



Sunday October 26, 2014
Reasons (Part-3)
Why Is Jesus Christ Unique?

The historicity of Christ

The historicity of Christ has been indisputably proven. **Historian Will Durant** has identified at least 19 ancient sources that refer to Jesus Christ as a real person.

A few examples:

- Thallus, a historian wrote in AD 52 about Christ's Crucifixion.
- Cornelius Tacitus called "greatest historian of Ancient Rome", lived around AD 64 - AD 116 confirms that Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate.
- Josephus who was court historian for the Roman emperor wrote in the "*Antiquities of the Jews*" in AD 97, about Jesus as an actual person, a man who lived at that time, was tried by Pilate, was crucified and was seen alive three days later.

Dr. Michael Grant, Cambridge University Professor:

"In recent years, no serious scholar has ventured to postulate the non-history of Jesus."

Clifford Herschel Moore, Harvard University Professor

"Jesus was a historical not a mythical being. No remote or foul myth obtruded itself on the Christian believer; his faith was founded on positive, historical and acceptable facts."

Why is Christ absolutely unique?

What makes Jesus so different from other great men in history, from other religious leaders, and other faiths.

We present these not in any way to demean other thoughts, faiths or philosophies, but rather to present the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, so that each one can decide for themselves what to do with the person of Jesus Christ.

We will present these in 9 key statements:

- #1, Christ's claims for Himself
- #2 The Bible's statement about the deity of Christ
- #3, The Bible's statement about Christ's absolute uniqueness
- #4, The incarnation and virgin birth of Christ
- #5, His life, work, teaching and impact on history
- #6, The sacrificial death of Christ



#7, The resurrection of Christ

#8, The provision of salvation through faith in Christ

#9, The power of Christ to transform, heal and deliver

While each of the nine could be explored in great depth and at great length, we will move quickly through each key statement highlighting main features. We will not have time to turn to all Scripture references and so will only make mention of some.

#1, Christ's claims for Himself

The Lord Jesus claimed several things for Himself during His earthly life and ministry:

- "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35,48,51) - as the life giving bread, He is the One who satisfied the hunger of every heart.
- "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12) - as the light of the world, He is the one who enlightens each one and gives light for each one.
- "before Abraham was, I AM." (John 8:58).
- "I am the door of the sheep"(John 10:7,9) - as the door, He is the only point of entry into the Kingdom and into eternal life.
- "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11,14) - as the good shepherd, He is the One who leads, guides and nurtures everyone who dares to entrust their life in His hands.
- "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25) - the One who alone promises to raise those who believe in Him from the dead, because He has conquered death.
- "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).
- "I am the true vine" (John 15:1,5) - to live life and be fruitful we must remain connected to Him.

The Lord Jesus, after His death and resurrection, in His revelation to John, claimed several things for Himself:

- "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Revelation 1:18)
- "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (Revelation 22:13). This is repeated in several places (Revelation 1:8,11,17; Revelation 21:6)
- "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star"(Revelation 22:16).

All of these reveal that He was more than just a man, a good teacher, a prophet, etc. He was and is God.



Let's consider a few things He said:

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

He claimed to be "the" only, and not "one among many". He did not claim to be one among many paths, one among many expressions of truth or one among many sources of life. Instead, He claimed to be "the way, the truth and the life". To go to the Father, One had to necessarily go through Him alone.

John 8:56-59

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

57 Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

59 Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

The Lord Jesus claimed pre-existence and the name of God for Himself, "I AM".

John 10:30-33

30 I and My Father are one."

31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.

32 Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"

33 The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."

When the Lord Jesus said "I and My Father are one" He not only claimed being one in mind and spirit with the Father, but as in the language of the people of His time, He being a Man, claimed deity.

John 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

Here again, in His prayer, He claimed being One with the Father, possessing eternal glory, in eternity past.

To our knowledge, no other man, spiritual leader, or religious teacher has made such claims to who he was.

