



## The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ

Dr Norman Geisler

Orthodox Christians believe that Jesus is the unique Son of God in human flesh. However, some unbelievers, who may or may not believe Jesus existed, do not believe that Jesus was necessarily a wise or a particularly good man. Others, such as Muslims, think that Jesus was a prophet, along with other prophets. Hinduism depicts Christ as one among many great gurus. Liberal Christians and many others hold Christ as a good human being and a great moral example.

In his essay 'Why I Am Not a Christian,' the agnostic Bertrand Russell wrote, 'Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if he did we know nothing about him.' As to Christ's character, he said, 'I cannot myself feel that either in the matter of wisdom or in the matter of virtue Christ stands quite as high as some other people known to history. I think I should put Buddha and Socrates above him in those respects' (Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian*).

### Deity and Humanity

Christianity is unique among world religions, and Christ's true uniqueness is the centerpiece of Christianity. The truth about Christ is based primarily on the New Testament documents which have been shown elsewhere to be authentic. The New Testament record, especially the Gospels, is one of the most reliable documents from the ancient world. From these documents we learn that numerous facets of Christ are absolutely unique.

Jesus Christ was unique in that he alone, of all who ever lived, was both God and man. The New Testament teaches the fully unified deity and

humanity of Christ. The Nicene Creed (325) states the uniform belief of all orthodox Christianity that Christ was fully God and fully man in one person. All heresies regarding Christ deny one or both of these propositions. This as a claim alone makes him unique above all other religious leaders or persons who have ever lived, and it can be backed up with factual evidence. Some of this evidence is seen in other aspects of Christ's uniqueness.

### The Supernatural Nature of Christ.

*Unique in Messianic Prophecies.* Jesus lived a miracle-filled and supernaturally empowered existence from his conception to his ascension. Centuries before his birth he was foretold by supernatural prophecy.

The Old Testament, which even the most ardent critic acknowledges was in existence centuries before Christ, predicted the *where* ( Micah 5:2 ), the *when* ( Dan. 9:26 ), and the *how* ( Isa. 7:14 ) of Christ's entry into the world. He would be born of a woman ( Gen. 3:15 ) from the line of Adam's son Seth ( Gen. 4:26 ), through Noah's son Shem ( Gen. 9:26–27 ), and Abraham ( Gen. 12:3 ; 15:5 ). He would come through the tribe of Judah ( Gen. 49:10 ) and would be the son of David ( 2 Sam. 7:12f ). The Old Testament predicted that Christ would die for our sins ( Psalm 22 ; Isaiah 53 ; Dan. 9:26 ; Zech. 12:10 ) and would rise from the dead ( Pss. 2:7 ; 16:10 ).

All of these supernatural prophecies were uniquely fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This is not true of any great religious leader or person who has ever lived, including Muhammad.

*Unique in Conception.* Christ was not only supernaturally anticipated; he was also miraculously conceived. While announcing his virgin conception, Matthew ( 1:22–23 ) points to the prophecy of Isaiah ( 7:14 ). Luke, a physician, records this miraculous inception of human life ( Luke 1:26f .); Paul alludes to it in Galatians 4:4 . Of all human conceptions, Jesus' stands as unique and miraculous.

*Unique in Life.* From his very first miracle in Cana of Galilee ( John 2:11 ), Jesus' ministry was marked by its miracles (cf. John 3:2 ; Acts 2:22 ). These were not healings of delusional illnesses,

nor were they explainable on natural grounds. They were unique in that they were immediate, always successful, had no known relapses, and healed illnesses that were incurable by medicine, such as persons born blind ( John 9 ). Jesus even raised several people from the dead, including Lazarus whose body was already to the point of rotting ( John 11:39 ).

Jesus turned water to wine ( John 2:7f .), walked on water ( Matt. 14:25 ), multiplied bread ( John 6:11f .), opened the eyes of the blind ( John 9:7f .), made the lame to walk ( Mark 2:3f .), cast out demons ( Mark 3:10f .), healed all kinds of sicknesses ( Matt. 9:35 ), including leprosy ( Mark 1:40–42 ), and even raised the dead to life on several occasions ( Mark 5:35f .; Luke 7:11–15 ; John 11:43–44 ). When asked if he was the Messiah, he used his miracles as evidence to support the claim saying, 'Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised' ( Matt. 11:4–5 ). This outpouring of miracles was set forth ahead of time by prophets as a special sign that Messiah had come (see Isa. 35:5–6 ). Nicodemus even said, 'Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him' ( John 3:2 ).

