



THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRIST

by

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“But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom”

—Hebrews 1:8

Sometime ago at a luncheon, a lady approached me with an interesting story and a provocative question. She said, “When my son was just a young boy of ten or twelve or fourteen, he decided to quit church; he didn’t want to go anymore, and he hasn’t gone for several decades. Now he is in his mid-thirties, and something has moved on him to cause him to want to go back to church, and he asked me this question: ‘Which church should I attend?’ He wasn’t asking whether it should be Presbyterian or Methodist or Baptist, but he asked, ‘Christian or Muslim or Hindu, or Confucian? What church should I attend?’”

She was quite perplexed and said she didn’t really know what to tell him. I am sure she is like a great many people in our country today, because the politically correct thing to say would be: It doesn’t matter. They are all basically the same. Like it doesn’t matter which filling station you use to fill up your gas tank. One is as good as another. There is basically no difference. That is political correctness.

Some of you may have noticed that I am not particularly politically correct. I believe it makes all the difference in the world. I believe that Christianity is not like other religions. I believe it is diametrically opposed to all of them. I believe that Christ and Christianity are unique in the true meaning of that word—not unusual, but unique. There is no very unique, slightly unique, and more unique. It is either unique or it isn’t. It is the only one, and so it is with Christianity.

This has been perceived by many of the wisest people of our world, even those that aren't known for their Christian faith. For example, Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon was probably one of the most brilliant minds this world has ever seen. He was a genius. Of that I have no doubt. I would challenge you to spend an hour reading the writings of Napoleon, and you will discover, as I did, that you find yourself in the presence of an intellect far superior to your own. He, unfortunately, applied that genius toward conquest and destroyed tens of thousand of lives. But when in his latter days he was banished to St. Helena, he gave himself to the study of theology and the Bible.

Once he was engaged in an informal debate with one of his generals, General Bertrand, who was a complete skeptic. Napoleon was talking to him about Christ and Bertrand said, "But sire, he may be all of that; he may be a great man, he may be the greatest of men—a genius even—but after all, he was only a man." To which Napoleon replied:

I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is *not* a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. We can say to the authors of every other religion, "You are neither gods nor the agents of Deity, You are missionaries of falsehood, molded from the same clay with the rest of mortals. You are made with all the passions and vices inseparable from them. Your temples and your priests proclaim your origin.

JESUS IS GOD

Now that is, indeed, high praise. Is it supported by the Scripture? There are cultists and liberals who would say that the Bible doesn't teach that Jesus is God. Unfortunately, many people don't know enough about the Bible to know whether that is true or not. Let me just give you a few New Testament passages that declare that Jesus is God:

- The first sentence in the great Gospel of John: "**In the beginning was the Word** [the logos], **and the Word was with God, and the Word was God**" (John 1:1).
- When Jesus had appeared to Thomas and showed his hands and his side after His resurrection, Thomas fell to his knees and said, "**My Lord, and my God**" (John 20:28). The Greek means "the God of me." Very definite.

But what does God the Father say about Jesus? We may hear from many other sources who He is, but the ultimate source would be: What does God the Father say?

After talking to the angels, God the Father directs His attention to the Son, and He says (this is God Almighty, the Father, speaking to the Son): "**Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom**" (Hebrews 1:8). This is taught in passage after passage after passage, to wit:

- He is "**the only begotten Son**" (John 1:18).
- He is "**the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ**" (Titus 2:13).

- He is **“Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ” (II Peter 1:1).**
- **“This is the true God, and eternal life.” (1 John 5:20).**
- **“In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9).**
- **“For unto us a child is born, . . . and his name shall be called . . . The mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6).**
- He is **“Immanuel”—“God with us” (Isaiah 7:14).**
- The Son is the **“brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.” (Hebrews 1:3).**
- **“He is the image of the invisible God . . . by him were all things created” (Colossians 1:15–17).** (By Him all things consist.)
- The Church was purchased with the blood of God (Acts 20:28).
- **“Christ, who is the image of God” (II Corinthians 4:4).**
- **“Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever” (Romans 9:5).**
- **“Christ, the power of God” (I Corinthians 1:24)**
- **“Our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (II Thessalonians 1:12).**

There are scores more of other texts in the Bible saying the same basic thing. There is no doubt that the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is God the Son, the second person of the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Triune God.

