

Jesus Christ

and the Trustworthiness of the

Bible

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Finding The Way

There are many alternatives out there as we look for what is real and what or who can be counted on in this life. Jesus Christ made some startling claims. He claimed to be the Son of God. He claimed to be the only way to get to God and eternal life; "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one comes to the Father except through Me," He said in John 14:6. He also made some startling demands. He said that whoever would follow him must "deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24), the follower giving control of his life to Christ. How can we know if Christ's claims are true and his demands viable? These are absolute statements; he didn't say, "I am a way," he said, "I am **the** Way;" meaning that there is no other. How can we trust these claims? What about Muhammad and his teachings, or Buddha and his? Muhammad claims that Jesus was just a prophet, and that Islam is the only true way. Buddha claims that we ourselves are "God," and we just haven't realized that this is true; there isn't just "one way" to God, there are many ways. Millions of people follow each of these teachers; are they all wrong? Many people say that they can all be right; this line of thinking is often found in the eastern religions, such as Buddhism, or Hinduism. However, it is important to point out that because of the absoluteness of Jesus' claims (such as that he is the only way to God), Muhammad and Buddha are necessarily wrong if Christ is correct. Others point out the seeming paradox of the cult leaders who lead their members to tragedy, while at the same time identifying with Christ and teaching from the Bible. A recent example of this would be Herf Applewhite, known as "Do," and his Heaven's Gate cult; Herf Applewhite claiming to be Christ in person, and echoing Jesus' words, "Follow me," while leading his followers to disaster. On the one hand, we find some leaders with teachings that are clearly not the truth, and yet we find people choosing to follow them nevertheless, such as these cult leaders. On the other hand, we find various other leaders that each have teachings that everyone would agree have at least some value and some truth, and yet at certain points are in complete conflict with each other, leaders such as Jesus, Muhammad, and Buddha. Our question at this point is, how can we know who is right and what is the truth? This paper was written to answer this question and to furnish individuals with a reasonable basis for faith in Christ and His claims.

The Christian Message of Salvation

God's love, Our Need, God's Provision, Our Response

In order to accurately state the case for Christ and the Bible vs. other leaders and their teachings, it is necessary to first take a look at what Christians believe about God and salvation. As previously stated, Jesus made the startling claims of being the Son of God, and the only way to God. According to the Bible, Jesus makes these claims on the following premises: There is one God, he has always existed, and he created the entire

universe and everything in it. He himself is not created. The following four points are one way of expressing the Christian view of salvation. First, God loves us and values us. The Bible says, **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16).** Second, the current state of mankind in general is that of both active and passive rebellion against God. “We like sheep have gone astray, each to his own way” (Is. 53:6). We have all chosen to do things our way instead of God’s way; we have put ourselves in control of our own life. Our rebellion, the Bible indicates, results in sin. **“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).** A lot of times if our conscience tells us we have done something that wasn’t right, this is usually a good indication we have committed a sin. And, just as through an act of selfishness we may hurt a friend and feel a sense of separation from that friend, the Bible indicates our sins have separated us from God, and from eternity with him (heaven). As we are (guilty of sin), God cannot allow us into his presence, and still be a just God. (Think of the victims of a crime and the position they would be in if the judge of their convicted offender simply ruled, “That’s O.K., you’re free to go,” without requiring any restitution or payment for the crime committed. Would this judge be upholding justice? No, he would not.) God is just, and requires that the price for evil be paid; if he did not, he would not be a just God. Our good deeds or “religion” cannot get us to eternal life either, because the requirements of God are absolute purity; so if we have committed even one sin, we are already disqualified, or, “have fallen short,” as Rom. 3:23 says above. While this does not sound very hopeful for humanity, the third point is that God did something about it. **“But God demonstrates His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).** Jesus claimed to be the only one in history who committed no sin (1 Pet. 2:22b, “He committed no sin”), and by his death on the cross he claimed to be paying the price for our sins; “The iniquity of us all was laid on Him” (Is. 53:7). John the Baptist, a prophet announcing Christ’s coming, said of him, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world” (Jn. 1:29). So Jesus claimed to be paying the price for the sins of the whole world by his death on the cross, and offers salvation not by our good deeds, but as a free gift by means of his perfect life and his payment for us on the cross; Eph. 2:8, “For by grace you have been saved through faith - and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.” The Bible then says that three days after making the payment on the cross, Christ rose from the dead; Paul says, “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,” (1 Cor:15:3,4). As we said, Christ offers salvation as a free gift. The fourth point is that just as with all gifts, this gift must be received, and on an individual basis. **“As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name” (Jn. 1:12).** Paul says “if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord...you will be saved,” (Rom.10:9). So what does it mean to receive Christ as Lord? It means to make a change from doing things our way, and give Christ control of our life. We make a decision to follow him with our life. Is. 53:6b says that we “have gone astray, each to his own way.” Jesus said, **“Repent and believe in the good news” (Mk. 1:15).** To ‘repent’ means to ‘change course.’ The verb for ‘believe’ here means to ‘put one’s trust in,’ and the ‘good news’ refers to Jesus; that

he is the Way to God, taking away “the sins of the world.” So we change course from our own way, and put our trust in Christ. How much trust? Jesus said, “Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; whoever loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me”(Matt. 10:37,38). As Lord, Jesus demands first place in our life, above our own will, and that of anyone else. According to the Bible, the alternative to spending eternity with God is spending eternity separated from God and all that is good; which is eternal suffering, or hell. In Matt. 25:46 Jesus speaks of the judgment of those who choose to follow him (the righteous), and those who refuse to follow him (the unrighteous): "Then they [the unrighteous] will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous, to eternal life." Jesus confronts us with an important decision. The really good news is this: The Bible says that if we make the decision to receive Jesus as Lord, **we can know where we are going as far as eternity is concerned: Heaven!** John, a close friend of Jesus, wrote a letter to some Christians, and that letter is now part of the Bible; it is called I John. At the end of this letter, he wrote, **“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know you have eternal life” (I Jn. 5:13).** This being God’s word, God wants us to be assured, He wants us to **know** that with Christ as our best friend, we have eternal life. Paul, another New Testament writer, writes in Ephesians 2:8, “For by grace [free gift] you have been saved.” Note the words ‘have been saved’ are in the past tense; the Christian’s eternal salvation is a 'done deal' as far as God is concerned in his word. Even more amazing is what the Bible says happens to an individual when he or she is saved. Since Jesus is a **risen** Lord and is alive today, when we receive him as Savior and Lord, the Bible teaches that he actually dwells inside us, in our hearts. Paul says that Christ dwells in our hearts through faith in Eph. 3:17, and Jesus says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come and fellowship with him, and he with Me” (Rev. 3:20). To summarize the Bible’s message of man’s dilemma and God’s solution:

1. The one God who created all things loves us (Jn. 3:16).
2. Each of us has gone our own way; we have committed sins, separating ourselves from God and an eternal relationship with him (Rom.3:23).
3. Because of God’s love for us, although we are unable to earn or achieve salvation, God paid the price for our sins through Christ, who died on the cross and rose again; he offers this salvation to us as a free gift (Rom. 5:8, Eph. 2:8).
4. This gift is received on an individual basis by receiving Christ as Lord of our life (Jn. 1:12).

These are some of the basic premises on which Christ makes his claims to be the Son of God and the only way to God the Father.

Some Background to Christ and Salvation

As we compare Christ and his teachings to other teachers, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of him and his background as the founder of Christianity. Jesus Christ was a Jew, the name 'Jew' coming from the name 'Judah,' one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus Christ claimed to be the mediator of God's New Covenant to the people of Israel and to the whole world. The tangible result today of this New Covenant is the New Testament (testament being another way of saying 'covenant') of the Bible, and Jesus' Christian church. To better understand this New Covenant, we need to take a look at the Old, or original Covenant, and its history as it was mediated through the people of Israel; all of this being found in the Old Testament of the Bible, and known as the Jewish religion, or Judaism, a form of which is still practiced today.

After teaching about the creation of the world and of man, the Old Testament of the Bible then teaches and shows how God reached out to man in general ways, such as through the wonder of creation, for example, and in more specific ways to a few specific individuals, usually called prophets. One of these prophets was a man named Abram. In Gen. 12:1-3, God speaks very specifically to Abram, giving him this command and accompanying promise (Gen. 12:1-3): "Go forth from your country and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you, and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." In Gen. 15:4 God adds to this promise that the nation which shall come from Abram will be taken through a son from his own body. So Abram was to be blessed by God, and a nation was to come from him, and this nation God would somehow use to bless the other nations of the earth. The Bible shows that after a time God appears to Abram and establishes a covenant with him (Gen. 17:1,2): "Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly.'" God also at this point changed Abram's name to Abraham (meaning 'exalted father'). God then makes it clear that the covenant and blessing would be through Abraham's son, Isaac, who would be born to Abraham's wife Sarah, "...Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac, and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him" (Gen. 17:19). Isaac is then born to Abraham as promised. To Isaac is then born a son Jacob, who is known as Israel, who then has twelve sons, which become the twelve tribes of Israel, or the nation of Israel.

The Jews, as stated above, are of the tribe of Judah, one of the twelve sons of Israel, but this name has come today to refer to Israelites in general, and 'Judaism' is the faith of the Israelites. Israel was God's chosen nation (Gen. 17:19), and they were to be set apart to represent God to the other nations and to tell others of him; "I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations." God spoke to the Israelites through prophets, giving them his word (the Old Testament of the Bible, and later the New Testament) which contained commandments and histories, and which foretold of a coming Messiah ('Christ', or 'Anointed One'), who would bring a new

covenant and be the Savior for Israel. "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,' says the Lord of Hosts," it says in Mal. 3:1, the last book of the Old Testament. Isaiah the prophet spoke of what the Messiah would do: "He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to the prisoners" (Is. 61:1b). Some of the more well-known prophets whom God sent to the Israelites to lead them and foretell of the Messiah were Moses, Joseph, Elijah, and Isaiah. For hundreds of years Israel waited for the promised Messiah.

The New Testament tells of the arrival of this long awaited Messiah and the new covenant: "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also created the world" (Heb.1:1,2). God long ago promised Abraham that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed. Although the Jewish people (Israel) had been called to share their faith about God with the nations around them and thus bless the families, or nations of the earth, Jesus, the Christ or Messiah, a Jew and a descendant of Abraham, came for the whole world and thus is God's ultimate fulfillment of his promise to Abraham. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16). "And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world" (I Jn. 4:14). Jesus Christ, as the mediator of the new covenant, came first to the Jews, and then to the whole world, establishing His church with a historical background and foundation of Judaism and the Old Testament, but teaching a whole new revelation of God to mankind through the promised new covenant, this new covenant being a long established plan of God, foretold of in the Old Testament. This church soon became known as Christianity, which makes use of the teachings of God in the Old Testament, but in the context of the teachings of the new covenant of Christ in the New Testament.

To summarize, the Old Testament of the Bible tells of a God who creates all things and then reaches out and establishes a covenant with a particular individual, Abraham, making him into a great nation and promising he would be a blessing to the whole earth. God also promises to Abraham's descendents He will make a New Covenant with them, sending a Messiah to bring this covenant. The New Testament begins with the arrival of this Messiah, Jesus Christ, who establishes the New Covenant from God, offering salvation for the whole world through faith in Christ.

Jesus Christ vs. Muhammad and Buddha

The question remains how can we know that all of this is true, or that what Christ says in the Bible is right or reliable? What about other teachers, other religions, and other "holy books" or scriptures? This is an excellent question. In this age of instant information; the Internet, PCS's, Direct TV, etc., we are able to be aware more than ever of and be

informed on the teachings of many leaders and religions, with varied teachings from all parts of the world. While personal investigation is still the best method to learn the details and discern the facts, one thing we can be fairly certain of is that many people are aware of, and additionally many are following, these teachers and the religions they have founded or profess; millions who adhere to Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and other major religions, in addition to various smaller cults. How do we deal with these religions, or rather, how do we deal with Christ when he says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through Me"? Jesus (and therefore Christianity) claims that he is the only way to God, that he is the absolute truth, and the only way to eternal life. These are some astounding claims. First of all, they set Christ apart as being no ordinary man, which lines up with his claims to be the only Son of God (Mk. 14:61b,62a: "And the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?' And Jesus said, 'I am'"), claims which we will treat later in this paper. But more importantly here, Jesus is making absolute statements. All truth ultimately is from him, which means that any so-called truths which do not agree with his teachings must be false. This is the law of absolutes: An absolute statement and its opposite cannot both be true at the same time. Both Muhammad and Buddha make claims which conflict with Christ's teachings. Since, as we have seen with absolute statements that both cannot be true, it is necessary to investigate, and from several directions. One of the main goals of this paper is to compare the teachers as well as their teachings. Taking a look at the four largest religions of the world, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, Hinduism is the only one of these which does not have a specific founder with whom we can compare. However, since Buddhism has many common roots with Hinduism and some of its basic beliefs are almost identical¹ we will look at Buddha and his teachings as representing the beliefs of both of these religions.

Muhammad and Buddha

Muhammad and Islam

Muhammad, the inaugurator of Islam (Islam means submission; i.e., to God), was born around 570 A.D. At this time in Mecca, Arabia, there was taking place the worship of many "deities". According to Islamic teaching Muhammad, at age 40, began receiving revelations and visions regarding the right way to live and regarding the one "true God," Allah (Arabic for God).² Muhammad did not claim to be without sin. In fact, he viewed himself as an ordinary man, and claims he was doubtful when he first began receiving the visions.³ Upon receiving these revelations, and continuing to receive them, Muhammad began to preach against the worship of these "deities" and began to preach a right life and that Allah was the only true God. The followers of Islam became known as Muslims. These revelations and visions were written down, and were later reassembled into the Qu'ran, Islam's chief holy book.

The Qu'ran, Muslims claim, while written down by a human (originally Muhammad), was authored word for word by Allah, and delivered to Muhammad by an angel. Taking the majority of the Bible as its roots, it teaches that Muhammad is the last and greatest of the prophets, beginning with Adam and Abraham in the Old Testament, and including

Moses, David, and in the New Testament, Jesus Christ. Muslims do not follow the Bible and its teachings in an exact manner, however. Jesus is considered merely a human prophet, not the Son of God,⁴ yet Muslims affirm the Bible's claim that Jesus was without sin.⁵ (This is a paradox; a morally perfect man most agree by definition is no ordinary man). He was born of a virgin,⁶ but was never crucified on a cross to pay the price for our sins, (God made someone else on the cross look like Jesus), and therefore Jesus never rose from the dead according to Islam.⁷ Islam, therefore, considers itself to be an extension of Judaism and Christianity, and a correction of their errors. As stated, Islam accepts the majority of the Bible, where it does not conflict with the Qu'ran. Probably the chief tie Islam has to Judaism and Christianity is due to the national identity of Muhammad and the Arabs. The Arabs are descendants of Ishmael, a son of Abraham, the Biblical prophet. Abraham had been given the Gen.12 promise by God that he would be made into a great nation and that through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. The Bible then states that Abraham had two sons; one by Hagar, his wife's maid, given to be his second wife according to Gen. 16:3, agreed to and suggested by Sarah, Abraham's first wife, due to her apparent barrenness, and then Abraham had a second son by his wife Sarah. Abraham's son through Hagar was Ishmael, the father of the Arab nation, and his son through Sarah was Isaac, the father of the Israeli nation. The Bible and Christians assert that only one of these sons was the son promised to Abraham by God. According to, among others, the text in Gen. 17:18,19, Abraham, before Isaac has been born, is trying to convince God that Ishmael should be the son of the promise: "And Abraham said, 'Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!' But God said, 'No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son...Isaac, and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.'" The Bible is clear that it is through Isaac that God's promise of Gen. 12 to Abraham, of the great nation coming from him which would in turn be a blessing to all the nations of the earth, would come. Islam, on the other hand, asserts that both Israel and Arabia are "promised nations," i.e., both equally have a special status before God as being called and chosen to be used by God to reveal his Word and teach his ways. This issue will be dealt with more thoroughly at a separate time.

To attain eternal life in Islam, the individual must choose to lead a good life, doing good. The Five Pillars of Faith which the Muslim is to follow are: The profession of faith, prayer five times a day, alms to the poor, fasting, and, if possible, one pilgrimage to Mecca.⁸

Muslims are judged by Allah on the Last Day and are sent either to eternal life, consisting of an eternity of sensual pleasures, or eternal hellfire, depending on whether they choose to follow the Law of Islam (performing the Five Pillars, and the rest of the teachings), or to lead a life of evil. "Muslim theologians explain that the way to salvation consists in the due performance of the five duties of Islam."⁹ The resultant Islamic view from the Qu'ran of salvation is that it is determined by the good works vs. the bad (evil) works of the individual; it is based on how good a life the individual has led. "There is no assurance of eternal life until the Muslim reaches the day of judgment at which it is commonly understood that all will be made to walk over the thin edge of a sword

stretched across a deep abyss. Those who succeed will enjoy an eternity of sensual paradise. Those who fail will be consigned to torment in the raging fires of hell. Faith and good works during a person's life are believed to give assistance in passing this test. Muslims believe one's good and bad works will be weighed on a huge scale and will influence whether he successfully crosses over the abyss into paradise."¹⁰ Salvation in the Islam faith, then, is an achievement of the individual; the passing of a test, the ability to do this being based largely on the good deeds the individual achieved during his lifetime.

Buddha, Buddhism, and Hinduism

Buddha founded Buddhism at the first half of the sixth century B.C.¹¹ Born Sidhartha Gautama, a prince in India close to the Nepal border, he had everything in life, growing up in a castle. As an adult venturing out of the castle, he saw suffering, which caused him to seek the meaning to life. After studying under various spiritual teachers, he went his own way, a moderate path consisting of prayer and fasting. After a night of striving under a tree he achieved a spiritual "enlightenment," according to Buddhist teachings.¹² Faced with the choice of remaining in this enlightened, blissful state, or teaching others the way to enlightenment, he chose the latter.

'Buddha' means 'one who has woken up,' or 'one who knows' (the basic truth of things).¹³ Anyone who reaches the 'truth' is a Buddha. Since Buddha originally studied under Hindu teachers as Hinduism was developing, most of the basic tenets of faith and central teachings of Buddhism are the same as Hinduism, such as reincarnation (the concept that it may take many lifetimes for a human being to reach Nirvana, or, salvation), and the teaching that all human beings are actually divine. "Now Gautama realized what Hinduism had always taught: 'The true self is God, and God is the true self.'"¹⁴ "God... is not any 'what,' ...He is not any 'who.' He is beyond desire, craving, wanting, wishing, and beyond such unrealities as age, suffering, and death. And when a man has entered that condition [i.e., becoming God] – when he, too, is above both existence and nonexistence – he is lost in God. He is in Nirvana."¹⁵ Buddha, however, came as a reformer, confronting the fatalism of the Hinduism of his day, teaching that individual effort does make a difference, and while founding Buddhism, he did in fact have an impact on Hinduism. Buddhism's sacred canon of holy books, called the Tipitakas, contain Buddha's sayings gathered by his followers, including the saying, "Hurt not others with that which pains yourself."¹⁶

Obviously, the 'God' of Buddhism is very much different than the God of the Bible. The God of Buddhism is an impersonal God, not having a personality or feelings, which is in contrast to the God of the Bible and Christianity, who does have these (Jn. 3:16, above, and I Pet. 5:7, "casting all your anxieties upon Him, because he cares for you."). The God of Buddhism is instead an abstract 'truth,' or 'way of the universe,' supposedly found inside each one of us. Also, as indicated, Buddhists believe that we ourselves actually become 'God.' Eternal enlightenment, or Nirvana, then, is becoming one with the truth that, as Buddha claimed, we all are divine or we all are God. This is in stark contrast to the Christian view of God: There is one God who is eternal and who created all things; he created human beings and the universe; he is God, we are not. At the end, those who

reach eternal life, according to the Bible, will in heaven still be created beings while God will still be the Creator. This concept of a personal, Creator God who loves us (Jn. 3:16) and the Buddhist concept of God are teachings about God which are in direct conflict with each other. The Buddhist concept of God would directly conflict with the commandment of the God of the Bible in Ex. 20:3, "You shall have no other gods before Me."

At the core of Buddha's philosophy of human morality is his Four Noble Truths: Life is suffering; Suffering is caused by desire; Cessation of desire results in cessation of suffering; There is a path that leads to the cessation of desire.¹⁷ This path that leads to cessation of desire is known as the Eight-Fold Path: Right views, Right purpose, Right speech, Right conduct, Right livelihood, Right effort, Right awareness, Right meditation.¹⁸ Buddha developed this path to assist others in becoming a Buddha, which is the final life one spends as a human being; after this life one enters Nirvana, becoming one with God.