*Unique in Death.* Events surrounding Christ's death were miraculous. This included the darkness from noon to 3 p . m . ( Mark 15:33 ) and the earthquake that opened the tombs and rent the temple veil ( Matt. 27:51–54 ). The manner in which he suffered the excruciating torture of crucifixion was miraculous. The attitude he maintained toward his mockers and executioners was miraculous, saying, 'Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing' ( Luke 23:34 ). The way in which he actually died was miraculous. As Jesus said, 'I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord' ( John 10:18 ). At the very moment of his departure, he was not overcome by death. Rather, he voluntarily dismissed his spirit. 'Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit' ( John 19:30 ).

*Unique in the Resurrection.* The crowning miracle of Jesus' earthly mission was the resurrection. It

was not only predicted in the Old Testament ( Psalms 2 , 16 ), but Jesus himself predicted it from the very beginning of his ministry: He said, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.' . . . But the temple he had spoken of was his body' ( John 2:19 , 21 ; Matt. 12:40–42 ; 17:9 ). Jesus demonstrated the reality of his resurrection in twelve appearances over forty days to more than 500 people.

*Unique in the Ascension.* Just like his entrance into this world, Jesus' departure was also miraculous. After commissioning his disciples, 'he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them' ( Acts 1:10 ). Contrary to the view of some, this was not a 'parable' but a literal bodily ascension into heaven from which he will return in the same literal body to reign in this world ( Acts 1:11 ; Rev. 1:7 , 19–20 ). The great Christian creeds clearly emphasize the miraculous bodily ascension of Christ.

*Unique in Sinlessness.* Some of Jesus' enemies brought false accusations against him, but the verdict of Pilate at his trial has been the verdict of history: 'I find no basis for a charge against this man' ( Luke 23:4 ). A soldier at the cross agreed saying, 'Surely this was a righteous man' ( Luke 23:47 ), and the thief on the cross next to Jesus said, 'This man has done nothing wrong' ( Luke 23:41 ).

For a description of what those closest to Jesus thought of his character, Hebrews says that he was tempted as a man 'yet without sinning' ( 4:15 ). Jesus himself once challenged his accusers, 'Which of you convicts me of sin?' ( John 8:46 ), but no one was able to find him guilty of anything. This being the case, the impeccable character of Christ gives a double testimony to the truth of his claim. Jesus' sinlessness was unique.

### **The Character of Christ Is Unique.**

Christ's character was unique in other ways. To a perfect degree he manifested the best of virtues. He also combined seemingly opposing traits.

*In Exemplifying Virtues.* Even Bertrand Russell , who fancied he saw flaws in Christ's character,

confessed nonetheless that 'What the world needs is love, Christian love, or compassion.' But this belies a belief in what most others acknowledge, namely, that Christ was the perfect manifestation of the virtue of love.

Jesus' willing submission to the ignominious suffering and death by crucifixion, while he maintained love and forgiveness toward those killing him is proof of this virtue ( Luke 23:34 , 43 ). He alone lived perfectly what he taught in the Sermon on the Mount ( Matt. 5–7 ). He did not retaliate against his enemies; instead, he forgave them. He rebuked his disciples for misusing the sword ( Matt. 26:52 ), and miraculously reattached and healed the amputated ear of one of the mob who came to take him to his death ( Luke 22:50 ).

Jesus was the perfect example of patience, kindness, and compassion. He had compassion on the multitudes ( Matt. 9:36 ), to the point of weeping over Jerusalem ( Matt. 23:37 ). Even though he justly condemned (in no uncertain terms) the Pharisees who misled the innocent ( Matt. 23 ), he did not hesitate to speak with Jewish leaders who showed interest ( John 3 ).

*In Combining Seemingly Opposite Traits.* One of the unique things about Christ is the way he brought together in his person characteristics that in anyone else would seem impossible. He was a perfect example of humility, to the extent of washing his disciples' feet ( John 15 ). Yet he made bold claims to deity, such as, 'I and the Father are One' ( John 10:30 ) and 'before Abraham was, I AM' ( John 8:58 ; cf. Exod. 3:14 ). The claim, 'I am meek and lowly in heart' ( Matt. 11:29 ) sounds arrogant, but he backed his words among little children ( Matthew 18 ). Yet he was so strong as to overturn the tables of those who merchandised God's house, cracking a whip to chase away their animals ( John 2 ). Jesus was known for the virtue of kindness, yet he was severe with hypocrites who misled the innocent ( Matthew 23 ).