The cultists like to say that the deity of Christ and the Trinity were invented by the Council of Nicea in 325, and prior to that time, none of the apostolic fathers believed that Jesus was God. Of course, they also say that the New Testament doesn’t teach it. We have just seen how wrong they are about that.

Let us take a quick look at the earliest of all of the apostolic fathers, Ignatius of Antioch. He was born a few months before Jesus died, so he was completely contemporary with all of the apostles. In Ignatius’ writings *To the Ephesians*, *to the Romans*, *to the Magnesians* and in other letters, here are just some of his phrases. (See if it is true that the deity of Christ was totally unknown by the apostolic fathers until 325 A.D.) Quote:

- “Jesus Christ our God”
- “who is God and man”
- “received knowledge of God, that is, Jesus Christ”
- “for our God, Jesus the Christ”
- “for God was manifest as man”
- “Christ, who was from eternity with the Father”

- “from God, from Jesus Christ”;
- “from Jesus Christ, our God”;
- “Our God, Jesus Christ”;
- “suffer me to follow the example of the passion of my God”
- “Jesus Christ the God”
- “Our God Jesus Christ”

. . . and on and on and on it goes. Could anything possibly be plainer than that? The idea that the deity of Christ was invented three centuries later is utterly (to use the correct theological term) balderdash—a direct quote from the Greek.

But, of course, there are atheists that don’t believe there is any God at all, and they are particularly aggressive in our day. I remember one teacher who was vehemently atheistic and was determined to inculcate atheism in all of her students in our supposedly religiously neutral public schools. After spending a year indoctrinating the class with propaganda, toward the end of the year, she asked all of those who were atheists to raise their hands. Most of the students raised their hands. She asked, “Are there any of you that are not atheists?”

An intimidating question for high school students, but one young lady raised her hand. The teacher asked, “You are not an atheist?”

She said, “No ma’am, I’m a Christian.”

The teacher asked, “And why are you a Christian?”

The young girl replied, “Because I believe in Christ, and my mother and father are both Christians.”

The teacher said, “And suppose that your mother and father were morons. What then?”

She said, “Well, I suppose then I’d be an atheist.”

Good for her. The atheists sometimes are put out because Christians and Jews have special days, but atheists have no special days. Somebody said, “Yes, you do. You’ve got April 1.”

The Bible says, “**The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God**” (Psalm 14:1). Yes, there is a God, and that God came to earth and was born and incarnated in human flesh. That is the first way in which Christ and Christianity are absolutely unique—separate from all pagan religions. No founder of any pagan religion ever claimed to be God, nor do their followers proclaim it for them. Certainly Mohammed never did, nor did Lao-Tse, or Zoroaster. Buddha was an atheist. Confucius said he knew nothing about Heaven—none of them ever claimed to be God. Only Christ made that claim. He is unique, and thus Christianity is totally different from any other religion in the world.

HE IS PERFECT

Christ is the only absolutely perfect person. Any other life that you examine, even those you may hold in high admiration, after awhile you will see that they have feet of clay, frequently reaching to their hips, but not so with Jesus.

I remember a university sophomore class that decided to put on a seminar on the theme, “The Weaknesses of Jesus.” The seminar had to be canceled after the first meeting because they had nothing to discuss. Isn’t that just like sophomores? Sophomore, by the way, is an oxymoron—two contradictory words: *Sophos* means wise; *moros* from moron means fool, and they are wise fools.

Interestingly, I think, that if they had their seminar on the strengths of Jesus, they would have had to cancel that also. Jesus had no strengths. Unlike Job, who was the great man of patience; or Solomon, who was a man of wisdom; or Samson, who was a man of might; Jesus had none. He is the altogether lovely One, and all of His virtues are in perfect balance.

He could say, speaking of the wisdom of Solomon, “. . . **behold, a greater [wiser] than Solomon is here** [in your midst]” (Luke 11:31). What a statement. Suppose I said that. You would laugh—right before you walked out. But we hear it from the lips of Jesus. Or, “**A mightier than Samson is among you.**” Jesus was the altogether lovely and perfect One.

Think about the things that Jesus never did that we all do. It is interesting. For example:

He taught us to confess our sins, but Jesus never did. Jesus never confessed a single sin. You say, “Wait a minute. Got you there, preacher. What about the Lord’s Prayer? ‘Forgive us our debts.’” That is the prayer the Lord *taught*, not the prayer He prayed. He said, “After this manner pray ye . . .” If you want the prayer the Lord prayed, you will find the High Priestly Prayer of Christ in John 17.