Hinduism explains this concept of the 'truth' of the divinity of human beings, and the path to arrive at oneness with God in this way: "Underlying man's personality and animating it is a reservoir of being that never dies, is never exhausted, and is without limit in awareness and bliss. This infinite center of every life, this hidden self, or Atman, is no less than Brahman, the Godhead... The reason we don't act or appear 'Godlike,' is due to the fact that the Eternal is buried under an almost impenetrable mass of false ideas and self-regarding impulses that comprise our surface being; in much the same way a lamp that is covered with layers of dust and dirt can be invisible."¹⁹ Hindus teach that we strive to be free from our ego and its false ideas and self-regarding impulses (these being the causes of evil) to reach our divinity by performing four yogas, or four types of exercises: Knowledge, Love, Work, and Meditation.²⁰ These exercises, or disciplines, are comparable to Buddha's Eight-Fold Path.

In both Buddhism and Hinduism, salvation, or reaching Nirvana, is purely an achievement of the individual: "Every individual must tread this path himself through his own energy and initiative. (Buddha said,) 'Those who, relying upon themselves only, shall not look for assistance to anyone besides themselves, it is they who shall reach the topmost height.' No god or gods can be counted on, not even Buddha himself."²¹

How Christ is Vastly Superior

As we have seen from our brief treatment of Muhammad and his teachings, and Buddha and his teachings, both have at least some aspects which most would argue as true and good and in agreement with some of the teachings of Christ. For example, Muhammad taught as of the Five Pillars of Islam to give alms to the poor, and Buddha, in his Eight-Fold Path, taught that right conduct was important, which would include giving to those in need. Jesus said "give to everyone who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you," Matt. 5:42. So these teachers and their religions, as well as most likely some of the teachings of other religions, such as Hinduism, do contain at

least some teachings which most would agree are good and true. However, they also teach things which directly conflict with Christ and the Bible. For example, as we have seen, Christ claims to be the only way to God, and salvation is not by our own personal effort, but by faith. Jesus asserted this first of all because of who he claimed to be, the only Son of God (Matt. 11:27; "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."). Jesus asserted this second of all because of what he claimed to do; that is, pay the price for our sins, giving "His life as a ransom for many" (Mk. 10:45). Muhammad teaches, on the other hand, that Jesus was not the Son of God, but one of many prophets, that he did not die on the cross for our sins or rise again, and that he, Muhammad, was the superior of all the prophets including Christ (an interesting proposition, considering that even Muhammad claims that Christ led a perfect life while he, Muhammad, did not, - and perfect is as good as it gets!), and that eternal life is through the confession of Islam and following and performing the Five Pillars of Islam. Buddha asserts that eternal life is achieved by each individual through the practicing of various disciplines, the Eight-Fold Path. So we have examples indicating that each of these founders and teachers of these religions agree on at least some general moral truths (for example, alms giving), but each are in direct conflict and contradiction with regards to what Christianity puts forth as an absolute truth, that of how men can be saved, or reach enlightenment. Since in regard to absolute statements which are in disagreement only one of them can be true, what we now have to ask is, how do we know that Christ is right about his claims that salvation is only by faith in him, and that he is right in his other claims about God which conflict with what Buddha, Muhammad, and other teachers teach? What makes Christ and his teachings superior to Muhammad and his teachings, or Buddha and his?

Christ Fulfilled Prophecies

Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, is immediately set apart from Muhammad and Buddha, in a big way in that his coming, his manner and place of birth, his mission, his reception and treatment from men, the manner, cause, and purpose of his death, the fact of and length of time until his resurrection, and even the date in history of his arrival as Messiah were foretold, or prophesied, over a period of several hundred years in a single body of prophetic and historic literature, the ancient Jewish Scriptures, which is the equivalent to the Old Testament of the Christian Bible, and were documented as fulfilled in the New Testament of the Bible. There were no prophecies concerning Buddha's coming or mission, and although some Muslims attempt to claim the opposite, there were no prophecies of Muhammad's coming or mission either. (This Muslim claim holds that certain Old Testament and New Testament prophecies apply to Muhammad, but this claim will be shown to be completely without substance at a later point.) The prophecies we are about to take a look at are astounding in the detail and accuracy of their predictions of Christ. But can they be trusted as evidence of a God who communicated to select men the details of a person and events of the future, hundreds of years before the fact, and therefore as evidence establishing Christ as a miraculous part of the plan of this God? To answer this, before taking a look at these prophecies and their fulfillments, it is crucial that we determine the validity, the trustworthiness, of the Bible.

The Validity of the Bible

To determine the trustworthiness of the Bible, we must ask the standard questions for testing literature: What evidence do we have? Are there eyewitnesses, and do they seem to be credible as to their reputation and manner of reporting? How reliable are the modern-day sources; the manuscript copies on hand today? What kind of 'track record' does the body of work have? What do the unbiased experts say? Does it have any outstanding characteristics in its teaching which lend credence to its validity?

First of all, one strong evidence of the Bible's validity is the current existence in the world today of various key peoples and events. The Bible teaches about a Jewish teacher called Christ who founded the institute of Christianity which then began to spread rapidly in the world. Today we find the existence of the Christian church throughout most of the earth. The Bible teaches on, and the Old Testament is largely based on, the nation of Israel which came into being thousands of years ago and was located in the Mediterranean. We find a nation called Israel in the Mediterranean. The Bible teaches that most of the Israelites rejected Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity. We find today the existence of both Christians and of Israelites throughout the world, and we find that the majority of the Israelites do not adhere to Christianity (although there are many who do). The beginning of this condition is faithfully recorded in the Bible in Acts; for example, where Peter confronts the unbelieving Israelites after healing a crippled man: "...Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has glorified His servant Jesus. You handed Him over to be killed, and you disowned Him before Pilate, though he had decided to let Him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. **You crucified the Author of Life, but God raised Him from the dead," Acts 3:12-15.** The result of this speech is seen in Acts 4:1-4: "The priests and captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were still speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand." Additionally, as previously discussed, the Bible claims to be made up of two parts; the old covenant (Old Testament), or God's covenant with Isaac (and his heir Israel), and the new covenant (New Testament), or God's new covenant with Israel, not invalidating the old covenant but superceding it (Jesus said, "Do not think I came to abolish the Law and the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill," Matt. 5:17; Paul said "Christ is the end (goal) of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes," Rom.10:4). The new covenant actually fulfilled and extended the old covenant to include not only Israel as God's primary chosen people, but people from all nations who receive the messenger of the new covenant, Christ, as their Lord and Savior. The Christians we see today follow the new covenant, making use of both the old and new covenant as their Scriptures, and the non-Christian Jews we see today follow, to varying degrees, the old covenant as their Scriptures. This existence today of this Jewish faith, the body of Jews practicing to varying degrees the teachings of the old covenant (of the

Bible), and to this day adamantly claiming it to be God's word to them, is overwhelming confirmation of the historicity of the Jewish faith as reported in the Bible, and the claim of the Bible to be historically and didactically made up of the two covenants. The existence of Christianity, the Israeli nation, and the relationship of these two peoples to each other and toward the Bible and its teachings are bedrock support of the Bible and its historical accuracy.

Second, also attesting to the validity of the Bible is its consistency in its teachings and its internal agreement of data. Written by 40 authors over a period of more than 1500 years, the Bible is perfectly consistent in its teaching of God, his attributes, and his plan of salvation by faith, from Genesis to Revelation. For instance, in regard to God's plan of salvation, at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis 15:6 we read of Abraham and how he obtained a right standing before God (salvation) by faith (belief, or entrustment); "Then he believed in the Lord, and it was credited to him as righteousness." At the other end of the Bible, Revelation 1:5b says, "To Him [Jesus] who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood;" and Rev. 21:6 says, "And He said to me, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.'" These verses, one at the beginning of the Bible and two at the end, along with others in between, teach that God's plan is not by our achievement of a good life, through which we could then boast (hence, pride), but instead the righteousness required for salvation is credited to the account of those who believe, as with Abraham above, without cost to ourselves, because Jesus paid the price with his blood on the cross. As another example, the Bible teaches consistently that there is only one God, and that he created all things. In the Old Testament Isaiah 44:6 says, "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his redeemer, the Lord of Hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me,'" and Gen. 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In the New Testament, we read in I Tim. 2:5a, "There is one God..," and in Heb. 1:10, "And 'You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands.'" Additionally, the Bible is internally consistent in its teaching of the life and message of Christ as well. The four gospel accounts of Christ, written by four different authors from 20 to 60 years after the events occurred, while giving very different viewpoints of the same events, do not contradict each other even in the details. "There are no contradictions in the gospels which would cause us to question their credibility. There are some mysteries, but no contradictions."²² Apparent problems or contradictions can be virtually always cleared up by more in depth investigation. For example, one apparent contradiction frequently cited by scholars and others is that of the detailed genealogy of Christ in the last portion of Matt. 1:1-17 not matching up with the corresponding portion of the genealogy of Christ as reported in Luke 3:23-38. Taken at face value, there appears to be a problem. The names referred to do not match. But this problem is easily resolved when it is taken into consideration that one list is obviously calculated through Jesus' legal father, Joseph (traditionally the genealogy would be traced through the father's line), while because Jesus is God's Son physically and does not have a natural father (Matt. 1:25 speaks of Joseph taking Mary as a wife; "...and he kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and He called His name Jesus.") the list in Luke is traced back through Jesus' mother

Mary's line. By necessity these lists would vary, at least in the immediate ancestry. Both, however, are descendants of David, from the tribe of Judah, from which the Messiah was to come; the prophet Micah foretells in Mic. 5:2, "And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a leader, who will shepherd My people." How could these authors of the New Testament have remembered Christ's many statements, as well as the many details of his life so accurately as to record them in exact agreement with each other? In part, they told and retold the stories to the early church. Jesus, however, gives the overarching reason in Jn. 14:26 when he says that God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, would guide them and remind them: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things, and will bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." This concept of God's Spirit working through men in writing the Scriptures will be dealt with below. The Bible is internally consistent in its historical and geographical reporting as well, as will be shown.

Third, source reliability attests to the Bible's validity. As we have seen, the Jewish faith, the Israelites of today, and the Christians both consider what the Christians call the Old Testament as God's Holy word. Since the foundation of Christianity by Christ at about A.D. 30 to the present the Jews have had their Hebrew copies of the Scriptures, Old Testament, and Christians have had their copies (Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and eventually English) as a rule separate from each other, (since the two groups are opposed in beliefs); yet today the Jewish and the Christian copies are the same, word for word. We have here in Christianity an amazing example that has taken place in history of a system like the business accounting ledger system, a system which acts as a verifying record in a business. In business accounting, in order to assure accurate record keeping, for purposes of elimination of error and/or dishonesty on the part of a clerk, the ledger is kept as a record to maintain and double check the accuracy of the other accountancy books. This is the same principle we see here with the Old Testament of the Bible! The Jews of Judaism (non-Christians) have themselves had a multitude of copies of the Old Testament for the last 2,000 years. Regarding these copies of their Bible as God's Holy word, they would never by any means allow people of another belief, such as Christians (or anyone else), to come in and change any parts of their Bible (say, for example, to rewrite a few prophecies of the coming messiah so that they might match up with the actual events of Christ's life - although, importantly, the concept of this type of behavior clearly has not been warranted by the founders of Christianity). **They have for 2,000 years kept their Bible secure from any possible tampering of people of other beliefs. This Jewish Bible, which we have in existence today, is in a sense a ledger for the Christian Old Testament (and of course, the Christian Old Testament is a ledger for the Jewish Scriptures as well). And guess what: A perfect match! The Christian Old Testament and the Jewish Bible are the same, word for word!** The Jewish Bible demonstrates the Christian Old Testament to be an exact account of the Scriptures, complete with messianic prophecies, back to the days before Christ; the Christian Old Testament is a remarkably reliable document; the Christians have not changed or altered the Old Testament in the least through these 2,000 years, but have faithfully preserved it complete even through the various language translations of the manuscripts: Perfectly

accurate through the language translations, perfectly preserved through time. And as indicated, and crucially, this verification works in both directions, the Christian Old Testament demonstrates the faithfulness of the Jews in regard to preserving their Scriptures. The fact that both the Christian Old Testament and the Jewish Bible are identical demonstrates a long term but random historical picture regarding Jewish practice and tradition: The high value placed by the Jews on Scripture as God's word and as writings which are not to be changed or tampered with, but preserved, honored, and protected. **And because of this 2,000 year picture, or example, of the Jewish commitment and success in perfectly preserving their Scriptures (from the time of Christ to A.D. 1999), we are able to have strong confidence in, and in reality no reason to doubt, the accuracy and preservation of this same body of Scriptures, the Jewish Bible (and in effect, the Christian Old Testament), during the its first 1,500 years of its existence, before the arrival of Christ (1500 B.C. to Christ's arrival).** And this is especially so since this attitude of the Jews about their Scriptures came from those Scriptures themselves: Ps. 119:89, "Forever, O Lord, your word stands firm in heaven;" Is. 40:8, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever;" Deut.8:3b, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." This supreme value, and accurate preservation, of Scriptures is very deeply rooted in the Jews' history. Is there any additional evidence to verify the Old Testament's source reliability during its existence before Christ? There is: For example, scholars have shown that "In 144 cases of transliteration from Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, and Moabite into Hebrew, and in 40 cases of just the opposite, or 184 in all, the evidence shows that for 2300 to 3900 years the text of the proper names in the Hebrew Bible has been transmitted with the most minute accuracy. That the original scribes should have written them with such close conformity to correct philological principles is a wonderful proof of their thorough care and scholarship; further, that the Hebrew text should have been transmitted by copyists through so many centuries is a phenomenon unequalled in the history of literature."²³ Putting it all together, these deeply rooted teachings of the Jewish Bible regarding the value and preservation of God's word, combined with our accountancy-style ledger system of separate but identical Jewish Bible and Christian Old Testament, a miracle of history giving us a 2,000 year random picture of the absolute success of the Jews in living out the above scriptural teachings, perfectly preserving their Scriptures, plus the historical record of the comparative texts, gives us not only a phenomenal evidence of the reliability of the Jews in perfectly preserving their Scriptures, but more importantly an amazing evidence for the absolute reliability of the Old Testament for its entire life; the first 1,500 years as well as the last 2,000 years; from its conception 3,500 plus years ago to today! Additionally, and of great importance, this demonstrates that the prophecies concerning Christ in the Christian Old Testament were there before Christ arrived and could not possibly have been fabricated.

Turning to the New Testament, when we compare source reliability of the New Testament documents with the source reliability of other documents of antiquity, we find that the case for New Testament reliability; its accuracy to the original authors' texts, is phenomenal, in fact, unparalleled! "There are 5,300 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament...No other document of antiquity even begins to approach such numbers

and attestation. The *Iliad* by Homer is second with only 643 manuscripts that still survive."²⁴ Additionally, besides number as attestation, "In no other case is the interval of time between composition of the book and the date of the earliest manuscript so short as in that of the New Testament."²⁵ The earliest extant manuscripts of the New Testament come to within a little over 200 years of the original writings.²⁶ This time space is nothing compared to the time space between most classical authors and their earliest manuscripts available today. The text of the seven extant plays of Sophocles come from manuscripts written over 1400 years after the author's death!²⁷ "To be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested to bibliographically as the New Testament."²⁸

Fourth, the Bible's reputation and track record as being a flawless source for historical and geographical data of the ancient Middle East and even the world attests to its validity. **This is crucial: To this date, the Bible has always proven to be correct regarding historical figures, events, and geographic locations, whether pertaining directly to Israel or to a foreign historical figure (such as a king) or place.** Occasionally archaeologists or historians are unable to locate or verify the existence of a place or person reported in the Bible, or they make discoveries which appear to refute or contradict the Bible, but what always happens is that given time, as new information surfaces, the Bible is shown to be correct. A perfect and very recent example, and one of countless examples, of where the validity of the Bible has been pessimistically questioned and then vindicated as new evidence emerged is demonstrated in the following article quoted in entirety from *Time Magazine*, 16 Aug., 1993 edition: "The Bible says David slew Goliath and went on to found a dynasty that ruled the ancient land of Israel. But no corroborating evidence for the story ever surfaced - until now [1993]. An Israeli archaeologist has uncovered an inscription near the Syrian border that refers to the House of David. Biblical scholars have termed the find 'sensational.'"²⁹ David is a prominent figure in the Bible; he wrote many of the Psalms, and is spoken of in, for example, I and II Samuel, I Chronicles, and the New Testament. Yet somehow up to 1993 there was no other known evidence of his existence outside the manuscripts of the Bible. Was the Bible wrong, or, alternately, was the Bible teaching a myth? As we see above from *Time Magazine*, and as is always the case regarding Biblical data, not on your life! Notably, it has also been published that about the same time as the above discovery of the inscription (early 1990's) there was actually an additional discovery of a reference to the House of David on an ancient artifact called the Moabite Stone.³⁰ Nelson Glueck, a Jewish archaeologist, and one of the world's leading archaeologists, said, "No archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference."³¹

Literary scholars, Christian and non-Christian, recognize the Bible as an authoritative and accurate body, at least historically, relying on it as an accurate record of what people said and did and when, what events occurred and when; and geographically, accurately supplying locations of places, things, and events. For example, if we look up "James" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica's Micropaedia* (condensed encyclopaedia) and go to "James, Son of Zebedee" (one of Christ's twelve original disciples), the *Encyclopaedia*

Britannica tells us he was born in Galilee, and died c. A.D. 44 in Jerusalem, his martyrdom being recorded in Acts 12:2.³² The encyclopaedia goes on to say, "As a member of the inner circle, James witnessed the raising [from the dead] of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37, Luke 8:51), the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2), and Jesus' agony in the garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33, Matt. 26:37)." Notice first of all how the editors of the encyclopaedia, who are literary and historical scholars and experts, cite several events in James' life, and with each event they have included the citation of the biblical passage which is their source for that event. What needs to be documented here is how the cited events are and are not treated by the experts: These events are reported by the editors as accurate historical events, sourced from the Bible, and, as reported, are considered by the experts as trustworthy accounts; no doubt of source reliability is expressed (not in this quote nor in the entire section devoted to this James; see endnote and consult text in context to verify, if necessary). But this is only the beginning; notice second of all what some of the material of the above quote and its cited passages deals with: A dead girl being raised to life by Jesus, and Jesus being transfigured (Mk. 9:2b,3: "And He was transfigured before them; and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them;" this event referring to God glorifying Christ at one point to strengthen the faith of the disciples). These events are by no means common, everyday events, but instead are clearly spectacular miracles! And here we have the unbiased experts (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* is a secular publication, not predisposed toward Christianity) clearly treating these miraculous biblical events as reliable, accurate accounts of historical occurrences! Jesus probably did raise Jairus' daughter from the dead! Jesus' probably was transfigured! **The experts' treatment of the Bible here and in other cases implies that it is reliable and trustworthy even in regard to its reports of the miraculous and extraordinary.** The example of James the Son of Zebedee was used here, but other biblical characters and events can similarly be referenced from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* or other encyclopaedias to verify these points. To demonstrate the distinction the above editors make in regard to ancient literature dealing with Christ which they do not regard as accurate and trustworthy, the following quote is given from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; "...the extra-canonical (outside of the Bible) literature tradition about Jesus, which is marked by legendary features and tendencies, have some points of contact with the sayings of Jesus in the canonical (within the Bible) Gospels...The *Coptic Gospel of Thomas*...is an example of such extra-canonical literature...It is of no use as a source for the historical Jesus."³³ While in their professional judgment the editors find that the Bible can be used as an accurate source, there are certain ancient documents, even pertaining to the same subjects, which they find clearly cannot.

Fifth, the validity of the Bible is affirmed by its outstanding characteristics of the content of its teachings. Actually, just about every point we have discussed above could be considered an 'outstanding characteristic' of the Bible, something which clearly separates it from ordinary literature and demonstrates its superiority and/or phenomenal reliability and accuracy. Additionally, however, since the Bible claims of itself to be God's word given to men so that we can believe in God (Rom. 10:17; "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ"), and so that believers can know God (Jesus said in Jn.