*Life and Teaching.* As Jesus himself declared, the substance of what he taught finds its roots in the Old Testament ( Matt. 5:17–18 ). He condemned meaningless traditions and misinterpretations of the Old Testament ( Matt. 5:21f ., 15:3–5 ). Though the essence of what he

taught was not new, the form and the manner in which he taught it was unique. The Sermon on the Mount employs a fresh teaching method.

The vivid parables, such as the good Samaritan ( Luke 10 ), the prodigal son ( Luke 15 ), and the lost sheep ( Luke 15:4f .), are masterpieces of communication. Parables stand at the heart of Jesus' teaching style. By drawing on the lifestyles of the people to illustrate the truths he wished to convey, Jesus communicated truth and refuted error. Also, by speaking in parables he could avoid 'casting pearls before swine.' He could confound and confuse those who did not wish to believe (the outsider), yet illuminate those who did desire to believe (the insider). While the use of allegories and parables themselves was not unique, the manner in which Jesus employed parables was. He brought the art of teaching eternal mystery in terms of everyday experience to a new height. The 'laws of teaching' identified by modern pedagogues (Shafer, *Seven Laws* ), were practiced perfectly in Jesus' teaching style.

The manner in which Jesus taught was unique. The Jewish intellectuals admitted, 'No one ever spoke the way this man does' ( John 7:46 ). As he taught in parables, he was thronged by the multitudes ( Matt. 13:34 ). As a lad, he impressed even the rabbis in the temple. For 'Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers' ( Luke 2:47 ). Later, he confounded those who attempted to trick him so that 'No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions' ( Matt. 22:46 ).

### **Christ Is Superior.**

Jesus Christ was unique in every way. From his complete deity to his perfect humanity; from his miraculous conception to his supernatural ascension; from his impeccable character to his incomparable teaching—Jesus stands above all other religious or moral teachers.

*Christ Is Superior to Moses.* As a Jew himself, Jesus had no argument with Moses, the prophet who brought the Jewish law and led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage to freedom as an independent nation. Moses and Jesus were prophets of the same God, and Jesus said that he did not come to abolish the law (found in the

writings of Moses) but to fulfill it ( Matt. 5:17 ). Jesus implies that Moses' words are God's words (compare Matt. 19:4–5 with Gen. 2:24 ). However, in many respects, we find that Jesus is superior to Moses.

*Christ is a superior prophet to Moses.* In Deuteronomy 18:15–19 , Moses predicted that God would raise up a Jewish Prophet with a special message. Anyone who did not believe this prophet would be judged by God. This passage has been traditionally interpreted as referring to Messiah. Genesis 3:15 is also understood by many to refer to Jesus as the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent.

*Christ's revelation is superior to that of Moses.* 'The Law was given through Moses; Grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ' ( John 1:17 ). While Moses set up the moral and social structures which guided the nation, the law could not save anyone from the penalty of their sins, which is death. As Paul says, 'by the works of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin' ( Rom. 3:20 ). The revelation which came through Jesus, though, was one in which the sins which the law made known are forgiven, 'being justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus' ( Rom. 3:24 ). Christ's revelation builds on the foundation of Moses by solving the problem of which the law made us aware.

*Christ's position is superior to that of Moses.* Moses is the greatest of the Old Testament prophets, but Jesus is more than a prophet. As the Epistle to the Hebrews says, 'Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but Christ was faithful as a Son over his house' ( Heb. 3:5–6 ). While Moses served God, Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with the right to rule over all servants.

*Christ's miracles are superior to those of Moses.* Moses performed great miracles, but Christ's miracles were greater in degree. Moses lifted the bronze serpent to give healing to those who would look, but in this he was merely following instructions. He never made the blind to see, or the deaf to hear. Also, there is nothing in Moses' ministry to compare with the resurrection of Lazarus or of Christ.

*Christ's claims are superior to those of Moses.* Moses never made a claim to be God and did nothing other than fulfill his role as a prophet. Jesus did claim to be God and predicted his own resurrection to prove it.

