

WHY I BELIEVE

Christianity Is The Only Way

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Christians in our day, perhaps as never before, are being exposed to the other religions of the world. The space age has made every spot on the globe accessible to man within 24 hours. Christians are being introduced to other cultures, nations, races and religions. Exchange college students numbering 100,000 with varying religious backgrounds have given a so-called American Christian culture a new exposure to Animism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism and Confucianism.
- B. In the 1970's, there will be a flood of eastern, mystical thinking into so-called American Christianity. There will be a syncretism (amalgamation) of western religion and eastern religion. America is actually in a post-Christian culture, and there is a growing feeling of disillusionment with organized Christianity among the youth. NOTE: We can expect to see more and more teaching that all roads (religions) lead to God. What religion a man holds is not nearly so important as the fact that he hold some religion. Above all else, a man must be sincere in his religion.
- C. The question naturally arises as to whether Christianity is the one true religion. What makes Christianity unique over the other religions? Is Jesus Christ the only way to God?
- D. The purpose of this lesson is not to discuss the various teachings of different religions but to set forth the concepts that make Christianity unique among the religions of the world.

II. THE CLAIM OF CHRIST AND THE APOSTLES

- A. The Christian, who claims that Christ is the only way to God and those who have not trusted Christ are headed for judgment, is often called a bigot. There are millions of people who want to say God is the way to heaven and whatever concept one holds of God is acceptable.

However, a Bible-oriented Christian states that Christ and the Christian religion are the only way to God and heaven.

- B. Christians believe that Christ is the only way because this is what Christ Himself taught (John 14:6) and the Apostles also taught it (Acts 4:12). A real Christian cannot be true to revealed scripture and affirm anything else. One must state that Christ is the only way or give up calling himself a Christian. To follow Christ is to follow His teachings.

III. THE SIMILARITIES IN ALL RELIGIONS

- A. Many people assume that all religions are basically the same. It is a fact that all religions are interested in ethics and do believe in the Golden Rule – “do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” However, this is where the similarities stop in relation to Christianity.
- B. There are some concepts found in other religions that are found in Christianity, but these concepts are always corrupted. Other religions claim a belief in God, holy books, punishment after death, a way of salvation, heaven and that their religion is the only true way.
- C. There are so many differences between Christianity and the other religions. Christianity has a different concept of God, of Man and of salvation. Even the motivation behind ethics and morality for a Christian is different, for he does these things not to gain salvation or to impress men but to glorify God.

IV. THE DISTINCT DIFFERENCES IN CHRISTIANITY FROM OTHER RELIGIONS

- A. Christianity Has a Founder Who Is God: Only the Christian religion claims that its founder is God. Christ was God come in the flesh. Christ Himself made this claim (John 10:30; 14:9) and the Apostles affirmed it (John 1:1; 20:28; Phil. 2:6; Heb. 1:8). NOTE: Of all the great religious leaders of the world, Christ alone claims deity. It does not matter what a person thinks about Muhammed, Buddha or Confucius as individuals. These men never claimed to be God and their followers emphasized their teachings. This is not true of Christ, for He made Himself the focal point of His teaching. NOTE: Christianity is Christ, and to take Christ out of Christianity is to have no Christianity at all. The question that Christ puts before all men is “Whom do you say that I am?” NOTE: Because Christ is God, all of His other teachings can be trusted.

B. Christianity is Historically Grounded: The uniqueness of the Christian faith consists in the fact that it was founded on a unique historical event. Christianity is based on the historical fact of Christ's life, death and resurrection. These facts can be substantiated for the honest seeker. Christianity is not some mystical religion that has no historical moorings. NOTE: The heart of Christianity is that in Jesus God has intervened in human history in a way which was both sufficient and final, for Christ died "once for all" for our sins, has been buried, and has risen from the grave on the third day. NOTE: In other religions you have to believe no historical facts, but the historical facts of Christ's death and resurrection must be believed before one can become a Christian.