8:31b,32; "If you abide in My word, then you are truly My disciples, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."), and so that believers can do God's will (II Tim. 3:16,17; "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."), as part of its validity as the word of God, it should definitely be able to demonstrate itself as having the outstanding characteristic of being a superior guide and authority on morality and on man's relationship to God also. Does it? The following two examples say that it does: The first, the Golden Rule spoken by Christ, says, "Whatever you wish that men should do to you, do so for them, for this is the law and the prophets," Matt. 7:12. This teaching of Christ is generally considered to be the most profound (therefore golden) moral teaching of all moral teachings in the world in regard to man's relationship with his fellow man, even by other religions of the world. Some argue that this teaching existed in other cultures and religions before Christ. This is not true, however. The negative form of this rule, "Do not do anything to anyone that you would not want done to you," had long been annunciated by Chinese, Hindu, and Greek philosophers, as well as being in Jewish inter-testamental literature in Jesus' day, but Jesus was the first to put it in the positive!³⁴ "The positive formulation in the mouth of Jesus surpasses the negative formulation of previous teachers just as far as 'to help and to benefit' surpasses 'not to injure.'"³⁵ The second example of the Bible's outstanding moral content is the Ten Commandments found in Ex. 20:1-17. These Ten Commandments of the Old Testament are widely recognized by many cultures and religions, in all or part, as a strong basic moral standard for man regarding right relationships to his fellow man and to God. Additionally, the depth of the moral teaching of the Ten Commandments is even more profound when it is considered that it came into existence at a quite early point in recorded history, sometime between the fifteenth and thirteenth century B.C.

Finally, the Bible says of itself that it is accurate and without error, being God's word. And as we have seen from the above powerful confirmations of the Bible's validity and trustworthiness, it is not only proper to take a look at what the Bible says about itself, it would be intellectually unfair and improper not to do so. Paul says, "All Scripture is inspired by God, and profitable for training, reproof, and correction; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work," II Tim.3:16,17. While physically written by men, all Scripture is authored by God's Spirit. Peter says, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God," II Pet. 1:20,21. As God's word, it follows that the Bible would demonstrate the character of God. Does God lie? According to the Bible, no: "Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man, that He should change His mind," I Sam. 15:29. Does God make mistakes? According to the Bible, no; "For I proclaim the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He," Deut. 32:3,4. God's works are perfect; he does not make mistakes, and he does not lie, therefore we can depend on his word as the truth. How did Jesus regard God's word in the Old Testament? When debating with the Jews, Jesus quoted Ps. 82:6 in the Old Testament and then asserted about it, "...the Scripture cannot be broken" (Jn. 10:35b),

indicating that God's word is without error. When Jesus was tempted, he continually quoted Scripture to answer the devil. In refuting one temptation he quoted Deut. 8:3, shown in Matt. 4:4, "But he answered and said, 'It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word which proceeds from the mouth of God."'" Jesus not only saw Scripture as without error, but absolutely necessary for life spiritually. Referring to his own teachings in the New Testament, Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away," Mk. 13:31. God's word, the Bible, is eternal, perfect, and absolutely essential for our spiritual life and eternal well-being.

The Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments above clearly demonstrate the Bible to be authoritative in area of moral and spiritual, or God-focused teachings. With regard to the depth and superiority of the Bible's teachings, however, those two examples only "scratch the surface," as will be seen in further examination of the depth and superiority of Christ vs. the other teachers, in a separate section. Nevertheless, keeping in mind these superior teachings, as well as the Bible's perfect historical and geographical record (evidenced most strongly in the existence today of the Jews and Christians, as well as its record of being a flawless source for scholars), its excellent source reliability, its consistent internal agreement (40 authors over a period of 1500+ years, and yet virtually no contradictions in teaching or data), and its own testimony of itself as being true and without error, what statement are we able to make regarding the validity and accuracy of the Bible? We can be sure of the Bible and its validity; we can have strongest confidence possible in the Bible and that what it says is the truth. The Bible is valid, the Bible is accurate, it is "model" as far as its demonstrated ability at passing our tests for literary reliability. This confidence in the validity and trustworthiness of the Bible is a crucial foundation necessary as we examine the further claims and assertions of the Bible.

We are now able to proceed with examining prophecies of Christ of the Old Testament and their fulfillment by Christ in the New Testament. Similarly, we will also look at types of Christ from the Old Testament (a type being a 'model;' a person or thing which is a foreshadow of a person or thing to come). (It should be noted that fulfilled prophecy is itself an astounding confirmation of the above discussed validity of the Bible; i.e., God's word is shown to be true as prophecies years later accurately take place just as God's word said they would.) As we begin to see from these prophecies how Christ is truly different from other religious leaders, which is our primary goal here, we will also see some amazing things that Christ went through for us. Jesus taught that His primary mission here in this world was to give His life for us: Mk. 10:45; "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." But it was more than this one act that he went through for us. He suffered rejection, humiliation, physical abuse and torture ("So His appearance was marred beyond any man," Is. 52:14b), all of his friends denied him, he was considered forsaken by God, and finally, crucified. And yet he knew ahead of time it was going to happen, and he went through it anyway, out of love for us. Jesus said to his disciples on the night of his betrayal, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends," Jn. 15:13. He has demonstrated his love for us. It is up to us to respond. The following list will give first the nature of the prophecy, then the Old Testament Scripture containing the

prophecy itself, and then at least one New Testament fulfillment by Christ of that prophecy. This list of prophecies and types is by no means exhaustive, since there are many more of each.

Fulfilled Prophecies by Christ in the Bible:

The Messiah, a descendant of Abraham, is said to be for the whole world:

Gen. 22:18; **"And in your seed shall all the families of the earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed my word."**

Fulfillment by Christ:

Acts 13:47; "For thus the Lord has commanded us, 'I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles [non-Jews by natural birth], **that you should bring salvation to the end of the earth.**"

Gal. 3:16,28,29; **"Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'and to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'and to your seed,' that is, Christ...There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise."**

A great prophet like Moses is coming:

Deut. 18:15; "The Lord will raise up a prophet like me from among you, from among your countrymen, and you shall listen to him."

Fulfillment by Christ:

Jn. 5:45,46; "Do not think I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of Me."

Lk. 24:27; "And beginning with Moses and the prophets, He explained all things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."

The Messiah to be born in Bethlehem:

Mic. 5:2; But as for you, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans for Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be a ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago; of eternity."

Fulfillment by Christ:

Luke 2:8,9a,10,11,15-17; "and in the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night...and an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to them,...And the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord...And it came about when the angels had gone away from them

into heaven, that the shepherds began saying to one another, 'Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.' And they came in haste and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger."

The Messiah (Christ) will be born of a virgin, and will be known as 'God with us.'
Is. 7:14 "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and **she will call His name Immanuel.**" ('Immanuel' is translated 'God with us!')

Fulfillment by Christ:

Lk. 1:26,27,31,32,34,35: "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in he said 'Hail favored one! The Lord is with you....Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end. And Mary said to the angel, '**How can this be, since I am a virgin?**' And the angel answered and said to her, '**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.**'"

The Messiah will be called God, and there will be no end to his reign.
Is. 9:6,7; "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us,...and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, **Mighty God**, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace, and there will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over His kingdom."

Fulfillment by Christ:

Jn. 20:28; "**And Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and My God!'**"

Heb. 1:1-4; "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the world. **And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.** When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of Majesty on high; having become much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they."

Rev. 1:5a,17b,18; "...**Jesus Christ**, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, **the ruler of the kings of the earth... 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the**

last, and the living One; I was dead, and behold, I am alive again forevermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades.'"

The Messiah's mission will be to bring good news and proclaim freedom to the captives. Is. 61:1,2a; "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because **the Lord has anointed Me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to the prisoners;** to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord...'

Fulfillment by Christ:

Mk 1:15; "**He came...saying, 'The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel.'**"

Mk. 2:9-12a; "'Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your pallet, and walk'? But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,' **He said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, rise, take up your pallet, and go home.'** And he rose...'"

Mk. 5:28,29,34; "For she thought, 'If I just touch His garments, I shall get well.' And immediately the flow of blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction...And He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.'"

Jn. 8:4,7b,9a,10b,11; "**...they said to Him, 'Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act.'**...He said to them, 'He among you who is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' And when they heard it, they began to go out, one by one... Jesus said to her, 'Woman where are they? Did no one accuse you?' And she said, 'No one, Lord.' **And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you; go your way, and from now on sin no more.'**"

Mk. 10:45; "**For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.'**"

The Messiah will come humble, on a donkey.

Zech. 9:9; "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you, He is just and endowed with salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey..."

Fulfillment by Christ:

Mk. 11:7,9; "And they brought the colt to Jesus, and put their garments on it; and He sat upon it...And those who went before, and those who followed after were crying out, 'Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

The Messiah will inaugurate a new covenant.

Jer. 31:31-34; **"Behold, the days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,** not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord. 'But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the Lord, 'I will put My Law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And they shall not teach again each man his neighbor, and each man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the Lord, 'For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.'

Fulfillment by Christ:

Lk. 22:19,20; "And having taken some bread, when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' **And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.'**"

The Messiah, the founder and foundation of the new covenant, will be rejected by the leaders of his own people.

Ps. 118:22; "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes."

Fulfillment by Christ:

Jn. 1:10-12; "He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not receive Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name..."

Heb. 9:13-15a; "For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of flesh, how much more will blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant..."

The Messiah will be betrayed by thirty pieces of silver, which will be given to the potter. Zech. 11:12,13; "And I said to them, 'If it is good in your sight, give Me my wages, but if not, never mind!' So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as My wages. Then the Lord said to me, 'Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them..."

Fulfillment by Christ:

Matt. 26:14-16; "Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests, and said, 'What are you willing to give to me to deliver him up to you?' And they weighed out to him thirty pieces of silver.' And from then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Him."

The Messiah will be struck down, his followers will desert him.

Zech. 13:7; "'Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man, My associate,' declares the Lord of hosts, 'Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered, and I will turn My hand against the little ones.'"

Fulfillment by Christ:

Matt 26:55,56; "At that time Jesus said to the multitudes, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.' Then all the disciples left Him and fled."

The Messiah will be mistreated.

Is. 50:6; **"I gave my back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck My beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting."**

Fulfillment by Christ:

Mk. 15:16-18; "And the soldiers took Him away to the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort. And they dressed Him up in purple, and after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; and they began to acclaim Him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' **And they kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting at Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him.**"

Matt. 27:26; "Then he released Barabbas for them, **but Jesus he scourged [whipped] and delivered over to be crucified.**"

The following prophecies, until otherwise cited, are exclusively from the two Old Testament chapters of Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. Both of these chapters in their entirety are considered to be Messianic prophecies, i.e., prophecies of Christ, because of their predictive nature and the way in which their numerous descriptions and events were precisely fulfilled by Christ. Additionally, **Christ quoted the first phrase of Psalm 22 when He was on the cross, and Ps. 22:16b says, "They have pierced My hands and My feet."** Psalm 22 was written by David between 1100 and 1000 B.C., or about **1100 years Before Christ!** And Isaiah was written between 740 and 700 B.C. All of Isaiah 53 is included below, as well as key passages of Psalm 22.

The Messiah will be acquainted with grief and sorrow, and will be despised and rejected, considered forsaken of God:

Is. 53:1-4; "Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He had no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. **He was despised and forsaken of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves considered Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.**"

Fulfillment by Christ:

Lk. 22:63; "**And the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him and beating Him**, and they blindfolded Him and were asking Him, saying, 'Prophecy, who is the one who hit You?'"

Lk. 23:33-37; "And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right, and the other one on the left. But Jesus was saying, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. And the people stood by, looking on. **And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, 'He saved others, let Him save Himself, if this is the Christ of God, His chosen One.'** And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, and saying, 'If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!'"

Jn. 11:32b-35; "Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, '**Lord, if You had been here my brother would not have died.**' When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her, also weeping, **He was deeply moved in his spirit, and was troubled**, and said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to Him, 'Lord, come and see.' **Jesus wept...**And Jesus raised his eyes, and said, 'Father, I thank You that you heard Me...' And when He had said these things, **He cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth.'** He who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings; his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'

The Messiah will be despised by and a reproach of the people, and considered forsaken by God:

Ps. 22:1,2,6-8; "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me? Far from My deliverance are the words of My groaning. O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer, and by night, but I have no rest...But I am a worm, and not a man, a reproach of men, and despised by the people. All who see Me sneer at Me; they separate the lip, **they wag the head, saying, 'Commit Yourself to the Lord, let Him deliver Him, let Him rescue Him, because He delights in Him.'**"

Fulfillment by Christ:

Matt. 27:39,43; "And those who were passing by were hurling abuse at Him, **wagging their heads,...`He trusts in God, let Him deliver Him now, if He takes pleasure in Him;** for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

The Messiah will suffer abuse and will have his hands and feet pierced, his garments will be taken, and lots will be cast for them:

Ps. 22:16-18; "For dogs have surrounded Me; a band of evildoers has encompassed Me; **they pierced My hands and My feet.** I can count all My bones. They look, they stare at Me; **they divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots."**

Fulfillment by Christ:

Jn. 19:23,24; "The soldiers, therefore, when **they had crucified Jesus,** took His outer garments, and **made four parts, a part to every soldier** and also a tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. They said therefore to one another, '**Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it,** to decide whose it shall be;' that the Scripture might be fulfilled, 'They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.'"

We have gone our own way, but the Messiah is to be a sacrifice for our sins:

Is. 53:5-6; "**But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way,** but the Lord caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

Fulfillment by Christ:

Jn. 19:17,18b; "They took Jesus therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of the Skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha. **There they crucified Him..."**

I Jn. 4:10; "**In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."**

I Pet. 2:24,25; "**And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross,** that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for **by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep,** but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."

The Messiah will be silent before his accusers, his burial will at first be along with transgressors, but will have to do with a rich man ultimately, and he will be without sin:

Is. 53:7-9; "**He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth;** like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for this

generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of My people to whom the stroke was due? His grave was assigned to be with wicked men, yet with a rich man in His death; although **He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth.**"

Fulfillment by Christ:

Jn. 19:8-9; "When Pilate therefore heard this statement, he was the more afraid; and **he entered the Praetorium again, and said to Jesus, 'Where are you from?' But Jesus gave him no answer.**"

Mk. 15:27; "And they crucified two robbers with Him, one on his right, and one on His left."

Matt. 27:57-60; "And when it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man came to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given over to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance."

Jn. 8:46, (Jesus speaking); **"Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak the truth, why do you not believe Me?"**

Heb. 4:15; **"For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."**

I Pet. 2:21-23; "For you have been called for this purpose, **since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously...**"

Because the Messiah is to sacrifice himself even to the death, the Lord will prosper him and reward him (the resurrection in view here):

Is.53:10-12; "But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; **by His knowledge the Righteous One, my Servant, will justify many, as He will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.**"

Fulfillment by Christ:

Phil.2:5-11; "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond servant and being made in the likeness of men. **And, being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**"

Rev. 1:5b,6; "To Him [Jesus] who loves us, and has released us from our sins by His blood, and has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; **to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**"

The Messiah will rise from the dead:

Ps. 16:10; "For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay."

Fulfillment by Christ:

Matt. 28:5-7; "And the angel answered and said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who has been crucified. He is not here, for **He has risen, just as He said.** Come, see the place where He was lying. **And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead;** behold, He is going before you into Galilee, and there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."

The Messiah will be raised on the third day:

Hos. 6:2; "**He will raise us up on the third day,** that we may live before Him."

Fulfillment by Christ:

Luke 24:15-32; "And it came about that while they were conversing and discussing, **Jesus Himself approached, and began traveling with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.** And He said to them, 'What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?' And they stood still, looking sad. And one of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, '**Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of these things which happened here in these days?**' **And He said to them, 'What things?' And they said to Him, 'The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened.** But also some of our women amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body they came,

saying they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive. And some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it exactly as the women had said; but Him they did not see.' And He said to them, 'O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He would go farther. And they urged Him, saying, 'Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.' And He went in to stay with them. And it came about that when He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. **And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him**, and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?'"

The Messiah will have the ultimate victory over all enemies, and his kingdom will not be destroyed!:

Dan. 2:44; "And in the days of those kings **the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.**"

Fulfillment by Christ:

Rev. 11:15b; "**The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.**"

Rev. 20:10; "**And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.**"

Rev. 21:6,7; "And He said to me, 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be My son.'"

The Messiah, the Son of Man, will have an everlasting dominion for every people, nation, and language:

Dan. 7:13,14; "I kept on looking in the night visions, **and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming**, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. **And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion** which will not pass away; His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed."

Fulfillment by Christ:

Mk. 14:61b,62; "...Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?' And Jesus said, **'I am, and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.'**"

Rev. 7:9, a vision of Heaven given to John; "After these things I looked, and behold, **a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb [Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God], clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands, and they cry with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.'**"

The date of the Messiah's arrival is given in the Old Testament:

Dan.9:25; "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress."

Fulfillment by Christ:

This prophecy of Daniel was written in 530 B.C. Messiah the Prince refers to Christ. About 72 years after the book of Daniel was written, in 458 B.C., King Artaxerxes issued a decree, appointing Nehemiah to restore Jerusalem³⁶ (Ezra 7:7,ff). Taking each 'week,' or 7 days, to symbolize 7 years in this passage (the precedent in the Bible for this 'weeks of years' symbolism, where a 7 day week symbolizes 7 years, comes from Lev. 25:8), the 7 weeks + 62 weeks, or 69 weeks total given in the passage would be a total of 69x7, or 483 years. According to the passage, the time of the issuing of the decree to restore Jerusalem, until the arrival of Christ (Messiah the Prince) would be **483 years from 458 B.C., which would be in the A.D. 25-26, the time of the commencement of Christ's ministry on earth!**

The Messiah provides salvation as a free gift!:

Is. 55:1,2; "**Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy, and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.** Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance."

Fulfillment by Christ:

Rom. 6:23; "**For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**"

Rev. 22:13,16,17,20,21; "**I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end...**I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star.' And the Spirit and the bride say 'Come.' And let the one who hears

say, 'Come.' **And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost."**

Rev. 21:6,7; "And he said to me, 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be My son.'"

Fulfilled Types:

In Genesis 22, Isaac is a type of Christ. God has promised Abraham that from him he will make a great nation through his son, Isaac. God now tests his faith in this promise by asking Abraham to sacrifice his son as an offering:

Gen. 22:1,6-13; "Now it came about that after these things, that God tested Abraham and said to him, 'Abraham!' And Abraham said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I tell you.'...And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son!' And he said, 'Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?' And Abraham said, 'God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' So the two of them on walked together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there, and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. But an angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Do not stretch your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him, for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.' Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up as a burnt offering in the place of his son."

Analysis and Fulfillment by Christ:

Isaac was a type of Christ: Just as Abraham, a father, offers his only son Isaac as a sacrifice, so God the Father offered his only Son Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" Rom. 8:32; "...but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time; sat down at the right hand of God," Heb.10:12.

The lamb is a type of Christ: Looking at the text we notice that Abraham said to his son, "God will provide for Himself a lamb..." John the Baptist in Jn. 1:29 says of Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!" God fulfilled Abraham's word by providing Jesus, the ultimate lamb of sacrifice for all mankind.

The ram was a type of Christ: We see that the ram that was used as the actual offering in the Genesis narrative was caught in the thicket by its horns. This can be taken as a secondary type of Christ, in that Christ had on his head a crown of thicket, or thorns, by the soldiers just before his offering up of himself on the cross! "And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and arranged Him in a purple robe," Jn. 19:2.

In Exodus 12, the Passover lamb is a type of Christ, and the Passover itself is a type of the new covenant inaugurated by Christ and symbolized by the Lord's Supper; the new covenant being prophesied of in Jer. 31:31-34. The Passover feast was instituted by God for Israel, who were slaves of Egypt, as a sign that a plague of judgment sent to the Egyptians from the Lord would **pass over** the homes of the Israelites, not harming them, affecting only the Egyptians. Ex. 12:1-3,5-7,11-13; "Now the Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 'This month shall be the beginning of months for you. Speak to the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household...Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or the goats. And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight. Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two door posts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it...Now eat it in this manner: With your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste - it is the Lord's Passover. For I shall go through the land of Egypt on that night, and I will strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments - I am the Lord. And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.'"