*Christ Is Superior to Muhammad.* Muhammad, the founder of Islam agreed with Jesus and Moses that God is one, that he created the universe, and that he is beyond the universe. There is considerable agreement over the events of the first sixteen chapters of Genesis, to the point where Hagar was cast out from Abram's house. After this, the Bible focuses on Isaac while Islam is concerned with what happened to their forefather, Ishmael. The teaching of Muhammad may be summarized in the five doctrines:

1. Allah is the one true God.
2. Allah has sent many prophets, including Moses and Jesus, but Muhammad is the last and greatest.
3. The *Qur'an* is the supreme religious book, taking priority over the Law, the Psalms, and the Injil (Gospels) of Jesus.
4. There are many intermediate beings between God and us (angels), some of whom are good and some evil.
5. Each man's deeds will be weighed to determine who will go to heaven and hell at the resurrection. The way to gain salvation includes reciting the Shahadah several times a day ('There is no God but Allah; and Muhammad is his prophet.'), praying five times a day, fasting a month each year, almsgiving, and making pilgrimages to Mecca.

*Christ offers a superior message.* Jesus made superior claims to those made by Muhammad. Jesus claimed to be God. Muhammad claimed only to be a mere man who was a prophet. If Jesus, then, is not God, he is certainly no prophet. Jesus offered a superior confirmation for his claims. Jesus performed numerous miracles. Muhammad performed no miracles and admitted in the *Qur'an* that Jesus did many. Only Jesus died and rose from the dead.

*Christ offers a better way of salvation.* Unlike the God of Islam, the God of the Bible reached out to us by sending his Son to earth to die for our sins. Muhammad offered no sure hope for salvation, only guidelines for working oneself into Allah's

favor. Christ provided all that is needed to get us to heaven in his death, 'For Christ also died once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that he might bring us to God' ( 1 Peter 3:18 ).

*Christ offers a superior model life.* Muhammad spent the last ten years of his life at war. As a polygamist he exceeding even the number of wives (four) he had prescribed for his religion. He also violated his own law by plundering caravans coming to Mecca, some of whom were on pilgrimage. He engaged in retaliation and revenge, contrary to his own teaching.

*Jesus Is Superior to Hindu Gurus.* In Hinduism a *guru* is a teacher. The Hindu scriptures cannot be understood by reading; they must be learned from a guru. These holy men are worshiped even after their deaths as supposed incarnations of the gods. What they teach is that humans need liberation from the endless cycle of reincarnation ( *samsara* ) which is brought on by *karma* , the effects of all words, deeds, and actions in the present and all former lives. Liberation ( *moksha* ) is obtained when the individual expands his being and consciousness to an infinite level and realizes that *atman* (the self) is the same as *Brahman* (the one absolute being from which all multiplicity comes).

In other words, each Hindu must realize personal godhood. Such a realization can only be achieved by following *Jnana Yoga*— salvation by knowledge of the ancient writings and inward meditation; *Bhakti Yoga*— salvation by devotion to one of the many deities; *Karma Yoga*— salvation by works, such as ceremonies, sacrifices, fasting, and pilgrimages, which must be done without thought of rewards. Each of these methods will to some extent include *Raja Yoga* , a meditation technique involving control over the body, breathing, and thoughts.

Hinduism as it is actually practiced consists largely of superstition, legendary stories about the gods, occult practices, and demon worship.

*Christ teaches a superior worldview.* Jesus teaches a theistic worldview. But pantheism, the realization of godhood, is the heart of Hinduism.

*Christ's teaching is morally superior.* Orthodox Hinduism insists that suffering people be left to

suffer, because it is their destiny, as determined by *karma* . Jesus said, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' He defined neighbor as anyone in need of help. John said, 'But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?' ( 1 John 3:17 ). Also, many, if not most, gurus use their esteemed position to exploit their followers financially and sexually. The Bagwan Sri Rajneesh accumulated dozens of Rolls Royces as gifts from his followers. The Beatles became disenchanted with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi when they learned that he was much more interested in the body of one of the women in their party than with any of their spirits. They admitted, 'We made a mistake.' Even the respected guru Mahatma Gandhi slept with women other than his wife.

*Jesus gives a superior path to enlightenment.* While the gurus are necessary to understand the sacred writings of *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads* , there is no esoteric or hidden truth in the Bible that must be explained apart from ordinary understanding. Christian meditation is not an effort to empty the mind, but rather to fill it with the truth of Scriptural principles ( Psalm 1 ). Inward meditation is like peeling an onion; you keep tearing off layer after layer until, when you reach the middle, you find that there is nothing there. Meditation on God's Word begins with content and opens up the meaning until it yields contentment of soul.

