

HONORING THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF
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The Only Way

by Billy Graham – 1984

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

–Acts 4:12, NIV

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. –1 Timothy 2:5, NIV

Why is Christianity so different from every other religion in the world?

The answer focuses not on a plan for living, but on the Person of Jesus Christ: Jesus, the Son of God the Father and the Second Person of the Trinity.

Today many voices are making other claims. Some say that Jesus is the first of the divine creation, and not eternally God. But we boldly echo the ringing conviction of the Apostle Peter: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16, KJV).

The title “Christ” means “anointed one.” It is the term, in the Greek language, for the ancient Hebrew word “Messiah”—the “anointed one” whom God would send to save his people. Peter and the first believers of the early Christian Church recognized Jesus as the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. Their part of world history was one of discouragement and despair. The promised Messiah shone as a beacon in the darkness, and his light has never dimmed: “In him was life; and the life was the light of men. ... That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:4,9, KJV).

Today, as world leaders struggle with seemingly insurmountable problems, this darkening and menacing situation accentuates the brightness of the One who proclaimed, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12, KJV).

He is “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, KJV).

In all my evangelistic ministry I have never felt a need to “adapt” Jesus to the many and varied nationalities, cultures, tribes or ethnic groups to whom I have preached. I try to adapt illustrations or to emphasize certain truths that will help a particular audience understand the Gospel more clearly in light of their cultural background.

But the essential truths of the Gospel do not change. The facts concerning his virgin birth, his sinless life, his sacrificial and substitutionary death, his resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father, and the glorious hope of his Return must not be diluted or distorted in any way.

Jesus is the only Christ; he is also “God, our Lord and Savior.” This is Truth: God himself has come down in the Person of his only Son. The incarnation and the full deity of Jesus are the cornerstones of the Christian faith.

This great truth is underlined throughout the New Testament. John begins his Gospel, “In the beginning was the Word ...” (John 1:1, KJV). The word “logos” in Greek, translated “word,” was understood by Hebrews and Greeks. Then John continues, “And the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:1,14, KJV).

Christ is from eternity to eternity, because he is fully God. The Bible says, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: ... For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him” (Colossians 1:15-16,19, NIV).

Matthew tells us of the birth of Jesus and states, “All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matthew 1:22-23, KJV).

Jesus himself gave frequent witness to his divine nature. He declared, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58, KJV). Jesus stated, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30, KJV). Furthermore, Jesus demonstrated the power to do things that only God can do. The charge brought against him at his trial was that “he made himself the Son of God” (John 19:7, KJV); and when asked if he was the Son of God, he replied, “You are right in saying I am” (Luke 22:70, NIV).

What proof did he offer that he was truly God come in human form?

First, there was the proof of his perfect life. He could ask, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” (John 8:46, KJV)—and no one could answer because his life was perfect. He was blameless. He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15, KJV).

Second, there was the evidence of his power. His power was the power of God almighty. He could quiet the storms on the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25). He raised the dead, healed the sick, restored sight to the blind, and made the lame walk (Matthew 8:1-3; Mark 1:40-2:12; Luke 7:12-15). His miracles were a witness to the fact that he is Lord of all nature: “For by him were all things created. ... And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16-17, KJV).

Third, there was the evidence of fulfilled prophecy. Hundreds of years before his birth the prophets of the Old Testament spoke precisely of the place where he would be born (Micah 5:2), and the manner of his death and burial (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53). Uncounted details of his life were foretold by the prophets, and in every instance these prophecies were fulfilled.

Fourth, there was the evidence of his resurrection from the dead. Jesus Christ was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4, KJV). The founders of the various non-Christian religions of the world have died and been buried. But Christ is alive! His resurrection is a fact! His tomb is empty.

Fifth, there is the proof of changed lives. Christ alone, the divine Son of God, has power to change the human heart. And he does. The Bible says, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV).

Yes, Jesus Christ is who he said he is: God himself in human form. That is a crucial truth which undergirds the reality of our salvation. Only the divine Savior could die as the perfect and complete sacrifice for our sins. Only the divine Lord could tell us how we should live. Only the risen and ascended Son of God is worthy of our worship and our service.

By faith Jesus becomes our Lord and Savior. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him (Matthew 28:18). The present evil world system does not yet acknowledge his Lordship; it is still under the deceiving power of Satan (Ephesians 2:2). But those whom Jesus indwells have authority over the evil one and all his demons. The Apostle John declares, “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4, KJV).

Because Jesus is Savior, he saves us from the penalty of sin (Matthew 1:21). Because Jesus is Lord, he gives us power over sin as we daily walk with him (Hebrews 7:25). And someday he will take us to be with himself. Only because Jesus is God and only when we have confessed him as Savior and Lord, can he bestow, and we receive, this blessed assurance and hope (Romans 10:9).

How can we know the truth about God? Is religion just a matter of personal opinion? The Bible says “no”! It tells us that we can know the truth—because God has revealed himself to us.

Since mankind’s fall in the Garden of Eden, God has continued to reveal himself in history. God chose a man, Abraham, who became a great nation. God miraculously delivered his chosen people from Egypt. Under Moses’ leadership the people crossed the Red Sea. God gave them the Ten Commandments, and he gave Israel prophets whose divinely inspired predictions were absolutely trustworthy.

But most of all, God revealed himself in the Person of his Son, Jesus Christ: “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:18, KJV). He confirmed that Jesus is truly God the Son by his miracles, and by raising him from the dead (Luke 24:44-48; Acts 2:32).

The written Word of God was prepared under the direction of the Holy Spirit, who preserved the authors from departing from God’s revelation in their writing so that they conveyed exactly what God wanted them to record: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20-21, KJV). Even though the human writers of Scripture wrote as sons of their time, God ensured that the words and thoughts were inspired and recorded accurately as he intended: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16-17, KJV).

Because the Bible is God’s inspired Word, it does not contradict itself or teach falsehoods—because God cannot lie. We may not understand every detail of Scripture, but we must never lose sight of the fact that it is God’s Word and not man’s ideas or opinions.

Jesus constantly quoted the Old Testament and made it clear that it was the inspired Word of God. We who follow Christ must have just as high a view of Scripture as Jesus did. The Word of God has the power to change lives (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

God has promised to bless his Word. Time after time in my ministry I have quoted a Bible verse in a sermon—sometimes without planning to do so in advance—and afterward someone has told me it was that verse which the Holy Spirit used to bring conviction or faith: “Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” (Jeremiah 23:29, KJV).

One moonlit night in the mountains of California I went out alone with my Bible. I laid my open Bible on the stump of a tree and prayed, “Oh, Lord, I don’t understand everything in this Book, but I accept it by faith as the Word of the living God.” Since that moment I’ve never doubted that the Bible is the Word of God. God has confirmed this to me, as I have witnessed the power of the Word of God at work in the lives of people.

Our call and power come from the infallible Word of God—the Bible. It is the very Scripture in which Jesus is revealed. Him we believe; him we trust; him we proclaim as Savior; him we confess before others as our Lord. He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

That is the foundation of the truth we declare. That is why we rejoice!

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