Analysis and Fulfillment by Christ:

The Passover lamb was a type of Christ: **Every house in Egypt where a lamb was sacrificed in the manner prescribed by God escaped the judgement of the death of the first-born from the plague.** Because by faith the Israelites offered the lambs, God accepted the lambs as symbolic sacrifices to him, and therefore accepted the Israelites; and the believing Israelites were saved from the death and destruction of the plague. In the new covenant inaugurated by Christ in the New Testament, **Christ is the sacrificial lamb of God which was offered up by God himself for our sins, and which we, too, must personally acknowledge by faith as the one time sacrifice for our sins.** As we place our trust in Christ the Lamb of God as the sacrifice for our sins, we will be saved from the judgment of eternal death and saved to eternal life; "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God," Jn. 3:18. The Egyptians were judged already, before the plague had even arrived; but the Israelites were not judged because of their faith in the lamb of God, a type of the true **Lamb of God, Jesus!**

The Passover was a type of the new covenant: Further confirming the above concept of the Passover lamb as a type of Christ, the New Testament tells how Christ established the Lord's Supper, which first took place on the eve of Passover: "And He said to them, 'I have earnestly desired to share this Passover with you before I suffer,'" Lk. 22:15. "And while they were eating, He took some bread, and after a blessing He broke it; and gave it to them, and said, 'Take it; this is My body.'" And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them; and they all drank from it. And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is to be shed on behalf of many," Mk. 14:22-24. As we stated, this Lord's Supper took place on the eve of the Passover; **Christ** was arrested that night and **was crucified on the day of Passover!** This timing can be none other than prophetic: **Hundreds of years to the day after the Israelites, through the symbolic sacrificial lambs which they offered in Egypt, were saved from death, God provides the true sacrifice, Jesus Christ, who saves us from eternal death! The significance of this timing is monumental. The Passover was central to the Jewish faith. God's judgment on the Egyptians from this plague was what convinced Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave from slavery and to become a free nation for the first time in their history!** (Ex. 12:30,31; "And Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead. Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night, and said, 'Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the Lord, as you have said.'") This demonstrates the faithfulness of God, especially to the Israelites, but to everyone, in giving such a sure sign as confirmation that Christ is the mediator of the new covenant. And in addition to this, just as the Israelites were to eat the lamb "in haste," so Christians are to take the Lord's Supper, the bread and the wine, which symbolizes the body and blood of Christ, the Lamb: Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me," Lk. 22:19, and, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day," Jn. 6:54. The Passover of the Old Testament and of the old covenant was a foreshadow of the new covenant, based on Christ's "blood of the Covenant." **This is firm and sure evidence for the Jews and for all that the God of the Jewish Passover and of the God of the Old Testament is the God of Christ and of his new covenant.**

The blood on the door posts was a type of the method of God's sacrificial offer for our sins: In the Exodus account above God tells the Israelites to put some blood on the two door posts and the lintel (crossbeam). Two swaths on the sides and a swath across the top would cross each other at the corners where they meet, forming a cross on each side of the doorway. Therefore each Israelite family had the sign of the cross on each side of the doorway of their house, foreshadowing the cross of Christ at His crucifixion.

Muslim Claims of Fulfilled Prophecies by Muhammad in the Bible

As Christians claim, and as we have seen evidence for above, that prophets of the Old Testament prophesied of the coming of Christ, and that Christ did in fact fulfill these, so Muslims scholars claim that Old Testament prophets prophesied of the coming of Muhammad, that he would be a prophet of God, and that Muhammad also fulfilled these. These claims of the Muslims will first of all be dealt with in this paper because it is our goal is to see how Christ is different than these other teachers, and therefore by examining the Muslim claims of prophecy we can show that they are without substance, while those of Christ are quite substantial, and second of all they will be dealt with thoroughly because once these claims are examined it becomes so utterly apparent that they are totally in error as to make it within the scope of this paper to completely refute and put to rest any notion of there being any substance whatsoever of prophecies of Muhammad or his claims of prophethood in the Bible. It should also be pointed out that since Muslims do claim the Bible as their historical, and in part, spiritual, foundation, and the God of the Bible to be the God of Islam, the Bible is their only legitimate source for prophecies, and in general they do not claim otherwise (with rare exceptions, which will be pointed out below). Also dealt with here will be a refutation of the claims of Muhammad and Muslims that Islam has any legitimate roots in the Bible or Judaism and Christianity, or that Allah is the God of the Bible. Importantly, as we begin, it is the hope that any Muslims who read this discussion know that the God of the Bible loves Muslims and all men, and does not desire that anyone perish; but instead, he "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth," I Tim. 2:4. Jesus said, "I am the Truth."

With regard to every one of these supposed prophecies and/or Bible verses claimed by Muslims to be prophecies of Muhammad, either one or more of the following apply: 1) they have already been fulfilled in a more precise manner by Christ; 2) they are so vague and inspecific as to be applicable to just about anyone (contrary to what we have seen in the above prophecies of Christ), or are simply references to people and places and cannot really even be construed to be prophetic; or, 3) are completely misinterpreted.

Muslims present, as part of their argument for a true Biblical foundation and basis for Islam and its beliefs, a didactic argument regarding Abraham's son Ishmael, stating that the descendants of Ishmael (in a large part, modern-day Arabia) as God's nation of promise from the Old Testament in addition to Israel. However, there is no biblical ground for this argument; in fact, the Bible clearly teaches the opposite, that only Israel was God's chosen nation. To review, as stated at a previous point in this paper, Abraham had been given a promise from God to be blessed, to be a great nation through a son from his own body, and that through this promised nation, to somehow be a blessing to all the nations of the earth; Gen. 12:2,3b: "'And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing;...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" Muhammad's and the Muslims' didactic argument given above, that according to the Bible Isaac's descendants Israel, and Ishmael's descendants (now) Arabia, were **both** called as nations of God's above promise to Abraham, can be examined first of all by looking at the Bible text itself; it says, "a great nation," 'a' as in **one**; the promise is singular regarding the number of nations. In Gen. 17, God then makes it abundantly clear through which son will be the promise; his

everlasting covenant with Abraham is through Isaac, as can be seen here, as God first initiates the covenant with Abraham, then specifies through whom it will be established: "Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and I will multiply you exceedingly.' And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, 'As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I will make you a father of a multitude of nations.'...Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, 'Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?' And Abraham said to God, **'If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!' But God said, 'No, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.** And as for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. **But my covenant I will establish through Isaac,** whom Sarah will bear to you at this time next year,'" Gen. 17:1-5,17-21. And in Gen. 21:12b God reiterates through whom the promise is made: **"...through Isaac your seed shall be called."**

There is no room for argument of interpretation here. The Bible clearly states that it is the descendants of Isaac, and not of Ishmael, through whom his covenant with Abraham would be and through whom are the promises of Gen. 12. Could it be eventually transferred over to Ishmael? Again, 'No,' as God says in v.13, this covenant with Isaac is "for an **everlasting covenant for his descendants [Israel] after him.**" What Muslim scholars do here is attempt to blur this clear distinction by referring to Arabia (Ishmael's descendants, in part) also as the "called," or "promised" nation, implying equal footing with Israel. But if we look at the above texts, we see a vast difference. Out of love for Abraham God says he "hears him" in his plea, and promises to make Ishmael a great nation. However, the covenant nation, the nation of the promised blessing to "all the families of the earth" (Gen. 12:1-3), is Israel alone. Abraham, because he was ninety-nine years old and was doubting that God is able to give him yet another son, asks that the promise of Gen. 12 might be fulfilled through Ishmael, who was already born at that time. In v.19, what was God's answer? 'No.' Two nations were foretold of, but only one, biblically speaking was, or could ever be, the called covenant nation of the promise; Israel, from Isaac. God said, "Through Isaac your seed shall be called." **Ishmael, and his descendants after him (i.e., Arabia and therefore Muhammad), did not have or receive any kind of special calling or covenant from God, nor was one implied in the future; in fact it was explicitly ruled out** (except in the sense that, as with everyone else, being one of the "families of the earth," God's plan was and is to bless them through his chosen covenant nation Israel (Gen. 12:3)). Amazingly, Abraham had six more sons after Isaac, and some of these also became great nations (the Midianites, for example, from Abraham's son Midian)! But the fact that a nation comes from a son of Abraham does not qualify it to be the called, covenant nation. For a nation to be "called," someone has to "call" it. To be a "covenant" nation, someone has to establish a covenant with it.

Paul says in Rom. 9:4,5, "...Israelites [descendants of Isaac], to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." Isaac was the only one to be called and receive a covenant from God, and it was an **everlasting covenant**, meaning that God would never revoke it; **it would always be with the Israelites**. What about today, 4000 years later; is God keeping his part of the "everlasting" covenant? Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you," Lk. 22:20b; he also said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them," Matt. 5:17; **the covenant with the Israelites is still in place through Christ, an Israelite**, and the new covenant of Christ. Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the God's laws of the Old Testament, and **the new covenant superceded**, without abolishing or revoking, **the covenant with Isaac**. Paul puts it like this in Gal. 3:26,28,29: "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus...**There is neither Jew nor Greek**, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, **for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, and heirs according to promise.**" The covenant is still in place in Christ! And, God's promise to Abraham to bless all the families of the earth is faithfully fulfilled in Jesus! What are the implications of all this with regard to Islam? The implications are profound. Muslim claims of a special calling/covenant status similar to Israel's in the Old Testament we have seen are totally contrary to Scripture. According to the Bible, there is absolutely no possibility of this special calling or covenant status of Ishmael and his descendants (modern-day Arabia) before God. Muhammad is a false prophet, the Qu'ran is not from God, and the Allah of the Qu'ran is clearly not the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible keeps his promises. He made an everlasting covenant with Isaac (Israel), and according to the New Testament, 4000 years later his word is still good. According to the Muslim faith, we would have to accept that God went back on his word. In fact, according to the Bible, there is no possibility of further prophets in the sense of men being called to deliver God's message in written form as Scripture, or God's inspired word, as the Bible claims of itself. Heb. 1:1,2a says, "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in many diverse manners. But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son..." In Jude 3 Jude urges us to "**contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints**"! There will be no more prophets bringing new Scriptures; the God of the Bible has delivered us his full gospel in Christ **once for all**; there are no new messages or revelations to come. Christ is it! Listen to the Bible: "For in Christ all the fullness of Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority," Col. 2:9,10. We have everything we need in Christ and in the New Testament; no further "word of God" is coming, nor is any needed. The Bible does talk about the New Testament church having prophets; "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, ...to another miraculous powers, to another prophesy..." I Cor. 12:7,8a,10a; but "this new manifestation of prophesy was (and is) not so much foretelling the future as forth-telling the meaning of God's redemptive work through Jesus the Messiah;"³⁷ these prophets are within the body of Christ, the Christian church, whose

message of God (Scripture) has been delivered "once for all to the saints" in Christ. As above, these facts have profound implications for the Muslim faith: From this careful study of the Bible texts, we have basically removed the foundation out from under Muhammad and Islam. Muhammad and his prophecies as God's word to us are unbiblical and false. The very Scriptures Muhammad leaned on to base and support his teachings, the Bible, do not support, but instead strongly negate, Muhammad and Islam.

Here is the good news (gospel) for Muslims and all the families of the earth: While most of us were not born Israelites by physical ancestry, **we can all be spiritual Israelites;** Muslims, Arabians, Americans, Asians, Africans, and **everyone can become an heir of the promised blessing given to Abraham, by putting our faith in Christ,** becoming children of God and heirs ultimately of eternal life. "You are now sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus...If you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise...you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise," (Gal. 3:26,29, 4:28). Only through Christ, through the everlasting covenant of the Israelites, is God's eternal blessing available to us.

To more firmly establish this bedrock point, that a relationship with God is, and forever can only be, available through Christ, and that Muhammad is a false prophet and Islam is not from the God of the Bible, we will take a brief look at the chief prophecies of Muhammad which Muslims claim point to him in the Bible. To refute arguments that there are biblical prophecies about Muhammad's coming and mission, we will start with the Old Testament and move to the New Testament, examining the main verses Muslim scholars put forth as specifically prophetic regarding Muhammad. (It is interesting to note that Muslim scholars also point to prophecies about Muhammad in the Qu'ran supposedly spoken by Jesus, as supportive evidence for Muhammad and his mission; but since these prophecies were written by Muhammad (in other words, Muhammad prophesying about himself!) - as acknowledged by Muslims - it is impossible to consider these as acceptable evidence for our purposes here). With regard to every one of these supposed prophecies and/or Bible verses claimed by Muslims to be prophecies of Muhammad, as previously stated, either one or more of the following apply: 1) they have already been fulfilled in a more precise manner by Christ; 2) they are so vague and inspecific as to be applicable to just about anyone (contrary to what we have seen in the above prophecies of Christ), or are simply references to people and places and cannot really even be construed to be prophetic; or, 3) are completely misinterpreted.

Muslim scholars point to Deut. 18:15 as probably their chief example of an Old Testament prophecy of the coming Muhammad. Moses is speaking: "'The Lord your God shall raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your brothers, you shall listen to Him.'" Although many prophets have come after Moses, all scholars generally agree that in this prophecy Moses is foretelling of prophet who would be distinguished from others. Muslims argue that while the word 'brothers' here could refer to the Israelites' own people, it could also refer to the Arabs, descended from Ishmael, Isaac's brother, and that in this case it does refer to Ishmael and the Arabs.³⁸ Also, Muslims state that when Moses states this prophet would be "a Prophet like me," that

Muhammad was in fact like Moses, while Jesus was not, therefore this prophecy was speaking of Muhammad, and not of Jesus, as Christians claim. They state, for example, that both Moses and Muhammad brought a 'law,' Jesus did not; also, both Moses and Muhammad fought physical battles against their enemies, and both had a family with children; while Jesus did not experience either of these aspects; therefore, this coming prophet could only be Muhammad, they reason.³⁹

Nevertheless, Muslims are greatly mistaken regarding all of these points and more. First of all, because Moses in this passage is speaking to the nation of Israel, which is made up of the twelve tribes, or sons of Israel, who were all brothers, the 'brothers' translation would give a natural understanding for the hearers of Moses' address, and for us today, as of being a fellow brother in their own nation; an Israelite.⁴⁰ In fact, some versions of the Bible translate this word 'countrymen,' eliminating the Arabs as a consideration. Following the Muslim line of reasoning, and stretching the word 'brothers' to imply some relative outside of the entire Israeli tribe, the brother of Israel was Esau, not Ishmael. Ishmael was Israel's father's brother, or Israel's uncle, not Israel's brother. The term 'brothers' here would be incorrect, or at very least inspecific and inferior; the term 'uncle,' or 'second cousins' would be the appropriate options. This point is solidified when we look at the text where it says 'from among you.' The Ishmaelites did not dwell among or anywhere near the Israelites, nor did they have strong ties with each other. Ishmael was sent away and separated from Isaac (and therefore Israel) as a youth: "But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had born to Abraham was mocking and she said to Abraham, 'Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son shall never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac,'" (Gen. 21:9,10). The two nations had been distanced for several hundred years now; 'from among you' could only mean what we can clearly read for ourselves that it means; from among or within their own nation Israel, 'from among you, from your brothers.' Christ was an Israelite 'from among' them, from their 'brothers,' Christ is the only fit here. Second, regarding the allegedly exclusive similarities between only Moses and Muhammad, Muslims fail to see the truth about Christ here as well: Christ did bring a 'law,' the 'law of Christ;' "Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ," Gal. 6:2. In James 2:8, James also refers to Christ's law; "If you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well." The royal law is the king's law, and Jesus, according to the Scripture, is the King of kings: "...and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is the Lord of lords and the King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful," Rev. 17:14b. Jesus said, "Do to others as you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets," Matt 7:12b; this is the royal law above, extended and improved upon by Christ, also known as the Golden Rule. Jesus also fought a physical battle for us; he physically laid down his life for us on the cross, conquering sin and death for us (I Cor. 15:54a,55), and Jesus also has a family with children; Christians are the children of God; Christ says, "Here I am with the children God has given Me" (Heb. 2:13b). Third, not only is Jesus like Moses in every way Muslims claim Muhammad was, and more, being a 'brother' Israelite 'from among' them, the key to determining once and for all who Moses was referring to when he foretold that this prophet would be "a prophet like me," is to determine what Moses

meant by "like me." As stated, there were prophets that came before Moses, and many prophets that came after Moses. **What characteristic do we find in Moses as a prophet of God that clearly distinguished him from all other prophets? To find out, why don't we ask Moses himself?!** Moses, in Numbers 12:6-8a of the Bible, spoke the following word of God to the people: "Then He [God] said to the people, 'Hear now my words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house; I speak to him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the Lord.'" Moses himself (and God too, since this is God's word) signifies the distinguishing characteristic of his own prophethood as having a close personal relationship with God himself, meeting with him 'face to face' and speaking directly with God, rather than through dreams, visions, inspirations, or angels. This is the way in which Moses was superior to every other prophet, knowing God and his will more closely, enabling him to be a more supreme prophet and leader of God for the people. There is only one other prophet who can claim this kind of face to face direct personal relationship with God: Jesus Christ! Jesus, the Son of God, being equal with God, came from the Father in heaven, and came to earth in the form of a human being. Christ's relationship to the Father was so close that they were One in essence; Jesus said, "I and My Father are One," Jn. 10:30. Jesus had been with the Father from all eternity, and had continually seen him face to face; he said of himself, "Not that anyone has seen the Father except He who is from God; He has seen the Father," Jn. 6:46, and Jesus prayed to the Father while on earth, "And now, O Father, glorify Me with the glory I had with You before the world was," Jn. 17:5. This special relationship of Christ with God, being the Son of God who is equal with God, was even foretold in the Old Testament, in Is. 9:6 (and other places), "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given...He shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." This direct personal relationship with God, as Moses said himself, is the key distinguishing characteristic of Moses' prophethood, shared only by Jesus, making the two of them superior to every other prophet; more closely knowing God and his will. Muhammad did not have anything close to this type of relationship to God. According to Muslims, Muhammad received his revelations, which were later to become the Qu'ran, **by means of an angel. Muhammad fails the stipulation put forth by Moses himself** regarding the distinguishing characteristic of the prophet to come; this prophecy could not have been about Muhammad, it could only apply to Christ.

In light of the uniqueness of Moses and Christ as prophets, the New Testament then makes a comparison of the two, demonstrating the superior glory of Jesus over Moses: "Therefore holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses was faithful in all His house. For this One has been counted as worthy of more glory than Moses inasmuch as he who built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house, as a servant for a testimony of those things which would be spoken of afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end," Heb. 3:1-6.

While both Christ and Moses were distinguished from every other prophet by means of their face to face relationship with God, Christ is clearly distinguished here from Moses; Moses was the servant of God, Jesus is the Son of God; Moses was created by God, Jesus is the Creator God. As stated, and further confirmed by the New Testament, this prophecy was fulfilled by Christ, Muhammad is not an option.

Muslims make another argument regarding Isaiah 42, specifically vs. 1-4, 10, 11; the passage reads: "Behold My Servant whom I uphold; my chosen One in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry out or raise His voice, nor make His voice heard in the street. A bruised reed, He will not break; a dimly burning wick, He will not extinguish; He will not be disheartened or crushed, until He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law...Sing unto the Lord a new song, sing His praises from the end of the earth! You who go down to the sea and all that is in it. You islands and all who dwell on them. Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voices, the settlements where Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing aloud, let them shout for joy from the tops of the mountains." There are several points where Muslims attempt to link this passage with Muhammad. First of all, they point out that the general language fits some of what Muhammad accomplished; he claimed to be a servant of God, and he worked to further the cause of justice. Secondly, v.4 speaks of a 'law.' They claim that this passage cannot be referring to Christ, because he did not bring any new law; Muhammad, however, did. Next, they claim that in v.10, where it says to sing a 'new song,' this really is referring to a new style of worship or praise, rather than as it reads, a 'new song.' Finally, Muslims argue that of the various localities exhorted to praise the Lord (v.10,11; from the end of the earth, ...the wilderness, the settlements where Kedar inhabits, the inhabitants of Sela,...etc.), the fact that Kedar, a people descended from Ishmael, is mentioned here, indicates that the Servant of which the passage speaks must be Muhammad.