*Christ teaches a better way of salvation.* The Hindu is lost in the karmic cycle of reincarnation until he reaches *moksha* and is left to work the way out of this maze alone. Jesus promised that we would be saved by faith ( Eph. 2:8–9 ; Titus 3:5–7 ), and that we could know that our salvation is guaranteed ( Eph. 1:13–14 ; 1 John 5:13 ).

*Christ Is Superior to Buddha.* Siddhartha Gautama ( *Buddha* is a title meaning 'enlightened one') is inferior to Christ. Buddhism began as a reformation movement within Hinduism, which had become a system of speculation and superstition. To correct this, Gautama rejected the rituals and occultism and developed an essentially atheistic religion (though later forms of Buddhism returned to the Hindu gods). His basic beliefs are summed in the Four Noble Truths:

1. Life is suffering.
2. Suffering is caused by desires for pleasure and prosperity.
3. Suffering can be overcome by eliminating desires.
4. Desire can be eliminated by the Eightfold Path.

The Eightfold Path is both a system of religious education and the moral precepts of Buddhism. It includes (1) right knowledge ('Four Noble Truths'), (2) right intentions, (3) right speech, (4) right conduct (no killing, drinking, stealing, lying, or adultery), (5) right occupation (which causes no suffering), (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness (denial of the finite self), and (8) right meditation ( *Raja Yoga* ).

The goal of all Buddhists is not heaven or being with God, for there is no God in Gautama's teaching. Rather they seek nirvana, the elimination of all suffering, desires, and the illusion of self-existence. While a liberal branch of Buddhism (Mahayana Buddhism) now has deified Gautama as a savior, Theravada Buddhism stays closer to Gautama's teachings and maintains that he never claimed divinity. As to his being a savior, it is reported that Buddha's last words were, 'Buddhas do but point the way; work out your salvation with diligence.' As a variant form of Hinduism, Buddhism is subject to all of the criticisms mentioned above. Jesus' teaching is superior. Further:

*Christ fills life with more hope.* Jesus' teaching is superior to Buddha's in that Jesus taught hope in life, while Buddhism sees life only as suffering and selfhood as something to be eradicated. Jesus taught that life is a gift of God to be enjoyed ( John 10:10 ) and that the individual is to be honored supremely ( Matt. 5:22 ). Furthermore, he promised hope in the life to come ( John 14:6 ).

*Christ offers a better way of salvation.* The Buddhist also teaches reincarnation as the means of salvation. However, in this form the self or individuality of the soul is eradicated at the end of each life. So even though you live on, it is not you as an individual who has any hope of attaining nirvana. Jesus promised hope to each man and woman as an individual ( John 14:3 ) and said to the thief on the cross beside him, 'Today you shall be with me in paradise' ( Luke 23:43 ).

*Jesus is a better Christ.* Jesus claimed and proved to be God in human flesh. Buddha was a mere mortal man who died and never rose again. Jesus, however, rose bodily from the grave. Gautama simply wanted to bring his 'enlightenment' to others to help them to nirvana, where all desires and individual existence is lost.

*Christ Is Superior to Socrates.* Although Socrates never started a religion, he has attracted a great following. Socrates never wrote anything, but Plato, his disciple, wrote a great deal about him, although these accounts may be as much Plato's ideas as the thought of Socrates. Plato presents Socrates as a man convinced that God has appointed him to the task of promoting truth and goodness by making humans examine their words and deeds to see if they are true and good. Vice, in his opinion, was merely ignorance, and knowledge led to virtue. He is credited as the first person to recognize a need to develop a systematic approach to discovering truth, though the system itself was finally formulated by Aristotle—a disciple of Plato's.

Like Christ, Socrates was condemned to death on the basis of false accusations from authorities who were threatened by his teaching. He could have been acquitted if he had not insisted on making his accusers and judges examine their own statements and lives, which they were unwilling to do. He was content to die, knowing that he had carried out his mission to the end, and that death, whether a dreamless sleep or a wonderful fellowship of great men, was good.

*Christ has a superior basis for truth.* Jesus, like Socrates, often used questions to make his hearers examine themselves, but his basis for knowing the truth about human beings and God was rooted in the fact that he was the all-knowing God. He said of himself, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' He was, in his very being, the fount from which all truth ultimately flowed. Likewise, as God, he was the absolute Goodness by which all other goodness is measured. He once asked a young man to examine his words by saying, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.' Jesus was the very truth and good which Socrates wanted to understand.

