***Jesus Christ - CA-012***

Every religion in the world is founded by someone. I include Christianity in this. I know Christianity is not a religion, and you know that Christianity is not a religion. But you pretty well have to be a Christian to understand that it isn't a religion. It's a relationship. So for convenience sake, we may speak of Christianity as a religion. Every religion in the world is founded by a human being who claimed to have been God's messenger. Every messenger hid behind the message except Jesus. Muhammad said, "I'm just Allah's messenger. I'm just his chosen prophet. If I hadn't done it, he would have chosen someone else. If you don't like what I say, it's not my message. It's Allah's."

The same goes for Buddha. He was the one who had found the path to enlightenment. It would have been the same if someone else had found it. It's just like gravity. The principle of gravity would be the same if Isaac Newton hadn't have been the first to call it a principle, and to describe it.

**The Sermon on the Mount**

But with Christianity, if you take away Jesus Christ, here's no Christian and there's no Christianity. Christianity is totally wound up in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mohandas Gandhi used to say that it didn't matter to him whether there was a man who lived named Jesus or not. He found all that he needed in the Sermon on the Mount. Whether there had been a Jesus, or whether there had not been a Jesus, the truth of the Sermon on the Mount was all that a person needed to live by.

That shows that Gandhi had never read the Sermon on the Mount intelligently. He might have read it, but he did not read it intelligently. So we're going to use the Sermon on the Mount as a launching pad. From there we're going to go to other Scriptures. I'm going to give you several reasons why, in Christianity, the Man is the message. Without Jesus, there is no Christianity. With any other religion in the world, you can take the teachings, and forget about the founder, and you'd still have the religion, but not with Christianity. It's all bound in a person.

**Authority**

So let's glean a few of these from the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5: "When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him." This is the beginning of what we call the Sermon on the Mount. It goes through a couple of chapters in Matthew. Immediately we notice that Jesus is speaking with authority. He pronounces some people blessed. So for the first 11 verses or so, He speaks with authority. So that right away tells us there's something different about the teachings of Jesus. He doesn't say, "Well, Rabbi Gamaliel says that the merciful are blessed, and Rabbi Hillel says that the pure in heart are more blessed than the merciful. I really haven't made up My mind yet." But He speaks with authority.

Notice in verse 11, He even goes beyond speaking with authority: "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Blessed are you when you are persecuted and insulted because of Me. Buddha never said that. Muhammad never said that. Zoroaster never said that. They would say, "Hey, here's the message. If people don't like it, then it's not our fault. We're just telling you what the truth is." But this is very personal. Jesus says, "Blessed when people insult you, and persecute you because of Me."

In verse 17, Jesus makes another authoritative statement: "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the prophets. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill." Most people don't even ask that question. When you're listening to a speaker or a teacher, you don't think, "Well, why were you born? Why are you even here on this earth?" But Jesus answered the question without anyone even asking it. He answers the question in such a way that makes you think He was either really egotistical and off on an ego trip, or He knew exactly who He was, and He had a strong sense of mission. "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the prophets." Boy, that really took a lot of nerve for an Orthodox Jew to stand up and say, "Now you may be thinking that I've come to abolish the whole Old Testament, but I really didn't come to do that. What I came to do was to fulfill all the promises of the Old Testament." It took a lot of nerve to stand up in front of a group of Orthodox Jews and to make that statement.

**Jesus Came to Usher in a Totally Different Way of Life**

So that brings us to the first thing that we can say that makes Christianity different from every system in the world, and that is that its founder, Jesus, clearly taught that He came to usher in a new covenant between God and man. He came to usher in a totally different way of life. Jesus said in Matthew 5:17, He didn't come to abolish the law and the prophets. He came to fulfill them again.