Taking these arguments one at a time, it is true that with the general language this passage could fit, to a small degree, Muhammad's accomplishments. Many would argue this passage could fit some of President Clinton's accomplishments as well (stretching it a bit!). The language is very general; there are few specific events or characteristics, unlike what we have seen in various of the prophecies that Christ fulfilled. As stated, Muslims claim that the 'law' mentioned in v.4 was brought by Muhammad (the Qu'ran), but Christ brought no specific law, therefore, the passage could not be a prophecy of him⁴¹ (as Christians claim). But Jesus did bring a law as we have seen, the law of Christ. Regarding v.10, where the prophecy speaks of singing a 'new song;' there is nothing to support the claim that this is referring to a new style of worship; the word in the text is 'song,' and 'song' actually fits best here. God is proclaiming a new work (v.9; "Now I declare new things; before they spring forth I proclaim them to you." Therefore God is encouraging his people to get excited about this new work, to have an excited attitude, with praising and singing; "Sing a new song, sing His praise!" And Christians all over the world do just this! Muslims state this is referring to the new style of worship that was introduced with the coming of Islam; specifically the chanting of the call for prayer.⁴²

But Muslim scholars acknowledge that the word 'sing' which is in fact used here in the text is not the same word as 'chant',⁴³ and that **it is also against the Muslim faith to sing!**⁴⁴ **Think about it: Would God give a prophecy commanding people to celebrate and sing about a new upcoming revelation He is to give forbidding singing!?** **Absurd!** Christians, on the other hand, are exhorted to worship God with "psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, making melody in your hearts to the Lord," Eph. 5:19. The Muslims would be better off not to even bring up this passage, it applies specifically to Christ and his church. The last issue is that Kedar, a descendant of Ishmael, is mentioned as one in a list of seven peoples and locations in this prophecy who should praise the Lord. There is nothing whatsoever in the text to link Kedar or any other of the people or places with the origin of the Servant spoken of; God is simply calling on peoples in the distance to look and see the amazing new things he is doing. And God quite often does proclaim things to other nations: Ps. 87:3,4, for example; "Glorious things are spoken of you O city of God. I shall mention Rahab and Babylon as those who know me; behold, Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia: "This one was born there.'" Also, Ps.72:10,11; "Let the kings of Tarshish **and of the islands** bring presents; the kings of Sheba and **Sela** offer gifts; let all the kings bow down before Him, all the nations serve Him."

Up to this point there is really nothing substantial to link this passage to Muhammad rather than to any number of great leaders, except possibly that he is known for bringing a 'law,' the Qu'ran, but Jesus brought the law of Christ. Now let us put this passage into proper perspective, and see who it is really about. The first line says it is about God's Servant. This passage is one of a series of Servant Songs in Isaiah, the others being in Is. 49, Is. 50, Is. 52, Is. 53 (which we looked at in detail above in the prophecies which Christ fulfilled: The Servant who was pierced through for our transgressions; his grave was assigned with a rich man in his death; there was no deceit found on his mouth; etc.). The number of prophecies fulfilled precisely by Christ in the Servant Songs firmly establish Christ as Isaiah's Servant of the Lord. "The messianic interpretation of the Servant Songs clearly follows the precedent set by Jesus and the apostles. The identification of the Servant of Yahweh (the Lord) with Jesus the Messiah is evident in a comparison of parallels between the accomplishments of Jesus and the Servant."⁴⁵ The identity of the Servant of Isaiah's writings as the Messiah is firmly established in history, being the most common view even of the Jews before Christ's arrival.⁴⁶ Matthew, in the book of Matthew in the New Testament applies this prophecy to Jesus (Matt. 12:17-21). The new thing which God is going to do, and which he wants "the ends of the earth" to praise and sing about (v.9,10), is the good news of Christ, the coming Messiah and Servant. God wants everyone, far and near, to know about the Messiah, because he is to be a blessing to all the families of the earth. Eight chapters later, in Is. 49:6, another Servant Song, God says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light to the nations, so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth." In Acts 13:42 Paul correctly applies this passage to Christ. Christ also received the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16; "And He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon Him."), taught and brought justice, and did not raise his voice before his accusers (Matt.

26:62,63a). This is clearly a prophecy of Christ; **Jesus has a clear historical precedent as the Servant of the Lord** in Isaiah; **Jesus was in fact the ultimate servant**, dying for us, and Jesus fulfills it far more precisely than Muhammad (to whom it actually does not apply, since singing is against the Muslim faith), the entire message being an exciting announcement of Christ's coming, and one of a series of announcements by Isaiah of the coming Messiah, which are the Servant Songs.

A surprising argument that Muslims put forth as an indication of a prophetic connection of Muhammad with the Bible is that the repeated mention of the name of Kedar in the Bible, the people descended from the second son of Ishmael, coupled with the fact that Ishmael was a son of Abraham, is "very clear," convincing evidence that Ishmael had some special status before God.⁴⁷ We will not reiterate the arguments that Israel is the only called, covenant nation; this has been established. As stated, it is surprising scholars would even attempt to use this as part of their argument. An exhaustive search of all the places in the Bible which mention the name of Kedar yields twelve. Two are in genealogies, in three Kedar is mentioned in passing, and five places are laments or prophecies **against** Kedar, and two are examples of God reaching out to the nations, as in Is. 42:11 above. None of these in any way signify or imply any kind of special status of Kedar with God. Additionally, if the frequency in mentioning the name of the descendants of a son of Abraham had anything to do with that people's status before God, **Abraham later had a son named Midian, and there are 67 references to this son and the nation which came from him in the Bible!** Compared to Kedar's twelve times, this nation at 67 would surely rank guru status! They fit the qualifications of the Muslim scholars: They are descended from Abraham, and have their name mentioned many times in the Bible! Clearly, this is an absurd argument. The Philistines are mentioned 252 times in the Bible, and the Egyptians, 610 times. Should we consider them as having a special status before God? The answer is no, nor should we the Midianites, nor Ishmael and his descendants, who are the Kedarites and the Arabs. **This is the criteria: God calls, God establishes the covenant.** And He has done this, but only with Israel, permanently, through Christ, available to all of us, including any Muslims who are ready to make a change, by faith in him, trusting in him only, as Lord and Savior, for salvation.

The final Old Testament passage we will deal with here which Muslims claim is a prophecy of Muhammad is Is. 21:13-17. The passage is as follows: "The burden against Arabia. In the forest in Arabia you will lodge, O you traveling companies of Dedanites. O inhabitants of the land of Tema, bring water to him who is thirsty; with their bread they met them who fled. For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, from the bent bow, and from the distress of war. For thus the Lord has said to me: 'Within a year, according to the year of a hired man, all the glory of Kedar will fail; and the remainder of the number of archers, the mighty men of the people of Kedar, will be diminished; for the Lord God of Israel has spoken it.'" Muslim scholars assert that this passage, referring to Arabia and the Kedarites, (of whom Muhammad, founder of Islam, is descended) speaks of a civil war between two groups of Kedarites, one oppressing the other, the oppressed group being aided by a neighboring tribe of Temanites, and were not defeated. They then state that this is what happened to the group of Kedarites led by Muhammad; they were

persecuted by fellow Kedarites, aided by Temanites, and were not overcome by their oppressors. Therefore, they state, this is a prophecy in the Bible of Muhammad and his call by God to prophethood and to announce a new revelation of God.⁴⁸

However, Muslim scholars have erred on several crucial points. First of all, curiously, they do not bring up the Biblical reference, right there in the passage, to **the name** of the oppressed tribe: "the Dedanites!" There is a reason they do not mention these people; the Dedanites, the tribe actually oppressed according to the Bible, were a tribe of Arabians who existed and were **separate from** the tribe of the Kedarites, and were not known as Kedarites!⁴⁹ But Muhammad and his oppressed group were actually Kedarites, the tribe that this passage says was actually doing the oppressing! Obviously, there is a conflict here, at least with the Muslim version of this passage. According to the Bible, this passage could not be about Muhammad's oppressed group of Kedarites; it is a prophecy about a different oppressed tribe of Arabs, the Dedanites. And history does indeed confirm that this prophecy was in fact exactly fulfilled by two separate Arab groups, the Dedanites and the Kedarites, soon after Isaiah prophesied it, about 700 B.C.,⁵⁰ 1200 years before Muhammad's existence; these Dedanites were oppressed by the Kedarites, they received aid from the Temanites, and were not overcome by the Kedarites. This passage is not a prophecy of Muhammad's group, it was already exactly fulfilled 1200 years previous. Second of all, not only does this passage historically not fit Muhammad's group, crucially, it also is a prophecy having as its focus the struggles of two tribes of Arabs, and nothing more! The Bible text title says, 'The Burden *Against Arabia*;' the text itself identifies its object and subject - a nation, Arabia, and a difficulty it will face! It does not deal with, speak about, or even allude to, an individual whatsoever, much less a 'leader,' much less a 'coming prophet!' When the passage we are focusing on does not deal with, mention, or even figuratively allude to an individual, and in fact states just the opposite, it is impossible to apply it to an individual. This prophecy does not in the furthest stretch of imagination apply to Muhammad as an individual, much less tell us anything about his supposed prophethood. And yet listen to what Islamic Dr. Jamal Badawi says of this very passage: It is "one of the most amazing prophecies in the Bible regarding the coming of the prophet Muhammad."⁵¹ The Muslims' best prophecy in the Bible regarding their claims of Muhammad's coming and prophethood has been historically confirmed to be erroneously applied to him, and crucially, is not even regarding an individual at all. Contrast this with the many prophecies of Christ we have seen; Is. 53, Ps. 22, and others, each first of all dealing with an individual, the Messiah, and each having numerous details and specific characteristics of the Messiah and his coming. The only conclusion we can arrive at here is no Old Testament basis for Muslim claims of Muhammad's coming nor is there any basis to his claims to prophethood.

Up to this point, we have not seen any prophetic Scripture that in any significant way points to Muhammad or his claims to be a prophet as its object. The message about the coming Prophet in Deuteronomy is directed to the Israelites themselves, with Christ being the only prophet who was actually **like** Moses, with a personal relationship with God. The Servant in Is. 42 can be none other than Christ. Frequency of names, and even, as a rule, physical descendancy is of no avail regarding a covenant with God; God calls, God

establishes the covenant. And applying the Is. 21 prophecy to Islamic history would be historically erroneous, and moreover, since it has a group of people as its object, it cannot be applied to some imagined unstated individual. These are all Old Testament prophecies, the chief ones Muslims put forth regarding Muhammad; turning to the New Testament to examine Muslim claims there of prophecies of Muhammad, there is really only one argument Muslims put forth for prophecy of Muhammad; but numerous Scriptures are cited to support this one argument. The basic argument is that the Advocate, or Helper (Greek: paracletus) foretold by Jesus, whom Jesus identified as the Holy Spirit, was actually prophecy of Muhammad. Below are several of the cited passages:

Jn. 14:16,17; "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot see because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you."

Jn. 14:26; "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."

Jn. 15:26a; "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who goes out from the Father, He will testify about Me..."

Jn. 16:7b; "...for if I go away, the Helper will not come to you, but if I go, I will send Him to you."

Jn. 16:13; "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own initiative but whatever He hears He will speak; He will disclose to you what is to come."

As stated, these references of Helper and Counselor continually described by Jesus Muslims claim are prophecies by Christ of the coming of Muhammad.⁵² They argue that these references to the Helper, and others, use the masculine pronouns (he, him, etc.) which do not fit the profile of a spirit,⁵³ therefore must refer to a human being and not a 'spirit.' This person, therefore, is Muhammad. But the Scriptures consistently teach that the Holy Spirit is a person, not a thing: He can be grieved; Eph. 4:2; "...do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God...;" he can be lied to; Acts 5:3; "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...?" and he can teach; I Cor. 2:13; "...taught by the Holy Spirit." So the Holy Spirit is correctly referred to as a 'he;' the Bible is consistent in the practice (you will not find the Holy Spirit referred to as an 'it' anywhere in the Bible), and consistent in the teaching. In addition, in almost all of these passages, **this Helper is identified as the Holy Spirit.** Is there a question about who the Helper is? Literary rule #1 in finding answers: Read the text! For example, in Jn. 14:6, Jesus says, "The Helper, **the Holy Spirit**, whom My Father will send,..." Here and elsewhere Jesus blatantly identifies the Helper as the Holy Spirit! It is not some mystery prophet, such as Muhammad, as Muslims claim, but the Holy Spirit. Some Muslim scholars will argue

that all the places where Jesus identifies the Helper as the Holy Spirit in the New Testament texts are interpolations (i.e., inserted into the original text at a later date), but the evidence demonstrates this to be an impossibility. As demonstrated previously, the Bible, the New Testament included, is the most reliable book we have. Its internal agreement, source reliability, and moral content are without peer, leaving the New Testament undeniably trustworthy down to the word. The text says the Helper is the Holy Spirit, and the text is correct. In addition to the text, the context refutes Muslim claims as well. When Jesus foretells in various instances of the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jesus says that he, Jesus, will be **sending** the Holy Spirit to his disciples, as demonstrated in the quotes of Jn. 15:26a and Jn. 16:7b above. Almost without exception in life the one who is higher in rank or authority does the sending of the one who is lower in rank. Yet, as we mentioned in our earlier summary of the Muslim faith, according to the Islam faith, Muhammad is the greatest and highest ranking of the prophets.⁵⁴ If Jesus is a lower ranking prophet than Muhammad, why then would Jesus be authoritatively sending Muhammad to accomplish certain tasks? And why would Muhammad's chief tasks be to bring to the disciples' remembrance all that Jesus had told them, as Jesus said in Jn. 14:26, and to testify to them about Jesus, as Christ stated in Jn. 15:26a? If Muhammad is the highest ranking prophet (as Islam teaches), wouldn't his own mission and teachings be the focus, rather than to focus on Christ's accomplishments and teachings, as these passages demonstrate will be the job of this coming Helper? These and other New Testament texts simply do not allow the possibility of the Muslim's interpretation of the Helper as being Muhammad. Also, not only do the text and context refute Muslim claims of the Helper being a prophecy of Muhammad, documented history demonstrates the Muslims' error as well; the Holy Spirit came, just as Jesus said he would: In each of the above New Testament passages, the context is the Last Supper, the first Lord's Supper; that night Jesus is to be arrested, and Jesus is aware of this. Therefore, he is beginning to get his disciples ready for ministry on earth for the long term, after his resurrection from the dead and his return to Heaven. He is informing them that while he will not be there in bodily form, the Holy Spirit will come to help them. He is therefore prophesying of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Then, on the day of Pentecost, shortly after Jesus' ascension into Heaven; "...they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance," Acts 2:1-4. The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost is so fundamental to Christianity, it is referred to as the "birthday of the church of Christ."⁵⁵ At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came in a whole new way, bringing a "new era for the world, a new power of righteousness...and a new basis of fellowship."⁵⁶ After Jesus' resurrection, in his last appearance to the disciples, which was at the time of his return to heaven, he spoke to the disciples according to this passage in Acts 1:4,5: "And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, 'Which,' He said, 'you heard from Me; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'" So although the disciples had seen the risen Lord at this point, it was not yet the right time for them to go out and

spread the message of Christ to everyone. The right time was on Pentecost, upon receiving the promised Spirit, and this is why Pentecost is usually considered the church's birthday. Additionally, this coming of the Holy Spirit is an event so firmly established in God's plan that it is even prophesied of in the Old Testament! In the same passage in Acts 2 above, on the day of Pentecost, where the Holy Spirit comes, Peter preaches to the bystanders that it is the Holy Spirit who is giving the disciples the utterance of tongues, and he quotes the Old Testament prophet Joel (Joel 2:28ff), demonstrating that this pouring out of the Holy Spirit is a partial fulfillment of what Joel had prophesied, Acts 2:16,17a; "but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: "'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'that I will pour forth my Spirit upon all mankind...'" Note also the language of this Old Testament prophecy passage; the Spirit is "poured forth" upon all mankind; with language like this, this prophecy is not referring to a flesh and blood human being, but the Spirit, as it says! Other Old Testament prophets, including Isaiah, in Is. 32:15, also speak of the coming of the Spirit. **The Holy Spirit's (Helper's) coming was not only prophesied by Christ and clearly identified by Christ to be the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit's coming was also prophesied by Old Testament prophets; and all of these prophecies were fulfilled; the Holy Spirit did in fact come, in a big way, fulfilling these promises of Christ, Joel, and others. The above prophecies by Christ of the coming Helper could not possibly even in the farthest stretch of imagination be speaking of Muhammad; the text, context, history, and fulfilled Old Testament prophecy make the Holy Spirit our only option.**

We have taken a thorough look at Muhammad's and Islam's claims of biblical prophecies and a biblical foundation for Islam, we have seen that according to the Bible, there is clearly only one nation called as God's covenant nation, to be a blessing to the nations, Israel, and this is an everlasting covenant which God is in fact still being faithful to through the promised Israelite Messiah Jesus Christ, and that because of the very nature of this being an everlasting agreement ("for the gifts and the calling are irrevocable," Rom. 11:29), neither Arabs, nor Muslims, nor anyone else can claim any special called covenant status with God except in the sense of submitting to God's original new covenant with Israel through Christ and becoming a "spiritual" Israelite (a Christian). We have seen that there simply is nothing of substance to the Muslim claims of prophecies in the Bible of Muhammad, in the New or Old Testaments, most of them being far more precisely fulfilled by Christ or the Holy Spirit, the rest not considerable as prophecy. Putting all this together, from a biblical standpoint, Muhammad's claims to be a prophet from the Bible, and that the God of Islam is the God of the Bible, are an impossibility. Muhammad's teachings, his "revelation" of the Qu'ran, blatantly contradict the Bible, and could not be from the God of the Bible. However, Muslims can also take a look at these Scriptures in the Bible, and they have, so how is it that they, even with all this obvious evidence to the contrary, continue to maintain that Muhammad is a prophet, having biblical roots? The answer is that the Muslims assert that the Bible has been corrupted.⁵⁷ In this way they are able to use any Bible verses which support their teachings, calling them accurate, but reject as corrupted any verses which contradict the Qu'ran and its teachings. This is why Muslims, while asserting a biblical foundation for Islam, reject the Bible's clear teachings of Christ as the crucified and resurrected Son of God, stating He

was merely a human prophet. While this method is very convenient, it also about as inconsistent as one can get, and terrible literary scholarship. And in answer to this, as we have seen, the Bible is the most reliable book on earth. Its internal agreement in teaching and data is excellent; it has proven itself to be, and is considered by the experts to be, a flawless historical resource, and its moral teachings are without peer. So which text is in error, the Bible, or the Qu'ran? A study of the Qu'ran reveals that one of the first revelations Muhammad received (now in the Qu'ran) told him that if he had any doubts about those revelations and the revelations about to be given him, that he should consult Christians! The Qu'ran says, "'And if thou [Muhammad] art in doubt concerning that which we reveal unto thee, then question those who read the Scripture [that was] before thee,' (Sura 10:95, Pickethall)"⁵⁸ "The learned doctors of Islam are sadly embarrassed by this verse, referring the prophet, as it does, to the people of the Book (Jews and Christians), who would solve his doubts."⁵⁹ The Muslims, while asserting that the Bible is corrupt rather than the Qu'ran being in error, are faced with the Qu'ran itself asserting the Bible and those possessing it to be the superior and authoritative source. Also, in Sura 2:136 and in other places of the Qu'ran, Muslims are instructed that both the Bible and the Qu'ran are to be considered authentic, both are valid revelations from God.⁶⁰ Could the Bible have been corrupted after these Qu'ranic endorsements were made, as some Muslims try to argue? As we stated in the Bible validity section, **the earliest manuscripts of the Bible available to us today date back to before Islam came into existence!** Therefore all the assertions made by the Qu'ran endorsing the Bible as it existed then were endorsing the same Bible we have today! Moreover, the Qu'ran also says, speaking of both the Bible and the Qu'ran, "The words of the Lord are perfect in truth and justice; there is none who can change his words," Sura 6:115.⁶¹ Here, and in other places, **Qu'ran reaffirms the authenticity and unchangeability of the Bible.** (The Bible also affirms itself to be forever the unchangeable and reliable word of God; "Forever, O Lord, Your word stands firm in heaven," Ps. 119:89.) So Muslims have a dilemma; the Qu'ran gives contradictory teachings; while claiming that the Bible is the equal and even superior source, putting itself in subjection to the Bible, and that the Bible is the unchangeable truth, it then proceeds to contradict the Bible in fundamental teachings such as the identity, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. So it is clear therefore that there is nothing wrong with the Bible, instead it is the Qu'ran which demonstrates itself to be inauthentic and flawed. Unfortunately for Islam, Muhammad did not follow the advice given to him in his own "revelation" to double check his revelations with the people who read the Bible to avoid contradicting them, and therefore the resulting Qu'ran contradicts not only the Bible but itself as well.

Muslims arrived at this dilemma, we are told, because Muhammad and the first Muslims did not have direct access to the Bible in their language; they "could not read the Bible (which was) available in the Hebrew and Syriac versions...whatever Muslims learned about the Bible was based on hearsay from Jewish and Christian laymen."⁶² Muhammad, it appears, was not in a good position to double check his revelations with the corresponding passages in the Bible, and therefore, he did not. As Muslims later began to learn from the Bible directly or obtain a more precise knowledge of what the Bible actually said (such as, for example, how God made only one everlasting covenant with

one nation, Israel, and specifically not with Ishmael), they had to account for these discrepancies. Their solution was to begin teaching that the Bible had been corrupted. But as we have seen, their own Qu'ran says this is not so (see Sura 6:115 above). The Bible, it goes without saying, is without error or corruption, and it is the Qu'ran which is in error.