#2 The Bible's statement about the deity of Christ

In several places, the Bible states the deity of Christ. Here are a few examples:



John 1:1-3,14

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Philippians 2:5-7

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

7 but made Himself of no reputation,...

(Other references: 1 Timothy 3:16; Romans 9:5; Isaiah 9:6; Micah 5:2)

The Bible points to this "Man" as deity coming into this world.

#3, The Bible's statement about Christ's absolute uniqueness

As we mentioned last week, more than 300 prophecies were fulfilled by Christ's first coming. We mentioned about mathematics and astronomy professor Peter Stoner who was a skeptic of the Bible, and to test its prophetic accuracy, he observed 48 major Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah that would come. Out of the 48, he considered just 8 of these (dealing with the Messiah being born in Bethlehem, His persecution, attempts on his life, etc), that established strict parameters to govern who this Messiah would be. Using the principles of probability he concluded the following: The chance that any man might have lived and fulfilled all 8 prophecies is 1 in 10^{17} ; yet the chance that any one man fulfilled all 48 prophecies is an astounding 1 in 10^{157} . The fact is that Jesus the Messiah fulfilled them all.

This Bible states Christ's absolute uniqueness as the only way for salvation and the only mediator between God and man.

Acts 4:12

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

1 Timothy 2:5,6

5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,

6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,

The Bible does not present Christ as "one among many". Instead the Bible present's Christ as "the one and only".



#4, The incarnation and virgin birth of Christ

The Bible teaches very clearly that the Lord Jesus was born of a virgin through the power of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:26-38).

Why is the incarnation and virgin birth important and what makes the difference?

When deity put on humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, here was a Man, born of a woman, and yet **not born in sin, not born with death working in Him, not born in subjection to satan**, as the rest of humanity. This Man, and **this Man alone, was able to live a sinless life**, though being a Man. He therefore, could be the ONE REPRESENTATIVE of the human race to both be the SUBSTITUTE on the Cross bearing the punishment of the sins of the entire human race, and also be the DELIVERER overthrowing the dominion gained by satan over the entire human race. No other man, no other religious leader who ever lived could do this.

The uniqueness of the incarnation in the Person of Jesus Christ, is that this incarnation is:

Absolute : He did not come with any imperfection, sin or contradiction

Complete : He did all that was needed to be done to deal with the issue of sin, salvation and satan and hence there is no need, absolutely no need, for another

Authoritative : He did not leave it open for other options. He did not claim to be "one among many", and in fact, denied the existence of any other.

Supernaturally Natural : He was completely supernatural in origin, but fully human.

Hebrews 1:3

Jesus Christ is God's absolute, complete, authoritative and final Word.

The problems with the concept of multiple avatars, as some would suggest, trying to include Jesus Christ as one among these many avatars are:

1, If each avatar was perfect why would there be a need for multiple? If each avatar was not perfect then these indeed could not be avatars.

2, Even if one of these avatars completed what was needed for mankind's need in the areas of sin, salvation and deliverance from satan, there would be no need for others.

3, In the light of Christ's unique claims, He would not fit among these avatars, since either He was right and the rest were wrong, or the rest were right and He was wrong.

They all cannot be right at the same time.



#5, His life, work, teaching and impact on history

His life was flawless, His works powerful, His teaching transforming. No one else has left such a mark on history. But more importantly - His life, work, and teaching still continue to impact us today, more than any other.

One Solitary Life (modified from the original version by Dr James Allan Francis 1926)

Nearly two thousand years ago in an obscure village, a child was born of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village (called Nazareth) where He worked as a carpenter until He was thirty. Then for three years He became an itinerant preacher. He healed the sick, cast out demonic powers, calmed the raging storm, multiplied food to feed the hungry and most important of all He taught the principles of an unseen Kingdom, that radically challenged human thinking.