He never apologized to anyone for anything. We have all done that a thousand times over. We need to do it more than we do, probably. Jesus never apologized to anyone. He had no reason to ever apologize to anyone.

He never sought advice. The Bible says that in a multitude of counselors there is wisdom. Jesus never sought advice from anyone. When it was proffered to Him by His mother, He said, “**Woman, what have I to do with thee?**” (John 2:4). When Peter tried to instruct and correct Him, Jesus said, “**Get thee behind me, Satan . . .**” (Matthew 16:23). No, in Him, all wisdom dwelt. Omniscience need not seek wisdom and counsel from anyone.

He never asked for our prayers. Many times I have asked you to pray for me. I ask you right now, again, to pray for me. I am standing in the need of prayer. I need your prayers. Jesus never asked for prayer. You say, “Now this time, I know I got you. There

in Gethsemane, the night before the Cross, He asked the apostles to pray for Him.” No, he didn’t. He said, **“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Matthew 26:41)**. They prayed for themselves.

Jesus never asked for sympathy. I don’t know about you, but when things really get hard, I think most of us appreciate a little sympathy from others. We really appreciate that someone can “feel our pain” and sympathize with us. Jesus didn’t. It was offered to Him as He was winding His way with the Cross down the Via Dolorosa, the dolorous way, to Calvary. You recall that the street was lined with the women of Jerusalem, and they were weeping and lamenting Him. Jesus stopped that ghastly parade and turned to these women and said, **“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children . . . For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” (Luke 23: 28, 31)**.

Four decades later, as the armies of Titus and Vespasian encircled Jerusalem and thousands of men were crucified and hundreds and thousands died of starvation, He knew what happened in a dry tree, and they learned it as well. Jesus doesn’t need our sympathy, because Jesus wasn’t a martyr. Many liberals and unbelievers like to think that He was a martyr to a cause, but Jesus said, **“No man taketh it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:18)**. He could have, in an instant, called down twenty legions of angels. He could have, by a blink of His eye, swept all of His tormentors into Hell. He is the omnipotent One and does not need our sympathy.

We should sympathize for ourselves and for our children and pray that they will come to know Him as Lord. *So the first way in which Christ is absolutely unique is that He is God, the altogether perfect One who has been incarnated into this world—and that is absolutely different than any pagan religion.*

HE DIED FOR THE SINS OF THE WORLD

Second, *Christ is unique in that He died for the sins of the world.* Buddha died for no one’s sins. He lived to be seventy-some and died naturally. So did Confucius. Muhammad died an old man in his bed, attended by one of his many wives. It was true of Zoroastor, also, and all of the rest. Only Jesus died for the sins of the world.

May I further say this: I sincerely doubt that any founder of any other religion ever even contemplated for a moment the idea that they could die and pay the penalty for the sins of the world. I would further go so far as to say this: I do not believe that any one of you has ever in your life had this thought. You might think that I were omniscient to make a statement like that. Have I listened to all of your thoughts? No. But I am sure I am right. You have never entertained the thought that you could die and pay for all of the sins of the world. Dear friends, that is . . . *unthinkable*.

No. Jesus trod the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God alone. There was no one to join Him, no one to take even a sip of that cup with the distillation of the sin of the

world that was held before His face at Gethsemane and which He took to His lips on Calvary. Jesus Christ, the altogether sinless One, became *sin* and the infinite wrath of the almighty Creator of the universe was poured out on Him. That is absolutely unique.

**HE ALONE ROSE
FROM THE DEAD**

Third, *Christ is unique because He is the only founder of any of the religions of the world that rose again from the dead.* I have visited the tombs of many of the great of this world and one thing I have discovered is that the tombs are all occupied—except the tomb of Christ. I have been to that tomb many times, walked around in it, prayed in it, and examined it carefully. It is empty. *Only* the tomb of Christ is empty

If you were able to descend into the great cavern of the dead and call the roll of the great, you would hear something like this:

“Buddha?”

“Here.”

“Mohammed?”

“Here.”

“Confucius?”

“Here.”

“Zoroaster?”

“Here.”

“Jesus?” . . . “Jesus?” . . . “Jesus?”

“He is not here: for he is risen, as he said” (Matthew 28:6).

“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore” (Revelation 1:18).

“And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:26).

