



### Distinction #5

## THE BIBLE CLAIMS AND PROVES TO BE GOD'S WORD.

The Bible is God's complete written revelation to mankind. Conclusive evidence for its inspiration and authority is based on: historical and archaeological confirmations, analyses of numerous OT and NT manuscripts, the Bible's unity (even though it contains 66 books written over 1,500 years by 40 authors), accuracy of textual transmission, and fulfillment of Bible prophecy (500 prophecies have already been literally fulfilled).<sup>8</sup>

Jesus Christ taught the OT's authority, sufficiency, historicity, and infallibility.<sup>9</sup> And He promised an authoritative NT through His apostles, who would soon write it. The Holy Spirit would teach them more truths and give them total remembrance of all Jesus had taught them (John 14:26-27; 16:12-15; 2 Peter 3:15-16).<sup>10-11</sup> (For an overview on the case for biblical inerrancy, see reference 12 below.)<sup>12</sup>

### CONTRAST:

No written religious authority in history has provided such purity of text, historical and archeological confirmations, and extensive prophecy with literal fulfillment.



### Distinction #6

## JESUS CHRIST CLAIMS TO BE THE ONLY DOOR TO HEAVEN.

According to the Bible, each person's eternal destiny depends on his or her decision whether to trust in Jesus and His finished work on the cross. Out of infinite love, God's Son stepped down from glory to rescue and reclaim us, taking our penalty upon Himself. Only a perfect Redeemer could settle the "sin issue" and save us from spiritual death.

Jesus did not come to earth merely to show us the way. He *is* the Way. He declared, **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"** (John 14:6). (See also Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:9; 1 Peter 3:18.)

### CONTRAST:

Religions may claim that various paths lead to God, but the Bible teaches we can only be reconciled to God on His terms—by trusting in Jesus.

### THE RISE AND FALL OF "RELIGION"

The first book of the Bible says that the people living after the great flood rebelled against Creator-God. They built a "tower of Babel" as their own approach to heaven (Gen. 11:1-9). Thus "Babylon" came to represent false religions.<sup>13</sup> Someday, all religions will merge into one, rejecting Jesus as Savior. But this one-world religion will fall by a great judgment from the living God (Rev. 14:8).



### CONCLUSION

Though religious people attempt to turn counterfeit keys to unlock heaven's door, Jesus freely offers the one key that fits: **"I am the door (to heaven). If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved"** (John 10:9). Someday, at the judgment seat of Christ, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Rom. 14:11). However, by then it will be too late to receive the Master's key to eternal life (Heb. 9:27).

Are you ready to invite Jesus Christ to be your Savior, Lord, and Friend? As the Alpha and Omega, who was dead and is alive forevermore, He holds the keys over death and life (Rev. 1:18; John 11:25).

### A PRAYER FOR SALVATION

*"Dear God, thank You for Your divine love and mercy. Thank You that I can have a personal relationship with You through Jesus Christ. I believe in His sacrificial death on the cross and that He rose from the dead. Lord Jesus, I trust You completely for my salvation, letting go of any religious pride by thinking I could earn (even partially earn) my way to heaven. Forgive me for my sins, cleanse me, and be my personal Lord and Savior. Amen."*

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REFERENCES: <sup>1</sup>C. S. Lewis. *Mere Christianity* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1980), 55. <sup>2</sup>James Strong. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Abingdon Press, 1890, 1980), Greek #25-27, 5. <sup>3</sup>Don Stewart. *Pastor's Perspective*, Answering Call-in Bible Questions, aired on KWVE 107.9 FM radio broadcasts, 2008-09. <sup>4</sup>Henry M. Morris, Ph.D. *Days of Praise* (Institute for Creation Research, 2008), 9-9-08 entry. <sup>5</sup>Merrill F. Unger. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Moody Press, 1988), 614. <sup>6</sup>Harold W. Hoehner. *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Zondervan Pub. House, 1977), 63. <sup>7</sup>M. J. Tyner. "Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?" apologetics brief (True-Way Tracts, 2007). <sup>8</sup>John F. Walvoord. *Every Prophecy of the Bible* (Cook Communications, 1999), 7-10. <sup>9</sup>Geisler, Norman, and Ronald Brooks. *When Skeptics Ask* (SP Publications, 1990), 142-3. <sup>10</sup>Ibid, 143-4. <sup>11</sup>Montgomery, John Warwick. *Where Is History Going?* (Zondervan, 1969), 179. <sup>12</sup>M. J. Tyner. "Is the Bible the Infallible Word of God?" apologetics brief (True-Way Tracts, 2012). <sup>13</sup>J. Vernon McGee. *Thru the Bible Commentary Series, Revelation Vol. 3* (Thomas Nelson Pub., 1991), 88.

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## WHAT SETS CHRISTIANITY APART FROM "RELIGION"?



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## Six Dramatic Distinctions that Set Christianity Apart from Religion

### INTRODUCTION

For ages man has grappled with the question “If we have a Creator-God, has He revealed Himself to the human race?” In today’s pluralistic world, numerous religions compete for our attention. They offer us ways to meet our spiritual needs, yet they present differing sources of religious authority containing contradictory views on God. Logically, they cannot all be true. This leads us to ask questions such as:

- Which religion predates all the others?
- Which religion provides us salvation or an afterlife?
- Which religion is authentic and worthy of embracing?