This man never went to college or seminary. He never wrote a book. He never held a public office. He never had a family nor owned a home. He never put His foot inside a big city nor traveled even two hundred miles from His birthplace. And though He never did any of the things that usually accompany greatness, throngs of people followed Him. He had no credentials but Himself.

While He was still young, the tide of public opinion turned against Him. His followers ran away. He was turned over to His enemies and sentenced to death on a cross between two thieves. While He was dying, His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth – the simple coat He had worn. His body was laid in a borrowed grave provided by a compassionate friend.

But three days later this Man arose from the dead – living proof that He was, as He had claimed, the Savior whom God had sent, the Incarnate Son of God.

Nineteen centuries have come and gone and today the risen Lord Jesus Christ is the central figure of the human race. On our calendars His birth divides history into two eras. One day of every week is set aside in remembrance of Him. And our two most important holidays celebrate His birth and resurrection. On church steeples around the world, His cross has become the symbol of victory over sin and death.

This one Man's life has furnished the theme for more songs, books, poems and paintings than any other person or event in history. Thousands of colleges,



hospitals, orphanages and other institutions have been founded in honor of this One who gave His life for us.

All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the governments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned have not changed the course of history as much as this One Solitary Life.

Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), Emperor of the French stated this about Jesus Christ:

"You speak of Caesar, of Alexander, of their conquests and of the enthusiasm which they enkindled in the hearts of their soldiers; but can you conceive of a dead man making conquests, with an army faithful and entirely devoted to his memory? My armies have forgotten me even while living, as the Carthaginian army forgot Hannibal. Such is our power."

"I know men and I tell you, 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 would die for him."

"I search in vain history to find similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history nor humanity, nor ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary."

H. G. Wells (1866-1946), the renowned British writer had this to say:

"I am a historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history." "Christ is the most unique person of history. No man can write a history of the human race without giving first and foremost place to the penniless teacher of Nazareth."

Today, your life can be totally transformed, if you will embrace the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

#6, The sacrificial death of Christ

Romans 5:8 1 John 2:2

The Cross sets Christ Jesus apart from all other religious leaders. God's great love is demonstrated to us through Christ's death on the Cross. He died not for His sins, but for the sins of the whole world so that we could be freely forgiven and come into a life-changing relationship with God.



His death was

Substitutionary : One Man dying in place of the rest of the human race

Atoning : Meeting all the demands of God's justice and judgment on sin and satan

Complete : Taking away the sins of the whole world, of all peoples, of all races, across all time.

Triumphant : Conquering sin, sickness and satan. Reversing the consequences of the Fall.

Transforming : Lives are affected even today, through His completed work on the Cross.

No other religious leader claimed such purpose and efficacy in their death.

#7, The resurrection of Christ

1 Corinthians 15:1-3; (Philippians 2:9-11; Acts 17:31; 1 Corinthians 15:14-17)

Some people have attempted to discredit the bodily resurrection of Christ by construing various unproved and questionable theories: fraud theory, swoon theory, hallucination theory, etc. However, Christ's resurrection from the dead, stands indisputably. Consider the following facts:

(Adapted from "Evidence for the Resurrection" - by Josh McDowell)

BACKGROUND

The New Testament witnesses were fully aware of the background against which the resurrection took place. The body of Jesus, in accordance with Jewish burial custom, was wrapped in a linen cloth. About 100 pounds of aromatic spices, mixed together to form a gummy substance, were applied to the wrappings of cloth about the body. After the body was placed in a solid rock tomb, an extremely large stone was rolled against the entrance of the tomb. Large stones weighing approximately two tons were normally rolled (by means of levers) against a tomb entrance.

A Roman guard of strictly disciplined fighting men was stationed to guard the tomb. This guard affixed on the tomb the Roman seal, which was meant to "prevent any attempt at vandalizing the sepulcher. Anyone trying to move the stone from the tomb's entrance would have broken the seal and thus incurred the wrath of Roman law.