Not only did Christ rise from the dead, but He arranged it in a certain way. The Resurrection of Christ is the best-proved fact in all of history. Our faith rests upon the Gibraltar of the Resurrection, and that cannot be shaken.

Consider Dr. Matthew Arnold, professor of history at Oxford University, who wrote massive tomes on the Roman Empire. Dr. Arnold said that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the “best proved fact of history.” That should comfort you to know that the professor of history at Oxford says that what we trust in for our eternal hope is the best-proved fact of history.

Or Lord Lindquist, the Solicitor General of the British Empire, the highest legal position in Great Britain, said: “I know something about evidence [that is one of the understatements of all times] and I can tell you that the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is better and fuller evidence than any other fact of history.”

Or Professor Simon Greenleaf, the Royale Professor of Law of Harvard, on this side of the pond, examined the laws of evidence upon which he wrote tomes and invented many of the laws of evidence. He was considered the greatest authority on legal evidences the world has ever known. When he, from a hostile point of view, examined every thread of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ and applied to each one of them the acid tests of evidence, he concluded, to his amazement, that if the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ were examined by any unbiased jury in the world, they would have to conclude that Jesus Christ actually rose from the dead. In this, also, Christianity is utterly unique.

TO SUM IT UP

So, to sum it all up, what shall we say? First, let me say this: I want you to remember this sermon. In fact, I will guarantee that you will remember it. How many outlines of how many sermons in the last year can you come up with right now? You will remember this one. An empty boast? Not at all. I have even arranged some mnemonic stimuli. We call them *Christmas*, *Good Friday*, and *Easter*. On Christmas we celebrate that God was incarnate in human flesh and born in a stable. On Good Friday, we celebrate that God in human flesh was skewered to a Cross and endured the wrath of His Father for our sins. On Easter we celebrate the glorious appearance of Christ back from three days in a tomb as the God-man conquering death.

Yes, those reminders of the points of my outline will be with you for the rest of your life. You will not forget the outline of my sermon today. If we were to sum it all up, what do we get?

Every Christian knows that we are saved by faith in Christ. I hope every one of you knows that we are saved not by any works which we have done, but by faith in the incarnate, crucified and risen Christ. Therefore, if we ask: Why is it that we are saved by faith? I think I might shake a few of you up. The answer to that is that we are saved by faith in order that we may be saved by grace. But if, then, I continue to inquire as to why it is that we are saved by grace, I am afraid I would shake up a lot more! Do you know why is it that we are saved by grace?

Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield was professor of theology at Princeton about 100 years ago. He was the great ornament of Princeton, and considered with Augustine and Calvin, one of the three greatest theologians that ever lived. He had a brilliant, brilliant mind, and he said this concerning the essence of Christianity, which separates it from every pagan religion whatsoever: "That salvation from alpha to omega, from eternity to eternity, is totally of God." Every pagan religion teaches that salvation is of man. Salvation is not of man; salvation is of *God*.

Dear friends, it was God that was incarnated, it was God that was crucified, it was God that rose from the dead. Salvation is of faith that it might be of grace, that it might be of God. The essence of Christianity is that our hope is in God—not a god that sits up in

Heaven with his arms wrapped around his belly, but a God that came down and hung upon a Cross to pay for our sins.

That is the essence of the Christian faith. Is it yours? Do you know that the Almighty God has redeemed you? Have you come to hear the marvelous music of His voice? Have you felt the wonders of His grace? Have you been immersed in His love? Has He changed your life? Do you know that your soul has been washed clean and white? Do you know that you have been clothed in His perfect righteousness, faultless to stand before Christ? Do you know that you have been redeemed?

If not, today could be for you the most important day—not in your life, but in all eternity. You will either accept Him, the Savior God as your own, or you will continue trusting in what you are trusting in now—and I will tell you exactly what that is: It is yourself, and you will do that right into Hell forever. Which will it be—the God of all grace or the self of all sin. The choice is yours.

PRAYER: How marvelously unique, O Christ, art Thou. How wondrous is the faith which you have given to us. O God, by your almighty Holy Spirit, open the eyes of some that yet may be blind. Take away the hard and stony hearts and render them a heart of flesh. May they look up unto the Cross and see that there Thou art dying for them. May they invite you to come into their lives, to reside in their hearts, to cleanse them by the blood, to wash them whiter than snow, and to grant them the free gift of eternal life right now. In Thy name. Amen.

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