*Christ gives more certain knowledge.* While

Socrates taught some true principles, he often was left to speculate about many important issues, such as what happens at death. Jesus gave a sure answer to such questions, because he had certain knowledge of the human destination ( John 5:19–29 ; 11:25–26 ). Where reason (Socrates) has insufficient evidence to make a definite conclusion, revelation (Jesus) gives answers which might never be anticipated.

*Christ's death was more noble.* Socrates died for a cause and did so with courage, which is certainly to be commended. However, Jesus died as a substitute for others ( Mark 10:45 ) to pay the penalty that they deserved. Not only did he die for his friends, but also for those that were, and would remain, his enemies ( Rom. 5:6–7 ). Such a demonstration of love is unequalled by any philosopher or philanthropist.

*Christ's proof of his message is superior.* Rational proofs are good when there is sound evidence for their conclusions. But Socrates cannot support his claim to be sent by God with anything that compares to the miracles of Christ and his resurrection. Pagan prophets and prophetesses, such as the Oracle of Delphi, do not compare with the precise biblical prediction and miracles. In these acts there is a superior proof that Jesus' message was authenticated by God as true.

*Christ Is Superior to Lao Tse (Taoism).* Modern Taoism is a religion of witchcraft, superstition, and polytheism, but it was originally a system of philosophy, and that is how it is being presented to Western culture today. Lao Tse built this system around one principle which explained everything in the universe and guided it all. That principle is called the Tao. There is no simple way to explain the Tao. The world is full of conflicting opposites—good and evil, male and female, light and dark, yes and no. All oppositions are manifestations of the conflict between *Yin* and *Yang* . But in ultimate reality *Yin* and *Yang* are completely intertwined and perfectly balanced. That balance is the mystery called the Tao. To understand the Tao is to realize that all opposites are one and that truth lies in contradiction, not in resolution.

Taoism goes beyond this to urge living in harmony with the Tao. A person should enter a life of complete passiveness and reflection on such

questions as, 'What is the sound of one hand clapping?' or 'If a tree falls in the forest when no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?' One should be at peace with nature and avoid all forms of violence. This system of philosophy has many similarities with Zen Buddhism.

*Christ brings superior freedom.* Jesus allows humans to use their reason. In fact, he commands them to do so ( Matt. 22:37 ; cf. 1 Peter 3:15 ); Taoism does not, at least on the highest level. Taoism engages in the claim that 'Reason does not apply to reality.' That statement itself is self-defeating, for it is a reasonable statement about reality. It is either true or false about the way things really are, and not contradictory, yet it claims that ultimately truth lies in contradiction. Jesus commanded: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, *and with all your mind* . This is the great and foremost commandment' ( Matt. 22:37–38 , emphasis added). God says, 'Come now, and let us reason together,' ( Isa. 1:18 ). Peter exhorts us to 'give a reason for the hope that you have' ( 1 Peter 3:15b ).

Jesus encouraged the use of freedom to choose, never imposing himself on the unwilling ( Matt. 23:37 ). Taoism asks each follower to set will on the shelf; to give up the power to change things. Jesus says that each person has a choice and that this choice makes the difference. Each chooses to believe or not believe ( John 3:18 ), to obey or disobey ( John 15:14 ), to change the world or be changed by it ( Matt. 5:13–16 ).

Jesus allows each person the freedom to be saved. Taoism offers only a way to resign oneself to the way things are. Christ offers a way to change both who we are and what we are, so that we might know the joys of life. Rather than accepting death as an inevitable end, Christ provides a way to conquer death by his resurrection. Lao Tse can make no such claim.

**Conclusion.** Christ is absolutely unique among all who ever lived. He is unique in his supernatural nature, in his superlative character, and in his life and teaching. No other world teacher has claimed to be God. Even when the followers of some prophet deified their teacher, there is no proof given for that claim that can be compared to the fulfillment of prophecy, the sinless and miraculous

life, and the resurrection. No other religious leader (except some who copied Christ) offered salvation by faith, apart from works, based on acting to take away the guilt for human sin. No religious or philosophical leader has displayed the love for people that Jesus did in dying for the sins of the world ( John 15:13 ; Rom. 5:6–8 ). Jesus is absolutely unique among all human beings who ever lived.

### Sources

J. N. D. Anderson, *The World's Religions*  
H. Bushnell, *The Supernaturalness of Christ*  
N. L. Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection*  
——— and R. Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*  
M. J. Harris, *From Grave to Glory*  
C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*  
B. Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian*  
C. Shafer, *The Seven Laws of Teaching*

This is an excerpt from [Wesley Owen bookshops](#).