But three days later the tomb was empty. The followers of Jesus said He had risen from the dead. They reported that He appeared to them during a period of 40 days, showing Himself to them by many "infallible proofs." Paul the apostle recounted that Jesus appeared to more than 500 of His followers at one time, the majority of whom were still alive and who could confirm what Paul wrote. So many security precautions were taken with the trial, crucifixion, burial, entombment, sealing, and guarding of Christ's tomb



that it becomes very difficult for critics to defend their position that Christ did not rise from the dead. Consider these facts:

FACT #1: BROKEN ROMAN SEAL

The first obvious fact was the breaking of the seal, the Roman guards, that stood for the power and authority of the Roman Empire. The consequences of breaking the seal were extremely severe. The FBI and CIA of the Roman Empire were called into action to find the man or men who were responsible. If they were apprehended, it meant automatic execution by crucifixion upside down. People feared the breaking of the seal. Jesus' disciples displayed signs of cowardice when they hid themselves. Peter, one of these disciples, went out and denied Christ three times. These cowardly men could surely not have attempted, or even come close to attempting to break the Roman seal, represented by the powerful Roman soldiers who stood guard.

FACT #2: EMPTY TOMB

Another obvious fact after the resurrection was the empty tomb. The disciples of Christ did not go off to Athens or Rome to preach that Christ was raised from the dead. Rather, they went right back to the city of Jerusalem, where, if what they were teaching was false, the falsity would be evident. The empty tomb was "too notorious to be denied." Paul Althaus states that the resurrection "could have not been maintained in Jerusalem for a single day, for a single hour, if the emptiness of the tomb had not been established as a fact for all concerned."

Both Jewish and Roman sources and traditions admit an empty tomb. Those resources range from Josephus to a compilation of fifth-century Jewish writings called the "Toledoth Jeshu." Dr. Paul Maier calls this *"positive evidence from a hostile source, which is the strongest kind of historical evidence. In essence, this means that if a source admits a fact decidedly not in its favor, then that fact is genuine."*

Gamaliel, who was a member of the Jewish high court, the Sanhedrin, put forth the suggestion that the rise of the Christian movement was God's doing; he could not have done that if the tomb were still occupied, or if the Sanhedrin knew the whereabouts of Christ's body.

FACT #3: LARGE STONE ROLLED UP A SLOPE

On that Sunday morning the first thing that impressed the people who approached the tomb was the unusual position of the nearly two ton (4,480 pounds, 2000 kg) stone that had been lodged in front of the doorway. All the Gospel writers mention it. Those who observed the stone after the resurrection describe its position as having been rolled up a slope away not just from the entrance of the tomb, but from the entire massive sepulcher. It was in such a position that it looked as if it had been picked up and carried



away. Now, if the disciples had wanted to come in, tiptoe around the sleeping guards, and then roll the stone over and steal Jesus' body, how could they have physically done that and also do so without the guards' awareness?

FACT #4: THE ROMAN GUARD FLEES IN TERROR

The Roman guards fled. They left their place of responsibility. How can their attrition be explained, when Roman military discipline was so exceptional? Justin, in Digest #49, mentions all the offenses that required the death penalty. The fear of their superiors' wrath and the possibility of death meant that they paid close attention to the minutest details of their jobs. One way a guard was put to death was by being stripped of his clothes and then burned alive in a fire started with his garments. If it was not apparent which soldier had failed in his duty, then lots were drawn to see which one would be punished with death for the guard unit's failure. Certainly the entire unit would not have fallen asleep with that kind of threat over their heads. Dr. George Currie, a student of Roman military discipline, wrote that fear of punishment "produced flawless attention to duty, especially in the night watches."

FACT #5: GRAVECLOTHES TELL A TALE

In a literal sense, against all statements to the contrary, the tomb was not totally empty--because of an amazing phenomenon. John, a disciple of Jesus, looked over to the place where the body of Jesus had lain, and there were the grave clothes, in the form of the body, slightly caved in and empty--like the empty chrysalis of a caterpillar's cocoon. That's enough to make a believer out of anybody. John never did get over it. The first thing that stuck in the minds of the disciples was not the empty tomb, but rather the empty grave clothes--undisturbed in form and position. If the body had been stolen, there would be no grave clothes!