C. Christianity Has a Proper View of Man: Only Christianity gives a proper picture of man and his sinfulness. All other religions, while they may speak of sin, do not believe in the depravity of the human soul. Johannes G. Vos says,

In particular, there is no non-Christian faith that sees man's predicament and need as it really is. That man is actually dead in sin they do not and will not admit. Only Biblical Christianity gives the correct diagnosis of humanity's case – man is hopelessly sunk in sin by reason of moral and intellectual revolt against the living God. Only Biblical Christianity, therefore, realizes man's desperate need for an absolutely gracious salvation. The other religions offer man advice – some of it good, some not so good – but Christianity brings men good news, the Gospel, the message that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has done for man what he could never do for himself. (A Christian Introduction to Religions of the World)

D. Christianity Has a Salvation Based on Grace: Biblical Christianity alone teaches that salvation is all of God and is supernatural in origin (John 6:44; Eph. 2:8-9; Eph. 1:4; II Thess. 2:13). Salvation is a gift from God to man because of His unconditional love, mercy and grace. God does something for men in Christ that they cannot do for themselves. Every other religion bases salvation on works or human merit. Norval Geldenhuys says,

In no other religion in the whole world does one come to know God as the One who in His love seeks the lost person to save him through His grace. In the writings of other religions we see how man seeks and yearns for God, but in the Bible we see how God in Christ seeks man to save him for time and eternity. (Commentary on the Gospel of Luke)

- E. Christianity Teaches That Salvation is Appropriated Through Faith: The Bible teaches that all a person can do to experience salvation is to believe (trust, lean upon) the person and work of Jesus Christ (John 1:12; 3:16; 3:36; Eph. 2:8-9). Salvation by grace is consistent with salvation through faith. Christianity teaches that good works are necessary to prove and demonstrate true saving faith, but they are not necessary to deliver one from the guilt and the penalty of sin. Paul Little comments,

In other religions, good works are the means by which one hopes to earn salvation. In Christianity salvation is received as a free gift, through the finished work of Christ, the “therefore” of good works becomes an imperative love of God. Or, as another has put it, other religions are “do,” Christianity is “done.” (Know Why You Believe)

- F. Christianity Brings Assurance of Salvation: Christianity alone offers assurance of salvation (Rom. 8:16; II Tim. 1:12). Because all other religions are based on good works, there can never be any assurance. In a “works” religion a person never knows when he has done enough works to be saved. However, the Christian’s assurance is based on what God has done in Christ for him.

- G. Christianity Gives a Unique Place to Women: In Christ a woman is raised to an equal status with men (Gal. 3:28). In every other religion a woman is suppressed and oppressed but not so in the Christian religion. In God’s order of creation a woman is to be in submission to her own husband (Eph. 5:22), but she is in no way spiritually, morally or intellectually inferior to man.

V. THE DECEITFULNESS OF SINCERITY

- A. There is only one true religion and that is the Christian religion, and there is only one way to God and that is through Jesus Christ. Yet, there are many who claim that Christ is only a way and not the way. They say that all religions have some good in them and that all men who believe in God will go to heaven. They are confident that there is but one God and different paths to get to Him. Their cry is that as long as a person is sincere about his religion he will make it to heaven.
- B. Sincerity is good when it is placed in the truth, but sincerity placed in untruth can be very deceitful. A person can be sincere and sincerely wrong. Sincerely believing something does not make it true. Little says,

Believing something doesn’t make it true any more than failing to believe truth makes it false. Facts are facts, regardless of people’s

attitudes toward them. In religious matters, the basic question is always, Is it true?

Take, for instance, the fact of the deity, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christianity affirms these facts as the heart of its message. Islam, on the other hand, denies the deity, death and resurrection of Christ. On this very crucial point, one of these mutually contradictory views is wrong. They can't simultaneously be true, no matter how sincerely both are believed by how many people. (Know Why You Believe)

- C. Christ said He was the truth and the way (John 14:6). If this statement is true (and it is) then all other religions are false!