In Matthew 5:21, He begins a different technique of teaching. He says, "You've heard that the ancients were told," and then He quotes Scripture from the Old Testament, or He quotes interpretation of Scripture, and he says, "This is what you've always thought. But *I* say." Again, He's speaking with authority, and He goes on through this section and He talks about anger, and murder, and divorce, and sexual lust. He says, "Whatever you think about these Old Testament commands, however you've interpreted them, I'm telling you, it should go a lot deeper than skin deep.

All the way through verse 38, He says, "You've heard an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist an evil person," and the implication which is "with evil."

Then there are quite a number of other Scriptures in which Jesus very explicitly states that He is no ordinary man. His life is a total fulfillment of the Old Testament law, and we're beginning a whole new dispensation. For example, in Matthew 26:26, at the institution of the Lord Supper: "While they were eating, Jesus took some bread and, after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat. This is my body' (or this represents my body). When he had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them saying, 'Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" So he's saying, "This is the end of the Old Testament. This is the beginning of the New Testament. It all begins with My death, with the blood that I'm shedding for you." We could look up many more claims where Jesus said that He had come to usher in a whole new way of life. Not many people (in fact, no one else in history) could have ever made that claim.

**Jesus Was the Judge**

Secondly, Jesus made it very clear that he was the judge. He was qualified to judge mankind. How many times have you heard somebody say, "Who are you to judge? Who do you think you are to judge?" In fact, that's what we Christians probably get more criticism for than anything else. Some of it's valid. Sometimes we do have a tendency to be judgmental in a negative, bad way. But other times, just because we know some truth, and we make a statement about the truth, people say, "Well, who do you think you are – judging?" This didn't bother Jesus. He never tried to justify why He was judging. He just made the judgment.

Now, in the Old Testament, when you read about Moses, for example, people would bring him a problem. They'd find a man picking up sticks on the Sabbath day, or someone who used God's name in vain, and they would bring it to Moses and say, "What should we do?" And many times Moses would say, "I need to go talk to God about this." He wasn't ready to make a snap judgment. Then he'd go pray. Then he'd come back and say, "Thus says the Lord." But you know, Jesus was always ready to make a judgment and to never back down on it, but to judge authoritatively.

Matthew 16:27: "For the son of man is going to come in the glory of His Father with his angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds." He called himself the Son of Man more often than he did the Son of God, and He was talking about Himself there. He said, "I'll be back, and I'll be back in the glory of the Father, and I'm going to judge everybody in the world, everybody who's ever lived, and repay them according to their deeds."

Then he makes another authoritative statement: "Truly, I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

John 5:17 is a good one, but it doesn't really have to do anything to do with judging: "But He answered them, 'My Father is working until now, and I myself am working." The question was because He was working on the Sabbath. Jesus just answered with full authority: "I'm working on the Sabbath, and My Father is working on the Sabbath. God always is holding the universe together, and if He ever stops it, none of (you) will ever be here." So at that point, He claimed to be able to make an absolutely perfect judgment. He always did. He claimed to be able to judge people. It never bothered Him when he was asked the question, "Well, who do You think You are to judge?"

So I'll tell you who He thought He was to judge. He claimed to be absolutely sinless. You know where I'm going. This is a review for most of you. In John 8:29, Jesus said, "He who sent Me is with Me. He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." I have never heard of anyone else ever making that statement that they always please God in everything they do. But Jesus had no problem with it.

**Sinless**

Then in verse 46: "Which of you convicts me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?" Now I wouldn't make this challenge to my best friends (my closest friends). I wouldn't stand up in front of people that I thought admired me, and I had a good relationship with it, and say, "Is there anybody here who could accuse me of ever having committed a sin?" I wouldn't touch that one. No way. I hope you wouldn't either. But Jesus stood up before a crowd of His most hostile enemies, and He said, "Does anybody here want to accuse me of ever committing a sin?" And nobody said anything. He said, "OK, since nobody here thinks I'm a sinner, and I'm telling you the truth, why don't you believe me?"