FACT #6: JESUS' APPEARANCES CONFIRMED BY EYE WITNESSES

Christ appeared alive on several occasions after the cataclysmic events of that first Easter. If the number of eyewitnesses is substantial, the event can be regarded as fairly well established.

OVER 500 WITNESSES : The apostle Paul appealed to his audience's knowledge of the fact that Christ had been seen by more than 500 people at one time most of whom were alive at that time when Paul wrote (1 Cor 15). Let's take the more than 500 witnesses who saw Jesus alive after His death and burial, and place them in a courtroom. Do you realize that if each of those 500 people were to testify for only six minutes, including cross-examination, you would have an amazing 50 hours of firsthand testimony? Add to this the testimony of many other eyewitnesses and you would well have the largest and most lopsided trial in history.



HOSTILE WITNESSES : Another factor crucial to interpreting Christ's appearances is that He also appeared to those who were hostile or unconvinced. This include Thomas his own disciple. Consider, Saul of Tarsus as becoming a follower of Christ after an encounter with the resurrected Christ. Saul despised Christ and persecuted Christ's followers. It was a life-shattering experience when Christ appeared to him. Although he was at the time not a disciple, he later became the apostle Paul, one of the greatest witnesses for the truth of the resurrection.

We believe and know that Jesus was bodily resurrected in time and space by the supernatural power of God.

"No religion stands or falls with a claim about the resurrection of its founder in the way that Christianity does" (Craig Blomberg)

#8, The provision of salvation through simple faith in Christ

Acts 10:43; Romans 10:9,10,13

What a wonderful and powerful gift that is offered to everyone who believes.

- Christ does not teach us to **earn** our salvation. He gives it to us freely as a **gift** to be received by faith, because He paid for it.
- Christ does not leave us in any state of **uncertainty** of salvation. He gives a clearly stated **assurance** of eternal life.
- Christ does not promise something that could only be experienced in some **unknown future**. He gives us eternal and abundant life, that becomes evident in a transformed life **here and now**.
- Christ does not provide merely a **new philosophy**. He provides salvation, that changes us and makes each one a **new person** inside out.
- Christ does not provide **mere religion**, a form of meaningless rituals and practices. He bring us into a **personal relationship** with Himself, the Eternal, Creator God.

No one else does this!

#9, The power of Christ to transform, heal and deliver

2 Corinthians 5:17; Mark 16:17,18; Hebrews 13:8

Even today lives of millions all over the worlds, across all languages, tribes and cultures are being transformed powerfully as they believe in Jesus Christ.

In His name prayers are answered, the sick are healed and demons are cast out.

A dead man cannot do these things.



So What's Your Take On Who Jesus Christ Is?

Liar, Lunatic, Legend, Lord

If Jesus was just a LIAR who deceived people and spread a big lie or a LUNATIC who had a large scale grip on people's minds, then He would not be able to transform people from bad to good, from sinners to holy people. His disciples and thousands of other throughout history till this day would not die for a known LIAR or confirmed LUNATIC. We know that He was not a LEGEND, not a folklore or story someone made up, as history is absolutely clear that Jesus Christ was someone who actually lived and died. So if He is neither LIAR, LUNATIC or LEGEND, then the only option we have is to embrace Him as LORD.

Prayer Time

Salvation call . Prayer for healing and deliverance. Minister by the gifts of the Spirit as the Spirit leads.

References:

- 1, John Stott, The Truth About Jesus
- 2, Ajith Fernando, Sharing The Truth In Love
- 3, Alex McFarland, The 10 Most Common Objections to Christianity
- 4, Josh McDowell, Christianity: Hoax or History
- 5, Josh McDowell, Evidence that demands a verdict