This paradox of Muhammad and his Qu'ran only serves to confirm what we have already seen; Muhammad is a false prophet, and the Qu'ran is a false revelation; Muhammad and his teachings are in direct conflict with the word of God, the Bible. Duet. 18:21,22, from the real word of God, gives the criteria for false prophets, for which Muhammad has just qualified, and how we should regard these false prophets: "'And you may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You shall not be afraid of him.'" In v.20 of this same passage, it says that the punishment for any living false prophet is death. As far as Muhammad and the Qu'ran are concerned, this passage teaches us that we "shall not be afraid of him." Thus from a biblical perspective, we are not to regard anything Muhammad or the Qu'ran says or let it concern us; it is false teaching and should be disregarded. If Muhammad did in fact receive some kind of 'revelations,' and didn't just invent his teachings himself, we can be confident they were not from God, but from the devil, and Muhammad was deceived; "And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light," II Cor 11:14. From a general perspective, if we have not yet decided and are looking for truth, the evidence of the false and self-contradictory nature of the Muslim teachings demonstrates very clearly that Muhammad is not the one to whom we should look.

Christ's life, even the intricate details of his life, were accurately spoken of and written down in the historical Bible of the Jews, the Tanach, which is the Old Testament of the Bible, historically reliable as we have seen. They were precisely fulfilled in the New Testament, also historically reliable. With just about each of the prophecies of Christ we have seen, taken on their own we might not have anything of great significance; but taken together, we are presented in a single body of ancient historical literature with detailed picture of one who would come born of a Virgin, be called 'God with us,' proclaim a message of freedom of the captives, suffer on our behalf as a servant, bring a new covenant from God, be pierced through and die for our transgressions, and rise from the dead. We then see in extremely reliable historical documents dated hundreds of years in the future of the primary documents the history of one man who led this very life described, tying the entire original picture together into an awesome plan of the salvation of man by the eternal God. It is beyond the ability of man or men, here being the Old Testament prophets, to have access to this type of and this detail of information about what was for them the distant future. Where, then, did they get this information? Peter says it came from the Holy Spirit; "for no prophesy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God," (I Pet. 1:21). The Bible states, and the historical evidence backs it up, that the details of the Messiah, and likewise their fulfillment, were from God, who alone knows the future. What are the chances of it being

coincidence that these detailed prophecies were all fulfilled by the one man Christ? A study done by mathematician Peter Stoner, states that the chances of one person fulfilling just eight prophecies in the detail in which Christ fulfilled his prophecies are 1 in 10¹⁷! ⁶³ The remoteness of this probability, according to Stoner, is the same as if we were to take an area the size of Texas and fill it two feet deep with silver dollars, then take one silver dollar, paint it red, throw it in the midst of the rest of the silver dollars, stir them all up (that's right, break out the tractors and the heavy equipment, we've got a lot of coins to stir up), and then blindfold an individual, and then for him to pick out the red silver dollar the first time. The chances are virtually nil. Josh McDowell, in his book *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, lists the eight specific prophecies Stoner used in this calculation, and also supplies a quoted verification by an unbiased non-Christian mathematics committee attesting to the mathematical accuracy of the methods used by Stoner in arriving at this figure. Amazingly, it was not just eight Old Testament prophecies that Christ fulfilled, but **40 major prophecies**, and almost 300 minor ones! The chances of coincidence of one man fulfilling 48 prophecies in the detail that Christ fulfilled his 48 major prophecies? **An awesome 1 in 10¹⁵⁷!**⁶⁴

A final objection to the reliability of the above evidence of prophecies is that the disciples who wrote the New Testament could have written the New Testament accounts in a fraudulent manner, so that the events would have matched up with the Old Testament prophecies which the disciples already had in the Scriptures. (As we have seen, no alterations could have been made to the Old Testament prophecies, or in fact any of the Old Testament at all, due to the two-way "ledger" system resulting from the miracle of history of the Jewish faith and their preserved copies of Scripture identical to the Christian Old Testament.) On the surface this sounds like a strong argument, but in truth this question is just another form of the question, "Is the New Testament reliable? Can we trust the accounts of its writers which state that Christ did in fact perform the given prophetic events?"

The untouchable reputation and track record of the Bible, as shown above in our look at the validity of the Bible, answers that we most definitely can trust the New Testament accounts to be accurate and truthful. Nevertheless, there is actually an additional and amazing evidence available to us which will remove all possibility of doubt, giving final and irrefutable confirmation that the New Testament documents are absolutely reliable. We will see this evidence in the following section, "Christ Rose from the Dead," and it will be a final confirmation of the New Testament reliability, because it will be a final confirmation of the reliability of those who wrote it, completely refuting any further arguments of the possibility of fraud on the part of those writers. Nevertheless, the evidence we have already seen confirms we can trust in the eyewitness accounts of the New Testament writers as accurate and true. Therefore Jesus did in fact fulfill prophecies of the highest caliber of reliability, and being so numerous, detailed, and so precisely fulfilled by him as to basically eliminate the option of coincidence or chance, and crucially, **this is bedrock evidence demonstrates a supernatural plan with Christ at the center of that plan.** There are no such prophecies of Buddha, and, as we have seen the Muslim claims of biblical prophecies of Muhammad are false.

Christ Rose from the Dead

One of the most crucial differences that sets Christ apart from Muhammad and Buddha is that Christ rose from the dead. Muhammad lived, taught some things about life and morality, died, and is still dead. Buddha lived, taught some things about life and morality, died, and is still dead. **Jesus lived, taught some things about life and morality, died, and rose from the dead.** Why is Jesus' resurrection important? **First of all, one of the main things that all religious teachers focus on in their teachings is what happens in the afterlife (eternity). Jesus is the only one who demonstrated authority and control in this area!** He did this by rising from the dead, something neither of the other teachers, nor any other historical spiritual leader did nor claimed to do in a historically substantiated way. "Talk is cheap!" Jesus gave us far more than a bunch of words to go on as far as his genuineness and trustworthiness, **Jesus proved he was telling the truth with the resurrection; a miraculous, historical event demonstrating his power and authenticity!** Paul says in Acts 17:31; "...He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world through a Man whom He has appointed, **having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.**" It has been said, "Nothing is sure in life except death and taxes." Jesus demolished this statement by breaking the bonds of death "since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power," Peter says in Acts 2:24b. Paul quotes the Old Testament prophets Isaiah and Hosea who prophesied of this moment, saying, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" I Cor. 15:54a,55. Since death could not hold Jesus, its sting was disabled, its power conquered, by Life Himself, Jesus Christ. This is good news for all men. Even more than taxes (and usually more undesirable as well), death is the common denominator for us all. But does death have the last word? Is death the last word for humanity? According to the Bible, Christ, who said "I am the Life," gets the victory; Rev. 20:14a; "And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire." We can be assured that in the end, life conquers death, and we who put our trust in the Life, Jesus Christ, can be a part of this: "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," I Cor. 15:56,57. Jesus' victory on the cross gives us instant forgiveness for our sin in this life, giving us the power to lead a victorious changed life (eliminating death's sting), destroying death's hold (or, its victory) on us in the next life, giving us eternal life. Jesus, after rising from the dead, said, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forever, and I have the keys of death and Hades;" Rev. 1:17b,18. Jesus is the only One who has demonstrated power over death; **Muhammad, Buddha, and Jesus, and others have taught about eternity, but Christ is the demonstrated expert in the field.** And, he said he is coming again to judge the world: "For just as the lightning comes even from the east and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be," Matt 24:27.

Second of all, not only does the resurrection put Christ in a place of demonstrated authority in the area of life, death, and the hereafter, it virtually verifies all that he said; he claimed to be Lord, the resurrection verifies this; he claimed that his death would pay the price in full for our sins, satisfying God's wrath toward us; the resurrection verifies this.

And specifically, from a biblical perspective, "The resurrection expresses God's satisfaction in what Christ has done. **‘The exaltation of the person is the vindication of the mission.’**"⁶⁵ Jesus' resurrection assures us that his death for our sins was efficacious; that is, that God does in fact consider it as acceptable payment for our sins, and shows us that God is endorsing all of Jesus' claims including his claim of being Lord of all.

Evidences of the Resurrection

The resurrection has profound implications; it is the historical evidence of victory over death and the offer for us to share in this victory. For this reason, it is important for us to examine this resurrection evidence carefully. The validity of the Bible has been shown; it is trustworthy historical evidence. And we will be looking at biblical historical evidence, as well as historical evidence outside of the Bible.

The first evidence we have for Christ's resurrection is the Old Testament prophecies. The Old Testament of the Christian Bible, which is equivalent to the Jewish Scriptures, the Tanach, was in existence since before the arrival of Christ on earth. In the above section "Fulfilled Prophecies by Christ in the Bible" are listed numerous Old Testament prophecies that the Messiah would rise from the dead. Ps. 16:10, "For you, O Lord, will not abandon My soul to Hades, nor will You allow your Holy One to undergo decay," was written 1000 years before Christ, and demonstrates the coming Holy One would be raised back to life. Hos. 6:2 is an additional prophecy of the fact that the resurrection would occur on the third day, and Is. 53, written 700 years before Christ and foretelling his suffering, ends in v10-12, which foretells that after the Messiah has laid down his life for others he would "see his offspring," he will be "allotted a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong," demonstrating the resurrection. These historical documents, which we have already seen to be reliable, stated hundreds of years before the fact of the resurrection that it would occur, and are therefore a strong confirming evidence of the resurrection.

The second evidence we come across for Christ's resurrection is the eyewitness accounts of the New Testament. The resurrection appearances of Christ in Matthew's gospel are given below, and we saw a large portion of Luke's account of these appearances, as well as portions of the other writers, in the an earlier section of this paper; but it is recommended that the reader read the other three gospel accounts as well (Mark, Luke, and John); while some of the story is reported by all, each writer supplies at least some details unique to himself, and all tell an awesome story! The other gospel accounts can be referenced in Mk. 16, Lk. 24, and Jn. 20, 21. Matt. 28: "Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his garment was white as snow; and the guards shook for fear of him, and became like deadmen. And the angel answered and said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified; He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and

behold, He is going before you into Galilee, and there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.' And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to report it to his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid, go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they shall see Me.' Now while they were on their way, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. And when they had assembled with the elders and counseled together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, and said, 'You are to say, "His disciples came and stole Him away while we were asleep." And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over, and keep you out of trouble.' And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day. But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him, but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" Taking a look at this account, and the others as well, we can see that the accounts are written in a matter-of-fact manner, not as embellished "fables." The writers report what they have seen and heard, giving all sides of the event, even including telling about the disciples who doubted, and giving the details of the steps taken by Jesus' enemies to prevent "false stories" of a resurrection; take a look at the payoff of the guards above, and the attempted "security measures" of Jesus' enemies in Matthew's previous chapter: Matt. 27:63-66; "...Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, "After three days I am to rise again." Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come and steal Him away and say to the people "He has risen from the dead," and the last deception will be worst than the first.' Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how.' And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone." These reports do not read like a fable, but as genuine eyewitness testimony of what has been seen and heard. Peter says in I Pet. 1:16; "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty."

As additional biblical evidence, The New Testament eyewitnesses and authors not only report the event of the gospel, but they also repeatedly refer to the fact of it and place it as a central part of Christianity. Luke, for example, restates the fact of Jesus' resurrection and its significance as he quotes both Peter and Paul in their discourses in Acts. In Acts 2:23,24a,25a,27, Peter in his first sermon says, "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to a cross, but God raised Him from the dead...David said about Him,...'You will not abandon Me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.' Brothers, I can confidently tell you that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day...Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that He was not abandoned to the grave, nor did His body see decay." Not only is Peter

referring to the fact of Christ's resurrection to prove Christ's authenticity, Peter gives an example of where David of the Old Testament, who lived 1,000 years before Christ, prophesies that Christ will rise from the dead. As stated, the Old Testament, backs up the New Testament as additional biblical historical evidence, and not only that, but in the miraculous form of a prophecy; and the disciples, as we can see, readily make use of this evidence by quoting it! (See also Hos. 6:2b.) Additionally, and this is crucial, Paul demonstrates the resurrection to be a central tenet of the Christian faith in I Cor. 15:3,4; **"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received; that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day, according to the Scripture,..."** This is Paul's summary of the gospel message; that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose from the dead; this is the message "of first importance," which Jesus has asked Christians to take to "all the nations," and the resurrection is a central point of it. Paul says why in the same passage of I Corinthians 15, in vs. 16-20; "For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If only we have hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most to be pitied. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep." **The entire institution of Christ's church, Christianity, stands or falls on the resurrection. But that's okay, because Christ did rise from the dead!** And from the New Testament documents, we see the resurrection event even interwoven into the very message and fundamental teaching of Christianity by these disciples and eyewitnesses; and this teaching is supported by the Old Testament prophecies.

In addition to examining the New Testament accounts of the resurrection and the New Testament and the other Bible teachings of the resurrection, we can also look at the people and events, surrounding and connected with the resurrection, inside and outside of the Bible, to see if we can discover supporting evidence. Taking a look at history, we do find this evidence. We find that eleven out of the twelve original apostles gave their lives to the death for Christ and the claim that he rose from the dead. This evidence, upon being shown to be reliable, is extremely compelling evidence. This represents eleven examples of the strongest convictions for authenticity of an event that human beings are capable of showing. And it represents yet another virtually undeniable evidence of the historicity of the resurrection. The are strong words, but this evidence, along with the Bible, has the strongest of implications regarding Christ and our relationship to him. To determine the reliability of this additional evidence of the resurrection, we will need to examine the surrounding details, as well as the hypothesized alternatives. The first step involves taking a look at three things: 1) The historicity of Christ, 2) The disposition of the apostles at the precise time of, and immediately following Christ's death, and 3)The historicity of the accomplishments and martyrdoms of the apostles.

Taking a look at the historicity of Christ, from the New Testament documents we know that he was born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1a; "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem...") taught in Galilee and surrounding areas (Mk. 1:14; "And after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God."). Reading the gospels we

can find a vast amount of what he did, what he said and what he taught (and doing this is always a good idea for Christians and everyone). Finally we know that he was crucified under Pontius Pilate (Mk. 15:15; "And wishing to satisfy the multitudes, Pilate released Barrabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he delivered him over to be crucified"), and as we have seen from the above Scriptures, he rose from the dead. Outside of the Bible, we find that there is indeed additional documented evidence of Christ's existence in history.

First, we have two accounts from Josephus, Jewish historian, in his *Antiquities*, A.D. 93; "About this time there arose Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it be right to call him a man. He was a doer of marvelous deeds, and a teacher of men who gladly receive the truth. He drew to himself many persons, both of Jews, and also of Gentiles. He was the Christ. And when Pilate, upon indictment of the leading men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him at first did not cease to do so, for he appeared to them alive on the third day - the godly prophets having foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things about him. And even to this day the race of Christians, who are named from him, has not died out."⁶⁶ The second passage in *Antiquities* regarding Christ refers to the trial of James, the brother of Jesus and leader of the Christians, before the Sanhedrin. This statement of Josephus speaking of James reads, "the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ."⁶⁷

Pliny the Younger, governor of Bythinia, corresponded by letter to the Roman Emperor Trajan in A.D. 112, where he stated that "the Christians were accustomed to assemble together regularly on a certain day, and 'to sing responsively a hymn to Christ as if to a god."⁶⁸

Tacitus, a Roman historian of good repute, in his well-known *Annals*, A.D. 115, describes how the Christians were persecuted in Rome. He then gives some background on the origin of Christians: "'Their name,' Tacitus adds, 'comes from Christus [Christ], who in the reign of Tiberius as emperor was condemned to death by the procurator Pontius Pilate."⁶⁹

Another historical source is the Jewish *Talmud*, a collection of Jewish traditions; an accumulation of teachings going back to the first century, written down in the fifth century. The *Talmud* states that the founder of Christianity was born out of wedlock, learned black magic in Egypt, where he was able to perform many marvelous works to deceive the people, called himself God, was tried by the Sanhedrin, as a deceiver and a teacher of apostasy, was executed on the eve of Passover by crucifixion or stoning, and had various disciples.⁷⁰ While this data is obviously not in complete agreement with the gospel accounts, "In general they confirm early Christian tradition by giving independent - even hostile - testimony that Jesus of Nazareth really existed. It is noteworthy also that the *Talmud* refers to Jesus' powers to perform miracles (although it attributes them to his knowledge of black magic) and to his claim to be the divine Son of God."⁷¹ In the account Jesus is referred to as Ben Pandera (Son of Pandera), acknowledging the

Christian teaching of Christ being born of a virgin (Pandera being a distortion of the Greek 'parthenos,' virgin).⁷²

Although the above list is not exhaustive, the references are more than enough to on their own, apart from the Bible, establish Jesus as a historical figure who lived in Palestine in the early years of the first century, led a group of people, and was condemned to death under Pontius Pilate. The "independent accounts prove that in ancient times even the opponents of Christianity never doubted the historicity of Jesus."⁷³ It was not until shortly before the twentieth century that the first attempt was made, and inadequate at that, to deny the historicity of Christ. **"Today no competent scholar denies the historicity of Jesus."**⁷⁴ Having established the historicity of Christ; the date of his existence, the fact of his leadership of a group of followers, and his execution under Pilate, we now need to understand what Jesus' death would have meant to his apostles (as far as their understanding at the time of his death). The disciples were expecting and viewing Jesus as the long awaited Messiah and conquering king promised by God. Matthew relates, "He asked, 'Who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah,...'" Matt. 16:15-17a. Isaiah prophesying described the Messiah (Christ) as follows: "For a child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There shall be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over His kingdom..." (Is. 9:6,7a). In a passage which we have already seen, but fitting to this section, Daniel the prophet described the coming Messiah in this way: "I kept on looking into the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days, and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed," Dan. 7:13,14. And there are various passages in the Old Testament which describe the Messiah as the conquering and ultimate king, and with which these passages the disciples would have been familiar, having grown up hearing them read and taught of in their synagogues. Israel in the time of Christ was under Roman occupation. Surely their long awaited Messiah and mighty conquering king would lead them to victory over these military oppressors...

Jesus had related God's plan several times to them; the victory at this time was not to be a physical military victory for the nation of Israel (such as freedom from Roman oppressors), but it would be a victory over spiritual forces, and for all men. He said, "Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many," Mk.10:45. He also foretold his death and resurrection several times; for example in Lk. 9:43,44, Jesus, just finishing performing the awesome miracle of healing a boy of an affliction (knowing that he has their complete attention), teaches them as follows: "And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at what He was doing, He said to His disciples, 'Let these words sink into your ears, for the Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men,'" Lk. 9:44. The

following passage, Matt. 16:21,22, shows Jesus once again predicting his death, and Peter's reaction demonstrates his disciples' lack of understanding of the coming event: "From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. Peter took him aside to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.'" The verses following in this passage tell how Jesus then rebuked Peter, telling him to set his sights on God's plan, not man's. Continually Jesus tried to change their view of the purpose of the Messiah, but their lack of vision and a lifetime of tradition and teaching of a military Messiah leading an earthly army was strongly engrained. As the events of the arrest, trial, crucifixion, and death of Christ ensued, retreat and defeat is what we see. They abandoned him at his arrest; "they all left Him and fled," Mk. 14:50; later meeting in secret behind locked doors "for fear of the Jews" (Jn. 20:19b). They demonstrate their dejectedness and defeat immediately following the crucifixion by their reaction three days after Christ's crucifixion when some of their women report having seen Christ risen from the dead; "And these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them," Lk. 24:11, and also by their statement, "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel," Lk. 24:21a. They were basically blind at this point to Christ's true mission, which as he said was "to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

So to the disciples, the death of Christ, at the time of its occurrence and immediately following, was a devastating blow. The words of Christ's mockers while he was on the cross must surely have been ringing in their minds as well; "He saved others, why could He not save Himself?" Their own hopes and dreams of redeeming Israel at the side of the promised Messiah were shattered. Jesus Christ, the awesome Prophet who had raised dead people, healed the sick, cast out demons, who had taught with authority about God's love for man, about loving God and one's fellow man, who had answered every one of the chief priests tests and traps; the supposed promised Messiah, had been arrested, tried in a mock trial, beaten, whipped, crucified, and had died, right before their very eyes; and it appeared Jesus had been powerless to stop it. And in fact it was almost certain at this point that God, too, had abandoned him; he had allowed him to be convicted by the Jewish synagogue, and had done nothing to intervene in Jesus' execution. Their Scripture even said, "Cursed is every man who hangs from a tree," Deut. 21:23. There was no way a victory could come from this tragedy; or so they thought. Understanding this mindset of devastating defeat as the significance of Jesus' death for the apostles at the time of the event itself will help us to make upcoming points regarding the resurrection.