So Jesus claimed to be absolutely sinless. Nobody else, none of the founders of the world's religions, dared to make that claim. Some of them, like Malcolm X, liked to talk about how Allah saved him out of a life of drug addiction and all kinds of sin until he became a Muslim. Muhammad himself – his last words were, "Allah, forgive me for my many sins."

Jesus just says He didn't have any sins. He was absolutely perfect. Not only that, but He claimed to be able, not only to be perfect Himself, but to be able to forgive sins. In Mark 2:5: "Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'" Some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts." They weren't even saying it out loud. They were just thinking, "Why does this man speak that way? He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" Then Jesus proved that he was God. Not only did he have the power to forgive sins, but He knew what they were thinking: "Immediately, Jesus, aware in His Spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, 'Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?' So Jesus claim to be sinless and to be able to forgive sins.

**A Special Relationship to God**

He had claimed to have a special relationship with God. John 14:23: "Jesus answered and said to him (to Judas), 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father will love Him, and we will come to Him and make our abode with him."

John 5:23: "So that all will honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not need the Son, does not honor the Father who sent Him." If you reject Jesus, you reject God. If you honor Jesus, you're honoring God. That was a bold statement to make.

Matthew 10:30: "Everyone who confesses Me before man, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father, who is in heaven." So Jesus claimed to have such a relationship with God that if you received Jesus, you received God. If you rejected Jesus, you rejected God. Whatever He decided to do, God would decide to do with Him there.

In John 20:17, Jesus claimed to have such a relationship with God. Did you notice that Jesus never used the term, "Our Father," except when He was teaching people how to pray, and He said, "When you pray, pray like this. Our father in heaven." But Jesus never called God "Our Father." In fact, in John 20:17, He goes to such lengths not to say "Our Father," that it's almost awkward: Jesus said to her, 'Stop clinging to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father, and your Father, and My God and your God.'" Why didn't he say," I'm going to ascend to our Father and our God?" Because he was taking pains to show that He had a special relationship with God. God the Father was His God, but not the same way He's our God. He is Jesus' Father, but not the same way He's our Father, because he has a very special, unique relationship with God. So He went to great pains to say, "My Father and your Father, My God and your God" – never our Father or our God.

**The Truth**

Incidentally, back in the Sermon on the Mount, you'll notice that if you have an NASB, Jesus uses the word "truly" several times. "*Truly*, I say to you." The King James Version says, "Verily," or sometimes, "Verily, verily" – the compound term. This is the Greek word "amen," and it means "the truth." "I tell you the truth." When it's compound (amen, amen), it means, "I am telling you the absolute truth." Now, it's used throughout the New Testament occasionally, but Jesus used it all the time. He was always telling people, "I am telling you the absolute truth." In the gospels, Jesus uses the term "truly" over 60 times. So He claimed to tell people the absolute truth. Again, we say Jesus speaking with authority.

Let's go back to Matthew. He speaks with authority and He claims to have to tell people the absolute truth. Matthew 7:24: "Therefore, anyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock." A lot of teachers tell their students, "You really should follow my advice because I know what I'm talking about." But Jesus says, "I'll tell you who I'll compare you to if you follow My teachings. You're like a man who built his house on a rock. If you hear My teachings and you don't apply them, you're like a man who built his house on the sand." He spoke with authority, and He claimed to teach people the absolute truth.

**The Giver and the Author of Life**

Jesus claimed to be the giver and the author of Life. We know from the Old Testament that only God can give life. Remember back in Exodus, when the Egyptians were going through the plagues, and they could duplicate with tricks some of the miracles that Moses performed. But when lice came from dust, the magician said, "This is the finger of God. We can't do that. We can't create life."

In Deuteronomy 30:15, God tells the Israelites, "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity." God is the only one who can make that claim. I'm giving you life, or I'm giving you death.

In Job 12:10, God, in whose hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind."

Psalm 36:9: "For with you is the fountain of life. In your light, we will see life.

Psalm 66:6: "You visit the earth and cause it to overflow. You greatly enrich it. The stream of God is full of water. You prepare their grain. For thus, you prepare the earth." God is the source of all life – all prevision.