Below is an overview of dramatic distinctions that set Christianity apart from all religions. These six keys reveal the one that is authentic.



#### Distinction #1

### CHRISTIANITY IS A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

In a general sense, Christianity is categorized as a religion. However, it is actually a personal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus, anchored in biblical truth. **Religion** is man reaching up to God, attempting to become acceptable to Him (or to become a god) by performing good works or by following rules, rituals, or traditions. **Christianity**, on the other hand, is God reaching down to man to bring us into a loving relationship based on what He has already done for us.

The Bible teaches we can do nothing to earn our salvation. It is God’s grand gift. We are saved by His grace alone. If we try to reach God by combining human works with God’s saving grace, we diminish the depth of His

sacrifice. And we create a barrier to knowing God now and forever. Our good works follow salvation out of gratitude (See Heb. 10:10-14; John 19:30; Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:21; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5.)

#### C. S. Lewis on the Gospel of Grace

*“We are told that Christ was killed for us, that His death has washed out our sins, and that by dying He disabled death itself. That is the formula. That is Christianity. That is what has to be believed.”<sup>1</sup>*

#### CONTRAST:

No “religion” can bring us into a personal relationship with God. Only Christianity can.



#### Distinction #2

### THE GOD OF THE BIBLE DEMONSTRATED MATCHLESS LOVE FOR US.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden of Eden, all humanity became guilty of sin (Rom. 5:12). Therefore, every person is born separated from God and headed for spiritual death. But the good news of Christianity is this: **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him (Jesus) should not perish but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16).

The God of the Bible loves every person with a divine *agape*<sup>2</sup> love. The ultimate demonstration of His love took place at the cross of Calvary. There Jesus Christ willingly shed His blood to redeem us. He stated, **“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends”** (John 15:13). (See also Rom. 5:5; John 17:26; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Isa. 53:4-6.)

#### CONTRAST:

No religion founders loved people perfectly, nor sacrificed so greatly to prove the depth of their love.

### WHICH RELIGION IS THE OLDEST?

Christianity\* predates all religions since: (a) The Bible refers to the beginning of all creation, including the first two human beings; (b) Jesus testified to the accuracy of Genesis and the existence of Adam and Eve (Matt. 19:4); (c) The Holy Spirit inspired Moses to write Genesis c. 1500 BC by compiling earlier records passed down; (d) Before the foundation of the world, God decided to create people in His own image and to mercifully redeem them after they fell (Gen. 1:26; Rev. 13:8).<sup>3</sup>

—Don Stewart, Christian Apologist/Author

\* Christianity fulfills historic Judaism, since it embraces Jesus Christ as the consummation of Messiah and embraces both Old and New Testament revelation.



#### Distinction #3

### CHRISTIANITY’S FOUNDER WAS GOD IN HUMAN FORM.

Jesus of Nazareth made the radical claim that He was eternal God in human flesh (John 8:58; 10:30-33; 14:9). His uniqueness in all of human history is shown in His pre-birth announcements (documented predictions over centuries), His birth (born of a virgin), and His life, death, and resurrection. His claim to deity was validated by:

- His performance of numerous miracles
- His fulfillment of extensive biblical prophecy
- His supernatural resurrection from the dead.

Jesus is fully human and fully divine—the unique God-man. As sinless man He could die for our sins; as almighty God, He could take away our sins.<sup>4</sup> This Bible truth is distinctly and formally stated in verses such as John 1:1-14; 1 John 1:1-3; 4:2-3; Rom. 1:2-5; Phil. 2:6-11).<sup>5</sup>

#### CONTRAST:

All religion founders were men, not God Himself.



#### Distinction #4

### JESUS’ RESURRECTION WAS AN UNMATCHED MIRACLE.

Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, the supreme miracle, is the central pillar of Christianity. This well-attested historical event occurred in AD 33.<sup>6</sup> Solid evidence for this event includes eyewitness accounts, the empty tomb, the apostles’ transformation, and the appearances of Jesus for forty days in His resurrected body.<sup>7</sup>

On the third day after Jesus was buried, He presented Himself alive again. No other person has ever returned to life in a resurrected, eternal body. The suffering Servant who was crucified for our sins will one day reveal Himself as conquering King. Even today He declares, **“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live”** (John 11:25). (See also Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:1-8.)

#### CONTRAST:

No religion founders conquered death by bodily resurrection (rising from the dead).

### WHAT IS A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

Christians enjoy a personal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus, which is grounded in the written Word of God. This relationship is made possible because the Holy Spirit dwells within believers (Rom. 8:11; Titus 3:5; 1 John 4:13). When they seek the Lord through worship, prayer, and reading God’s Word:

- He guides, enlightens, encourages, and restores them.
- He meets their longings for love, understanding, peace, and freedom.
- He inspires their thoughts, actions, and prayers.
- He empowers them to follow Him and fulfill their callings.
- He gives them assurance of their destiny in heaven. (See John 14:16-17; 16:7-15; 1 John 5:10-13; Rom. 8:15-16.)