But what do the available reliable historical documents tell us actually became of these cowardly, disillusioned, and defeated men? Let us now take a look at the subsequent lives and earthly fates of these twelve disciples, beginning just fifty days after the crucifixion:

Peter, along with the other eleven disciples, fifty days after the Passover and Christ's crucifixion, was boldly preaching Jesus in Jerusalem, (Acts 2:14,22b,23,24,36b); "But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: 'Men of

Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give heed to my words...Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know - this man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power...know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ - this Jesus whom you crucified." The book of Acts tells us that Peter continued preaching in Jerusalem and was arrested with threats several times (Acts 4:3; 5:18; 12:3). At one point after being arrested and threatened by the chief priests, Peter and John replied to them, **"Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard!"** Peter founded the church in Antioch, according to early fourth century historian Eusebius, in his *Church History*.⁷⁵ Eventually Peter traveled to Babylon (no longer existing with this name; located on the Euphrates River in modern-day Iraq) to preach the gospel, where he wrote his first extant letter I Peter in the Bible (I Pet. 1:1, 5:13) in A.D. 44. Peter later also wrote his second letter of the Bible, II Peter (II Pet. 1:1). He eventually took the gospel to Rome,⁷⁶ and Eusebius puts him in Britain toward the end of his life.⁷⁷ Confirming this is a church which exists today in Britain, St. Peter's of Cornhill, founded by British King Lucius in 179 A.D., and dedicated to Peter "in commemoration of his evangelistic efforts in Britain"...The church has on its age-worn walls the "historic fact and dates by the order of King Lucius...preserved to this day for all to see and read."⁷⁸ According to John Chrysostom, fourth century Bishop of Constantinople, and confirmed by other sources, such as third century historian Jerome and ancient writer Heggisepus,⁷⁹ Peter the apostle was martyred for his faith in Christ in Rome, in A.D. 64, by crucifixion. After declaring himself unworthy to die in the same manner as his Lord, at his request, he was crucified upside-down.

Andrew, along with Peter and all the apostles, was arrested soon after the day of Pentecost for preaching of Christ, but was freed as follows; "But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates...and they laid hands on the apostles, and put them in a public jail. But an angel of the Lord during the night opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, 'Go your way, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life,'" Acts 5:17a,18-20. Andrew went on to evangelize and found churches in Scythia (South Russia), according to Eusebius, then to Byzantium where he founded a church, and finally to Acaia, Greece.⁸⁰ He was martyred by crucifixion with chords instead of nails, sentenced by Aegeas, taking two days to die, during which time he taught the people from the cross, according to ancient historian Bernard, in his *Sermon of St. Andrew*.⁸¹ Historian Newman, in 1685, reiterates this account, adding that Andrew's cross was in the form of an "X," which is now known as St. Andrew's cross.⁸² A source known as the *Acts of Andrew*, written approximately AD 260, confirms Andrew's martyrdom in Greece.⁸³

James son of Zebedee, and brother of John, after boldly proclaiming Christ in Jerusalem, was the first of the twelve to be put to death for his faith; "Now about that time Herod the

king laid hands on some who belonged to the church, in order to mistreat them. And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword," Acts 12:1,2. At the time of his execution one of his accusers came to him and begged for his forgiveness, which James gave him. The man then and there publicly professed his faith in Christ and was executed on the spot with James, according to third century theologian Clement of Alexandria.⁸⁴

Simon the Zealot, after beginning of the church, evangelized in Mauritania, and Africa, then went to Britain, where he was crucified, according to fifth century historian Dorotheus;⁸⁵ the trips to Mauritania and Africa being confirmed by Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople (758-829 A.D.).⁸⁶

Jude, also known as Thaddeus, thought to be the son of James who was son of Zebedee, went on to preach Christ in Syria, Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Persia, suffering martyrdom in Syria, according to Nicephorus Callistus.⁸⁷

Matthias, who was chosen by lot to replace the disciple Judas who betrayed Jesus ("Then they prayed, 'Lord, You know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two You have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas has left to go where he belongs.' Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles," Acts 1:24-26.), preached the gospel in Armenia, and was eventually martyred there for the Lord in Sebastople, according to Dorotheus.⁸⁸

Philip ministered to the Galatians, some of whom had previously emigrated to France, known as the Gauls.⁸⁹ Philip followed their trail and evangelized as far as France, to the Gauls and others, according to Isadore, Archbishop of Seville,⁹⁰ who states that afterward Philip returned to Hieropolis, where he was stoned and crucified for the Lord. Third century historian Jerome tells us that Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus in the late second century confirms Philip was martyred for the Lord in Hieropolis in Phrygia.⁹¹

Nathaniel, also known as Bartholomew, is confirmed by many reliable sources, including Eusebius,⁹² to have evangelized in India, as far as Southern India, leaving a Hebrew copy of the gospel of Matthew in India. According to Hippolitus, a second to third century theologian and historian, Nathaniel was present at Philip's martyrdom in Hieropolis, also being crucified; however, due to the occurrence of an earthquake and the resulting conviction of Divine Judgment in the hearts of the people there on themselves, the Hieropolis magistrates took down Nathaniel from the cross, Philip already being dead.⁹³ Nathaniel was eventually martyred for Christ in Albanople, Armenia, by order of the governor in A.D. 68, according to Hippolitus.⁹⁴ Nicephorus tells us Nathaniel cheerfully underwent his crucifixion, "comforting and confirming the convert Gentiles to the last minute of his life."⁹⁵

Matthew, according to Eusebius quoting Papias, who was a disciple of John son of Zebedee and who lived at the end of the first century, wrote the gospel that bears his name, according to second century theologian Iranaeus.⁹⁶ Matthew had a strong ministry to the Jews, his gospel emphasizing the "Jewishness" of Christ; his ancestry and the

fulfillment of prophecies, Matthew's gospel being the only one written in Hebrew. Matthew is later said to have evangelized in Persia, according to St. Ambrose, an ancient historian, and this would place the copy of the gospel of Matthew on the Indian trade route for Nathaniel to obtain and take on to India.⁹⁷ Various sources including Catholic tradition also place Matthew in both Egypt and Ethiopia,⁹⁸ and Socrates, an ancient writer, confirms Matthew's chief area of evangelism was Ethiopia.⁹⁹ Most authorities "affirm that he was painfully put to death."¹⁰⁰ According to the Talmud, Matthew was condemned to death (for his faith) by the Jewish Sanhedrin. This was most likely the Sanhedrin of Alexandria, Egypt, because an important body of Jews was there.¹⁰¹ Another ancient confirming source, also places his martyrdom in North Africa.¹⁰²

Thomas went on to do a great work in India; "It is evident that St. Thomas arrived in India no later than 49 A.D."¹⁰³ Witnessed by Dionysio, an author writing in 1578, there was existing upon his arrival to Malabar, India a church and community with a testimony of unanimous belief in the oral tradition that St. Thomas was the founder of their church and that he underwent martyrdom for it, being run through with a lance by Brahmin priests on a mountain slope while praying.¹⁰⁴ While the reliability of our earliest source for Thomas' ministry in India, the *Gospel of Thomas*, written toward the end of the second century, is considered questionable in some of its accounts, the report of Thomas' apostolate to India is taken by modern scholars to be reliable.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, several fifth and sixth century sources, such as the fifth century source, *Martyrologium Hieronimanum*, place Thomas in India and affirm his death as taking place there.¹⁰⁶ The sources and vast number of traditions even in existence today overwhelmingly confirm these as the actual events of Thomas' life.

John son of Zebedee was with Peter during several of his sermons in Acts (Acts 2:14 and 3:11), and was arrested with Peter at least twice, in Acts 4:3 and 5:18. Iranaeus, a theologian who knew Polycarp who was a disciple of John, says in one of his writings that John eventually went to Ephesus, and spent a considerable amount of time there evangelizing and as a church elder.¹⁰⁷ According to Eusebius, it was while in Ephesus that John was exiled to the isle of Patmos,¹⁰⁸ because of the testimony of Christ, as we see at the beginning of Revelation, which John received on the island from Christ, and wrote down: "I, John, your brother and fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus," Rev. 1:9. After his banishment he returned to Ephesus, and wrote the gospel of John, according to Iranaeus.¹⁰⁹ Jerome, in his work *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, confirms John wrote the gospel of John and that he later wrote I John at the request of the bishops of Asia to combat heresy.¹¹⁰ Most sources agree as to John's authorship of II and III John as well. John endured exile and other persecution for Christ, being boiled in oil as a form of torture, but surviving.¹¹¹ John continued to teach until he died of old age at age 99 in Ephesus.

James the Less, also known as James son of Alphaeus, was put in jail for his faith along with the other disciples, according to Acts 5:18. We have less historical accounts regarding the life and ministry of James the Less than the other disciples; we know from

one reliable source that after his release with the other disciples from prison, he continued to teach and proclaim the message of the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem and surrounding regions, fearing no man, and was put to death for his faith by stoning at the command of emperor Claudius.¹¹²

The above is the history and earthly fate of the original twelve apostles. To further strengthen the point to be made, included below is the history and earthly fate of three additional disciples of Jesus; Paul, John Mark, and James the brother of Jesus. Importantly, if anyone, of these three only Mark (John Mark) would have been a disciple of Jesus at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, as we will see below. For Mark and James, as for the twelve, the crucifixion of Christ would have been a first hand experience; this could possibly also be the case for Paul, but it is uncertain whether he was in Jerusalem at that time.

Paul was the most zealous of all the disciples, completing four missionary journeys throughout Asia Minor and Southern Europe, and going to Rome on the fourth, and possibly reaching Spain (see Acts 13-14, 15:36-18:22, 18:23-21:14, 23:23 to the end of Acts, and Rom.15:28 for accounts of these journeys). Paul, originally a Pharisee who persecuted the Christians (He says in Galatians 1:22,23, "And I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only, they kept hearing, 'He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.'"), made no apologies for his dedication to Christ; his goal being to "know Christ, and Him crucified," I Cor. 2:2. His devotion to Christ at all costs, even to the death (which he knew ahead of time was his destiny), was demonstrated in another of his letters, where he says in Phil. 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Paul details some of what he went through for the cause of Christ in II Cor. 11:23-25,28: "Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep...Apart from such external things there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches." In addition to the above letters in the Bible written by Paul (all of which have their authorship identified as Paul at the beginning), he also wrote Romans, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, and Ephesians. Paul finally did lay down his life for Christ, Jerome tells us, in Rome in A.D. 64,¹¹³ on the same day and in the same location as Peter. As a Roman citizen he could not be crucified, and so was beheaded. His martyrdom in Rome is confirmed by many sources, including Eusebius.¹¹⁴

Mark, though not being one of the twelve many think was a disciple of Jesus during His time on earth, is best known for writing the gospel of Mark, the earliest of the gospels, being written at the request of Peter while he was in Rome with Peter, says Clement.¹¹⁵ Many think Mark is the young man his gospel alone records as escaping naked (!) when a soldier grabs his cloak, at Christ's arrest (Mk. 14:51,52). He accompanied Paul on part of his first missionary journey to Asia Minor (Acts 13:13), and was also with Peter in Babylon to evangelize there (I Pet. 5:13). Mark later founded a church in Alexandria

according to Eusebius, and after Peter and Paul's martyrdoms in A.D. 64, he left Rome to return to Alexandria.¹¹⁶ While he was preaching there on Easter Sunday, some idol worshipers, threatened by Christianity and in celebration of their own festival which happened to fall on the same day, burst in and seized Mark, and then dragged him to death.¹¹⁷

James the brother of Jesus at first did not believe in Jesus (Jn. 7:5), probably out of sibling jealousy. However, Jesus made a special resurrection appearance to James (I Cor. 15:7), and James was soon the elder of the church of Jerusalem! He shows himself to be a decisive leader at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. He wrote the letter of James in the Bible.¹¹⁸ He was finally prominently confronted by the Pharisees before all the people to renounce his faith in Jesus, and he said in the presence of the people, "Why do you ask me about Jesus, the Son of Man? He sits in heaven in the right hand of the majesty on high, and will come again with the clouds of heaven."¹¹⁹ They then threw him down from the top of the temple. Injured, he got to his knees and began praying for them, and a Rechabite (a descendant of the Rechabites to whom God had given the promise in Jer. 35:19 that because of their obedience to him they would not fail to have a man standing before the Lord forever) stepped in and pleaded that the Pharisees spare James, but in spite of this they proceeded to stone and beat James to death as he continued praying God would forgive them, according to Epiphanius, and confirmed by Hegesippus and others.¹²⁰

As we have seen, the evidence inside and outside the Bible indicate that the disciples without a doubt led bold lives totally committed to Christ and the furtherance of the gospel. They endured extreme hardship and opposition, were jailed and exiled, and they traveled great distances. Eleven out of the twelve laid down their lives for him, at separate times and in separate places on the globe. And they died loving and praying for their enemies, as Christ had taught and done. Mark, the writer of the book of Mark, and James, the writer of the letter of James, also died for their testimony of the sinless life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and Paul, who wrote most of the remainder of the New Testament, including the letters to the Romans, the Ephesians, and the Colossians, though he was not present for much of Christ's earthly ministry, eye-witnessed the resurrected Lord and went on to lead a life of supreme commitment to the Savior, and to finally give his life for Christ. And yet these are the same men who we earlier saw were dejected, and disillusioned. What caused radical change, which we have seen is historically valid? What caused them to make this total commitment to a Lord whom they had just witnessed with their own eyes as rejected, seemingly forsaken of God, and executed? Peter stated it in his first sermon: "God raised him up!" Jesus came back! Jesus rose from the dead! "And while they were telling these things, He himself stood in their midst. But they were frightened, and thought they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have'...And while they still could not believe it for joy and were marveling, He said to them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate it in their sight," Lk. 24:36-39,41-43. Jesus appeared

to them physically alive here and various other times demonstrating his victory over death. Paul gives a partial list of Jesus' resurrected appearances in I Cor. 15:5-8: "And He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time;...then He appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also." These men witnessed with their own eyes the resurrected Lord Jesus. God had not abandoned Jesus, but instead had glorified him and given him the ultimate victory.

Suggested Alternative Explanations to the Resurrection

Are there alternatives besides the resurrection to explain what we have seen to be the radically changed lives of the disciples, and their dedication to Christ to the death? There are actually only three suggested reasonable alternatives to the resurrection, based on the conditions of the circumstances which we have above established; i.e., that Jesus was in fact executed under Pontius Pilate, which is historically affirmed, and that the disciples were of a discouraged and defeated state of mind, as the evidence demonstrates.

Alternative #1 Could the apostles have invented the story to somehow bring some post-humus glory to their Master and to themselves? This alternative is actually suggested by the Chief Priests as seen above in Matt. 27:63,ff. To answer, **many men, as we have seen in history, will give their lives for something they believe to be true, such as a just war, or a heroic sacrifice for a friend, but no one will give their life for something they know to be a lie.** If these New Testament authors had fraudulently altered the events of Christ's life, when the moment of truth came, where they were offered the opportunity to recant and live or to stand on their testimony of the risen Lord, they most certainly would have recanted. But history, both inside and outside of the Bible, tells us that they each, as well as many others, made the ultimate sacrifice for Christ. **They all stood by their testimony, to the end - of *this* life!** The resultant lives of the disciples, being of the highest moral caliber, and their unswerving commitment even to the point of death, does not allow for fraud to be a consideration. "But it is acknowledged even by those who are not believers that so pure an ethical movement as Christianity cannot have originated in deliberate fraud on the part of the disciples."¹²¹ Looking at the facts, this hypothesis simply does not get off the ground.

Alternative #2 Could Jesus have somehow survived the crucifixion, revived himself and recuperated, and then returned and deceived the disciples into believing that he had risen from the dead as he had foretold? Roman crucifixion was brutal and thorough. It was the Roman centurions' job to be sure that the executed were dead, and they did. In the case of crucifixion, since the victim normally dies of suffocation due to the position of the lungs from hanging on the cross for a long enough period that the victim's legs are too tired to support the body, the centurions break the legs to expedite death ("The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him," Jn. 19:32.). If an individual already appears to be dead, another procedure is to pierce the side and check to see what comes out of the wound. If the blood has coagulated and separated from the body's water, then death has occurred. This is what they found in Jesus' case, according to John the apostle's gospel, with John testifying that

he himself witnessed it: "...but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs; but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he [John] who has seen has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may also believe. For these things came to pass that the Scripture might be fulfilled, 'Not a bone of Him shall be broken.' And again another Scripture says, 'They shall look on Him whom they pierced,'" Jn. 19:33-37. With this stringent of procedures in practice by the Roman centurions, and John's testimony that He saw Jesus confirmed to be dead, the idea of Christ's surviving the crucifixion and returning to "rally the troops" is simply inconceivable. As confirmation, the execution of Christ under pilate is in fact taken to be a true event by competent scholars. Jesus did in fact die on the cross in the A.D. 30's.

Alternative #3 Could the disciples have hallucinated that Jesus was risen? The psychological frame of mind necessary for this hypothesis did not exist. As we have seen above, rather than being confident and preoccupied with expectations of Jesus' resurrection, the disciples were dejected and fearful. Even after all the predictions Jesus made of his resurrection, and then some of the women coming and reporting to them seeing a vision of angels telling of his resurrection, they still thought it was nonsense. Thomas, being one of the last to see the risen Lord, gives the extreme example of this skepticism which to some degree they had all had in his reaction to the resurrection report: "The other disciples were saying therefore to him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hand the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe,'" Jn. 20:25. When Jesus later appears in person and gives Thomas the opportunity to perform each of his detailed confirmations, Thomas does not take him up on it, but "Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and My God!'" Jn. 20:28. The hopeful attitude conducive for hallucinations was not there. Additionally, "the possibility of the occurrence of hallucination is lessened in inverse proportion to the number of persons to whom Jesus is represented as having appeared."¹²² The idea that these eleven defeated, scared, and often stubborn men who had seen Christ's death first-hand to all have the same hallucination with the degree of confidence of its genuineness so that they would be willing to go and lead totally selfless lives for Christ and ultimately die for him, is utterly absurd.

The resurrection is the only acceptable explanation for the disciples' radical commitment to Christ and their willingness to lay down their lives for him. Additionally, the subsequent historical events of the writers of the New Testament, allows no possibility of fraud or falsifications in their writings and teachings. As stated, even those who are not believers recognize that so pure an ethical movement as Christianity cannot have originated in deliberate fraud on the part of believers.

And this is the final irrefutable evidence of the New Testament reliability referred to in "Christ Fulfilled Prophecies:" **The changed lives and martyrdoms of the disciples who were the writers of the New Testament is the final confirmation of the New Testament writers, demonstrating they are absolutely reliable, and therefore confirming the New Testament itself is reliable, and thus the validation of the**

historical fact of the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah by Christ as reported in the New Testament, a supernatural accomplishment made only by Christ!