The Jews understood this. In John 5:21, Jesus said, "Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life. Even so, the Son also gives life to whomever He wishes."

In John 6:48, Jesus said, "I am the bread of life.

John 14:6: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me." So Jesus very clearly and explicitly stated that He was the source and the giver of life. The only source and giver of life is God. So Jesus was explicitly stating that He is God.

He also claimed to be the "I am" of the Old Testament. You remember in Exodus when Moses was commissioned to go to Pharaoh and demand that the Israelite people be released. Moses said, "Who will I say, who sent me?" And God said, "Tell them 'I am' sent you." That was the sacred Old Testament Hebrew name for God: "I am." That says it all. He is. He exists. So the Jews really held this in an almost superstitious awe. They wouldn't even pronounce the name that God had said that that's who He was: "I am." When they were raiding orally and they came to it, they would say, "The Lord."

When Jesus was walking on the water, and the disciples saw Him, and they thought it was a ghost, He said, "Fear not. It is I." In the Greek, what He said was, "Fear not. I am." Greek is a lot like other languages. Many languages don't use a lot of subject pronouns, because if you use the correct verb, the pronoun is understood. For example, in Spanish, or in French, or Italian, or Romanian (any of the romance languages), when the verb ends with the proper letter, you know who is doing the action. For example, in Spanish, if you want to say, "I speak," you just say "Hablo". If you want to say, "You speak," you say, "Hablas." So you don't have to use the pronoun. Anytime you use the pronoun, it's for emphasis. This is the same way in Greek. He didn't have to say, "I am." He could have just said, "Am." But Jesus seemed to delight in using this when it wasn't necessary.

Another place is in John 18. The police had come to the garden to arrest Him, and in verse 5, he had asked them, "'Whom do you seek?' And they answered him, 'Jesus, the Nazarene.' He said to them, 'I am.'" The English Bible says, "I am He." But you notice the "He" is in italics. So that's not in the original. Jesus said, "I am." And pow! "They drew back and fell to the ground." Now, this is a mystery to me. I don't pretend to understand it, but I think that somehow they said, "'We're looking for Jesus of Nazareth.' He said, 'I am.'" And for a split second, His deity shone through, and those guys were just utterly wiped out. Jesus seemed to love to use this term in relation to Himself. For one reason, it made people so uncomfortable?

If you want to see how uncomfortable it made them, turn to John 8:24: "Therefore, I said to you that you will die in your sins for unless you believe that I am (and again, the 'He" is in italics), you will die in your sins. In the 28th verse of the same chapter: "When you lift up the Son of man, then you will know that I am. I do nothing on my own initiative. But I speak of things as the Father taught me."

Verse 56: This is what he's been leading up to. They just keep on goading him: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." So the Jews said to him, "You're not yet 50 years old. You have seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly (verily, verily – you better listen to this – I'm telling you the absolute truth), I say to you, before Abraham was born (what I was – I used to be), I am. Thousands of years ago, I am." Only God could use that term. So Jesus seem to delight in using this, "I am." He very explicitly claimed to be the "I am" of the Old Testament.

**Angels**

Now, all through the Bible, we say that angels are such magnificent beings. Whenever an angel appears to a prophet, the first thing the prophet does is fall on his knees – Daniel, Ezekiel, and all the prophets, all the way through John in the Revelation. And you remember the angel lifted John up and said, "Hey, don't worship me. I'm a servant of God just like you are."

**Worship**

But I don't remember Jesus ever telling anyone who had kneeled down before Him, "Don't worship me. Don't kneel before me." Jesus accepted their worship. In Matthew 2:11, as He was an infant, the wise men came and worshiped Him. Or Matthew 8:2, or Mark 5:6. I could give you many more. All through the New Testament, people come and worship Him. Some of the liberals say, "Well, that just means they honored Him. They showed Him respect." In some instances, maybe it does mean they were honoring Him and showing Him respect. But when you get down on your knees in front of someone, especially when you're an Orthodox Jew, and you are extremely conscientious about worshiping anyone except the Lord, your God, and you get on your knees in front of someone, you are worshiping them. All through the gospels, Jesus consistently accepted worship. You're not to worship anyone but God. No one is to receive worship except God. So Jesus explicitly or implicitly, however you want to put it, He claimed to be God by allowing people to worship Him.

**Loyalty**

I have never heard of any religious leader who claimed men's highest loyalty, but Jesus. In Matthew 8:22, Jesus said, "Follow me. Allow the dead to bury their own dead." Jesus claimed loyalty above family. Luke 14:26: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate." That means by comparison. Your love for your family, when you compare it to your love for Me, it looks like hate because it's not as strong. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." So Jesus claimed loyalty above a person's natural self-love.

The only other people who might ever even hint at claiming this kind of loyalty would be cult leaders – people who are drawing people to themselves for selfish gain. But I'll tell you something that no cult leader has ever done. No cult leader has ever let himself be put to death (through a torturous death) for the sake of his followers when he could have gotten out of it.

So Jesus made a legitimate claim to people's highest and deepest loyalty. In fact, Jesus said, "The ultimate test of a person's integrity is, what do you say about Me? If any man loves the truth, he will believe Me."

**Jesus Claimed to Know the Future**

Jesus claimed to know the future. Every year, I get a kick out of reading the psychic predictions for the coming year. If one makes 15 or 25 predictions and one of them is right, they're considered, "Oh, boy, this guy is really right on. He knows the future." But Jesus claimed to know everything that was ever going to happen in detail.

Matthew 26:13: Jesus says something to the woman who had washed His feet with the expensive ointment. It's almost a casual conversation. He doesn't say, "I'm going to tell you something about the future that you're not going to believe." He just seems to say such things in unguarded speech. He says, "Truly, I say to you. Wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."

Mark 8:31: "He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days, rise again." So he was just teaching them about what was going to happen to Himself in the future. And we could go through the gospels, and we could look at many more where Jesus just calmly claimed to know everything that was ever going to happen.

**Jesus Claimed Complete Victory over Sin**

Jesus claimed complete ultimate victory over sin, evil, and Satan. Matthew 16:18: Jesus told Peter something when Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. He said, "I say to you that you are Peter. Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overpower it.

In Luke 10:18, "He said to them, 'I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.'" He claimed to have total victory over Satan. He claimed to know everything that was going to happen in the future, and everything that happened in the past, and to even be a witness to it. He said that He was there when He saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning.

In John 12:31, Jesus said, "Now judgment is upon the world. The ruler of this world will be cast out." He claimed to have total victory over evil. Now no other religious leader or founder of any religion has made anywhere near the claims about his own person and self that the Lord Jesus Christ has made. So, as the liberals are fond of saying, "It doesn't really matter whether there was a man named Jesus or not. His teachings are just as valid." Whenever you hear somebody say that, that's a statement that reveals a fantastic amount of ignorance. They've never read the gospels intelligently. Gandhi had never read the Sermon on the Mount intelligently, or he would have seen that Jesus was so intimately tied with His teachings that you can't separate them.

When Buddha was ready to die, and his followers thought that his time was short, he was asked, "How would you like for us to remember you?" And Buddha answered something like, "It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter whether you ever think of me or not. It doesn't matter how you remember me, or whether you remember me or not. Just remember what I tell you now."

On the other hand, think of Jesus the night before He was crucified. He instituted a memorial supper in His honor that was to be performed regularly by Christians. Before he left the earth, he commissioned Christians to go into all the world and evangelize in His name, and He promised to always be with them, which would mean that he would have to be omnipresent. So the claims of Jesus are that He was and He is equal to God.

There is no Christianity without Christ. There's really no religion in Christianity. Christianity is a relationship with the person, Jesus Christ. Aren't we thankful for that?

Leon Adkins, 2003

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