What is more, to expand on a previous point and at the same time get a closer look at the disciples' new post-resurrection mind-set, there was far more here than a demonstration of power over death. Jesus had told them many times ahead of time that the whole event of the crucifixion was going to happen, and that he would rise from the dead. The angel at Jesus' empty tomb had said, "He is not here, for He has risen, **just as He said,**" Matt. 28:6a. The disciples were seeing that once again, what Jesus had said would happen, did happen. This was an object lesson for the disciples which they should have learned by now: Jesus is always right, and he always keeps his promises. He had taught new things with authority; he had answered every one of the tests and traps of the scribes and Pharisees, usually turning the tables on them and giving them a lesson (we saw this in the case where he forgave the sins of the paralytic, an act which brought accusations from his enemies, but then healed the paralytic to verify his authority to forgive sins); he had led a completely sinless life (in Jn. 8:46a Jesus says, "Which one of you convicts Me of sin?..."), and he had in detail foretold all of the events of his arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection: He had said that one of his disciples would betray him, "Behold, the hand of the one who is betraying Me is with me on the table," Lk.22:21. Judas betrayed him: "And while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a multitude with swords and clubs..." Mk. 14:43a. He had said specifically to Peter that that night he would deny that he knew him: "And Jesus said to him, 'Truly I say to you, that you yourself this very night, before the cock crows twice, shall three times deny Me,'" Mk.14:30. Peter denied him three times that night: "...she looked at him, and said, 'You too were with Jesus the Nazarene.' But he denied it...And the maid saw him, and began to say to the bystanders, 'This is one of them!' But again he was denying it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, 'Surely you are one of them...' But he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know this fellow you are talking about!'" Mk. 14:67b,68a,69,70a,71. Jesus had said that all his disciples would abandon him, "And Jesus said to them, 'You will all fall away...' Mk.14:27a. All of his disciples fled at his arrest. Jesus, who had always been right and always told the truth, had known in detail exactly how everything would happen. This kind of foreknowledge and control could only come from God. This was the only possible conclusion: Jesus was from God. He had not only conquered death, but he had done it **"just as He said."** Why? If he knew it was going to happen, why had not he prevented it? As Jesus had said, his life was "a ransom for many." He knew it was going to happen, but he went through it anyway, to take the iniquity of us all on himself, as the disciples' Scripture said. In service to God, he had laid down his life for them, and for the world; "Greater love has no one than this, than that he lay down his life for his friends," he had said, the night before doing so (Jn. 15:13). It was out of love that Jesus died on the cross for his disciples and for us, to save us from our sins and bring us back to God. And now he had risen from the dead, demonstrating that what he had said was true: "I am the resurrection and the life," Jn. 11:25a. The resurrection was the final object lesson for the disciples: Jesus always keeps his promises, he is from God, Jesus loved them so much that gave his life for them, Jesus

has power over death, and in him only is the resurrection and eternal life. The disciples, as we have seen, learned their lesson. They all knew what this meant to them, Christ was to have first place in their lives, taking a place of more importance than even their own lives if it came to that, and they demonstrated this, with joy, dedicating the remainder of their lives to their Savior Jesus Christ, and in almost every case, paying the highest cost for him. Peter and John epitomize the attitude of them all when they say to their persecutors, **"Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard!"**

"Let goods and kindreth go
This mortal life also
The body they may kill
God's Truth abideth still
His Kingdom is forever"

Martin Luther, from the hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

Where does this leave us? Jesus Christ did in fact rise from the dead. This is what the Old Testament predicted, this is what the New Testament confirms, this is what the disciples stated, and this is what the historicity of Christ, the confirmed disposition of the disciples, and the historically documented changed lives and absolute devotion of the disciples substantiate; being the only realistic explanation for the transformed lives, far-reaching ministries, and ultimate martyrdom of almost all of the disciples, resulting in the rapid spread and growth of the Christian church across the face of the earth. As we stated previously, the implications of this are profound: This verifies Jesus' claims to be Lord and to be the only way to God. And Jesus' demonstration of control over the entire crucifixion and resurrection event, deliberately choosing to give his life for us to save us from sin and rising from the dead, clearly shows that he loves us, and he is from God; and as we have previously pointed out, if he is from God, then everything he has said is true: He is the only Son of God, and he is the resurrection and the life. There is no one better to place our trust in than the One who has proven himself trustworthy. Jesus has demonstrated that he is the Son of God, and that he loves us; and he offers us salvation. Please receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior now, if you have not already, giving him control of your life. At the end of this paper is a suggested prayer and guidance in this decision.

Christ's Life and Teachings Unparalleled in Human History

Jesus Christ has already been shown to stand on a completely different plain than Muhammad, Buddha, or anyone else because of the outstanding evidences of fulfilled prophecy and the resurrection. But there is yet another, equally weighty criteria that again sets Christ apart in a big way, his life and teachings. While it can be said that both Muhammad and Buddha had teachings some of which, as we have seen, were of moral value, and most would agree they each left (by many standards) an example of good

ethical character for us, we will see that Christ does far more than this, since it is his goal to bring us into the most important relationship of our life.

Salvation by Faith, Not Good Works

What Christ taught about how man is to relate to God, and God's plan of salvation for man is so child-like in principle as to appear obvious once fully grasped, and yet is so profound that no other teacher of any other religion has even coming close to matching it: A relationship with God and salvation by grace (unmerited favor) through faith, not by works (i.e., leading a good life). "For by grace you have been saved through faith; not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast," Eph. 2:8,9. Jesus, when asked by some Jews what good works they must do to be saved, put it this way; "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent," Jn. 6:29b. In other words, we are saved by God's love and provision, not by our good life or our success at obeying some laws. Does this give us the opportunity to simply believe, and then lead whatever life we choose? Absolutely not! James says, "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself," Jas. 2:17. The Christian's salvation comes by putting Christ as Lord, believing that Christ already earned his salvation; "He who believes in the Son has eternal life," Jn. 3:36a. With Christ as Lord, the believing Christian is following him, and the good works and changed life come **as a result of salvation, not in order to earn or merit it**. What did Muhammad and Buddha teach? As we have seen, Muhammad taught that salvation is **achieved by each individual**, based on how good of a life the individual leads. The attaining of salvation is a human achievement, being earned by the individual, in Buddhism too; no god or gods can be counted on, according to Buddha.

Why, we may ask, is the teaching of salvation Jesus' way, as a free gift through faith, superior to the teachings of the way of salvation according to Muhammad or Buddha, both based on individual human achievement or good works? To answer this, we will give an imperfect, but sufficient, illustration: A child in a healthy, well-relating family knows that he is loved and accepted for himself, and he knows that when he has done wrong that love and acceptance is still there (although some correction may follow). He does not have to earn or achieve his relationship in the family; by faith (trust and belief) he knows he has value as a human being and is part of that family. His membership in his family is a free gift he obtained at birth. He knows there are certain things he should and should not do (behave, not misbehave), and certain responsibilities he has (school, chores, using his talents, etc.), but these are because he is a member of the family, not so that he can become or remain a member. As much more mature as this child is who sees his family relationships as by faith compared with the child who feels he must earn his place in the family, or earn the approval of his family, so much more morally mature is the teaching of salvation by faith over any teaching of salvation by good works, the latter of which every other religion besides Christianity espouses. As the child of faith above, a Christian does not do good deeds in order to attain to salvation, a Christian does them because he or she has been saved. They are the result of the changed life of a believer, done in thankfulness, love, and obedience. In fact, the Bible actually uses "family" terminology to explain becoming a part of God's people, the family of God. Just as the

child above received his place in his family as a free gift simply by being born into it, so also Jesus said we "must be born again," Jn. 3:3. John says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," Jn. 1:12,13. Paul says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise," Gal. 3:26-29. The New Testament also speaks of God as Father. Importantly, when studying the texts, we find that Jesus never refers to the Fatherhood of God in connection with all humanity. He only spoke of God as Father regarding his own relationship to God, or, regarding others, he restricted the right to call God "Father" to those who had shown their loyalty to himself, therefore being entitled to regard themselves as children of God."¹²³ This is in keeping with the above discussion of the family of God, and the children of God. We enter the family of God by faith in Son of God, Jesus (not by are own achievement, as if we could impress God), and we become children of God, with God as our Father. God is the Creator of all humans, but Father of his believers only.

Objections raised to this method of salvation as a free gift by faith frequently cite the hypothetical criminal who has done terrible things all his life and is condemned to die, then repents at the last minute. "If God lets this individual in, and not someone else who led a good life but did not believe in Jesus, how is that just?" the argument goes. First of all, the Bible says, "God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap," Gal.6:7. God knows our hearts ("He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is..." Rom. 8:27a). Only an individual who is genuinely sorry for his sins and has repented of them and believed will be saved. Only God knows that individual's heart; only he can know whether an individual such as the above hypothetical condemned criminal, if he were given more time to live, would live a changed life in keeping with his outward confession. Second of all, the Bible says we have all sinned and fall short of God's requirements (Rom. 3:23). Since "God dwells in unapproachable light," (I Tim. 6:16), and no sin may enter his presence ("Your eyes are too pure to look on evil," Hab. 1:13), if we have committed even one sin, we have become transgressors; "For he who keeps the whole law, and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all," Jas. 2:10. So if we are going to try to make it by our own power, God requires perfection. The individual who wants to get to heaven by his own merit and not by trusting in Christ, would have to keep from sinning from the beginning to the end of his or her life. But even this is not possible, however, because the Bible says we are born in sin. Looking at the fall of the human race with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3), we can see man's first time of choosing to do things his way instead of God's way, which introduced sin into the world: "And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?' The man said, 'The woman You put here with me - she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it.' Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me and I ate.'...To Adam he said, 'Because you have listened to your wife and ate from the

tree about which I commanded you, "You must not eat of it," cursed is the ground because of you..." Gen. 3:11-13,17a. The curse represents that sin has entered the world, because of Adam and Eve's first sin. Because Adam and Eve were sinful, all their descendants are sinful at birth, including us; "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me," Ps. 51:5. So we are born into sin, and we need a Savior to rescue us from it, since we cannot do it ourselves. God sent us this Savior, Jesus. Jesus led the perfect life which we are unable to lead (I Pet. 2:22), then died on the cross to pay for our shortcomings (sins), and then rose from the dead. According to the Bible, the way it actually works is that Jesus takes away all our unrighteousness (sin), and gives us his righteousness (his perfect life); "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him," II Cor. 5:21. Paul talks about it like this in Romans, showing how God credits our "account" with Jesus' righteousness, using Abraham from Genesis as an example: "For what does the Scripture say? 'And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,'" Rom. 4:3. Paul is quoting Genesis 15:6 here to show that God saves man by crediting our "account" with Jesus' righteousness as a free gift. And actually, Paul uses the example of Abraham to show that this has always been God's method, even back in the beginning. Jesus' death on the cross paid the price for all sins for all time; he is the "Lamb that was slain before the creation of the world," Rev. 13:8. God always has saved man by crediting the account of the believer with Christ's righteousness. Evangelist Tony Campolo, speaking at Urbana Christian conference on the topic of the arrival of Christians to heaven and the expected experience at the judgment seat of God (where God will look in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev. 3:5) to determine if we go to heaven or hell), humorously uses conference organizer John Kyle to illustrate his point: "Can't you just see John Kyle, standing before the judgment seat, and the Lord saying [ominously], 'Kyle, we've been waiting for you.'" Tony then says, referring to Kyle's record of good and bad deeds in the Lamb's Book: "...but if they open it up, I've got good news: There won't be any of the dirty rotten things that he's done written in the Kyle [record of the] book. It is forgotten!"¹²⁴ Our sins are taken away by Christ, and as good as forgotten by God. And then Christ credits our account with his righteousness; as Christians, we get credit for all the good things Jesus did! Tony continues along this line: "I can't wait to get to glory. **When they open my [record of the] book, they're going to have under the name Tony Campolo all the good stuff that Jesus ever did! I'm going to be credited for it!**... I wish my wife no harm, but I want her there when I arrive, because I know when they start reading all the good stuff Jesus ever did, she's going to say, 'You didn't do all of that!' I'm going to say [pointing to God], '**It's His book!**'"¹²⁵ If the Lamb's Book of Life says we are credited with Christ's righteousness, you can be sure it's true! And if God wants to give you this righteousness of Christ as a free gift, **take it!**

From a different angle, the Bible indicates, and many would agree, that if we look at God as the Creator and source of all things, then all good ultimately comes from him and him alone. All of our gifts, talents, abilities, everything, is from him. If we are seeing our salvation as based even partly on good works in any way originating from us, we are negating this principle, because we are failing to see that even our ability to do those works, and even our ability to choose to do those works, which we are attempting to take

credit for, is ultimately a gift from him, and therefore something for which he should get the credit, not us! This is why Paul says in Eph. 2:9, "we are saved by grace...that no one should boast." If we were to somehow achieve eternal life through our own power, we would be boasting, and wanting some of the glory. But "our own power" is actually God's power on loan, so he deserves and should get all the glory. The truth is, Jesus said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing," Jn. 15:5. Once we realize this, our good works take on a new meaning. Similar to the child who obeys and completes responsibilities because he is loved and a member of the family, so our good deeds will be not to achieve salvation, but because we already are saved, loved, and a part of the family of God, with God as our Father and Jesus as our brother. We will be doing good works because we are thankful that we have been saved from our sinful past, and out of love for the Father and Son who saved us. Once we realize this, here and when we get to heaven, **we will give God all the glory.**

The above concept of Jesus' righteousness being credited to the account of those who believe as a free gift sounds almost too good to be true, but it is true! The word "gospel" means "good news," and **Jesus Christ is the Good News!** The Bible says that if we have received Christ, salvation is a promise from God! "We know we have passed from death to life, because we love the brothers..." I Jn. 3:14. Jesus says, regarding believers in him, "My Father, who has given them to Me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand," Jn. 10:29. Christians have crossed over from death to life, and are children in the family of God, safe in the palm of their Father's hand. This is strong language! God uses language like this to assure believers in him of their eternal security, because of **the Good News: The price has been paid, in full!!!** When God's children know for certain that their eternity is secure, this emboldens them to live excited, courageous lives for God, bringing Him more glory!

The Golden Rule

Not only in Christ's superior teaching of salvation by faith does Christ show himself superior, and distance himself from Muhammad and Buddha, but in many individual teachings as well. For example, what is commonly called today the Golden Rule, is from Christ. It states, "Therefore whatever you want others to do for you, do so for them..." (Matt. 7:12a). Most regard this to be the highest of all moral teachings on man's relationship to his fellow man, as we pointed out in the section on the validity of the Bible. The commandment closest to Jesus' Golden Rule in the Old Testament is from Lev. 19:18, "Love your neighbor as yourself," which most understood to mean love for one's fellow Israelite. The Golden Rule, however, implies love and concern for all men, exercised without reserve. Jesus Christ gave us this teaching; Muhammad didn't, and Buddha didn't. **If we want to know who has the truth, look to the one even most non-Christians acknowledge has the truest statements. Christ is without peer!!!**

Christ's Perfect Example, Enabling a Relationship with God

Ultimately, the greatest teaching of Christ came from the way he lead his life. What he taught, he lived, perfectly, in fact, according to the Bible, which says he was without sin (Col. 5:21.). He said, "Follow me," and gave the perfect example. "There are few men

who can follow an abstract ideal; all men are capable of devotion to a person. It was the supreme accomplishment of Jesus as a teacher that he exemplified in himself all that he taught."¹²⁶ As we have seen in the section "Christ Fulfilled Prophecies," the Biblical evidence contains both Old Testament prophecies and New Testament eyewitness accounts of Christ's sinless life (see, for example, Is. 59:7-9, and I Pet. 2:21-23). Jesus provided the perfect example by committing no sin. This is a perfect example of obedience.

But with Jesus, this was only the beginning. He also taught about and gave the perfect example of love; loving others, and loving God. He taught about loving others, saying, "...love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you..." Matt. 5:44, and "...whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also," Matt. 5:39b; he then demonstrated the perfect example of love for man by tirelessly teaching, healing, and serving others, and ultimately dying for us on the cross; "Greater love has no one than this, than that he lay down his life for his friends," he said a few hours before his crucifixion. As we have seen in the section on the resurrection, he laid down his life of his own choice, knowing full well ahead of time it was going to happen, and going through it anyway, for us: Jesus said before the crucifixion, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it up again. No one has taken it from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father," Jn. 10:17,18. Why did Christ go through it? Paul says, "It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am foremost of all," I Tim. 1:15. Jesus gave his life to save we sinners; but not only sinners who are his friends, but also the whole world, including his enemies: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing," Jesus said, praying for his enemies from the cross, even though it was they who put him there (Lk. 23:34a); "...and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world," I Jn. 2:2. Regarding love for God, he exhorted the multitudes from the Scriptures to love God; "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind," Matt. 22:37b, and then he demonstrated this love and devotion to God by laying down his life for God in obedience: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted Him, and bestowed upon Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," Phil. 2:5-11.

Being the perfect example not only involves perfectly loving others, it involves telling the whole truth; therefore much of Christ's teaching involved who he is: The Son of God. Demonstrating who Christ is, God's own Son, assures that God gets the glory and credit for Jesus' perfect example. There is a down side to this: Christ's claims to be the Son of

God, while being the truth, continually caused controversy for him, and as we will see, are one of the factors that resulted in his crucifixion. Taking a look at these claims, Jn. 5:18 says Jesus was "making Himself equal with God," Jn. 5:18. In John 8 the Pharisees accuse Jesus regarding an implication he made to have seen the patriarch Abraham (of the Old Testament, who lived almost 2000 years before Christ's earthly mission); "The Jews therefore said to Him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, **I Am**,'" Jn. 8:57,58. Jesus did not say "I existed," or "I was," as might seem more appropriate for the context, but "I Am." "I Am" was God's covenant name given to Moses on Mt. Horeb; "Then Moses said to God, 'Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I shall say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?' And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM;' and he said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you,'"" Ex. 3:13,14. Jesus was applying God's covenant name, I Am, or in Hebrew, Yahweh, to Himself, making Himself equal with God, as his hearers understood him to be doing, and thus, in their opinion, because they did not believe Him to be equal with God, He was blaspheming; "Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out from the temple," Jn. 8:59. After the resurrection Thomas calls Jesus God, and Jesus accepts this title; "Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed,'" Jn. 20:28,29. Jesus also exercised the prerogatives belonging to God alone, according to the biblical understanding of God; he forgave sins and received worship. In Mk. 2:5b, Jesus forgives the sins of a paralytic; "And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, 'My son, your sins are forgiven.'" The scribes' reaction to this was, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?," Mk. 2:7. Jesus response was as follows: "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your pallet, and walk'? But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins' - He said to the paralytic - 'I say to you rise, take up your pallet, and go home.' And he rose and immediately took up the pallet and went out in the sight of all; so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying 'We have never seen anything like this,'" Mk. 2:8b-12. Jesus received worship, here and in other places; Matt. 14:25-27,33: "And in the fourth watch of the night, He came to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were frightened, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.'...And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, 'You are certainly God's Son!'" But Jesus himself had earlier said, when being tempted, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only,'" Matt. 4:10. So Jesus not only claimed to be the Son of God and exercised the prerogatives clearly belonging only to God, he also backed up his claims with miracles, an example of such miracles being seen above, and Jesus himself makes this point in Jn. 10:30,32; he says, "I and the Father are one;" when the Jews pick up stones to stone him for this statement, being in their eyes blasphemy; "Jesus answered them, 'I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?'" Remembering the section "Christ

Fulfilled Prophecies,” we have additionally seen that there were prophecies showing that the Messiah would be called God; he would be the Lord Himself; Isaiah in two places identifying the Messiah as God: In Isaiah 7, he is to be called Immanuel (God with us), and in Isaiah 9, he will be called "Mighty God." So Jesus clearly claimed to be God, exercising the rights and prerogatives accompanying the claim, according to the Bible, and the prophecies affirmed these claims.

So is Jesus the Son of God, equal with God, as he claimed, and as the Old Testament indicated the Messiah would be? Two accomplishments would say definitely yes. His first accomplishment is that after making these claims of divinity, as we have seen in the section on the resurrection, Jesus was then put to death in the presence of many witnesses, and then rose from the dead in the presence of many witnesses. And as we have seen, He foretold ahead of time how the entire event of his arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection was going to take place, including the many detailed actions, reactions, and deeds of those involved. He demonstrated complete foreknowledge and control over the entire situation, and equally importantly, he demonstrated power over death; Jesus rose from the dead. This kind of foreknowledge, control, and power, clearly, belongs in the category of "Divine." Amazingly, Christ accomplished this without participating in any way in any of the wrong actions or faithlessness of the individuals or crowds involved! This leads us to Christ's second accomplishment which affirms his claims to be the Son of God: Christ committed no sin; he never did anything wrong. Jesus said, when debating with the scribes and Pharisees, "Which one of you convicts me of sin?" Jn. 8:46, because as much as his enemies wanted to trap him and discredit him out of jealousy, no one could find fault with him. In the above passage in Jn. 8, and elsewhere, the only perceived "fault" they could find with Jesus was in his claims to be the Son of God. An example of the only accusation the Pharisees could come up with to Jesus' above challenge for them to show where he has committed a sin is given in our above discussion on the passage in Jn. 8, where they take as blasphemy his claim for the supernatural feat of having been known by Abraham, implying himself equal with God. At Jesus' trial after his arrest, the whole council was trying to obtain testimony for grounds to put Jesus to death, but they were unable to find anything they could make 'stick;' "And many were giving false testimony against Him, yet their testimony was not consistent," Mk. 14:56. Finally, the only charge they could find was that of blasphemy, because of Jesus' claims to be the Son of God, as we see in Mk. 14:61b-64; "Again, the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One [i.e., God]?' And Jesus said, 'I am, and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.' And tearing his clothes, the high priest said, What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?' And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death." So other than Jesus' calling himself the Son of God, even Christ's enemies could find no sin in Christ; and the validity of this claim of equality with God is the what we are establishing.

Leading a morally perfect life, according to the Bible, would demonstrate Christ to be the Son of God, since mankind is sinful at birth, and has fallen short of the glory of God; therefore this is something which only the divine Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary

and conceived of by the Holy Spirit, could achieve. Even from an extra-biblical perspective; there has been no one in history apart from Christ whose life has demonstrated the moral character and reputation to be able to make the claim to be completely without sin and to be able to historically develop a widespread allegiance of others to this claim, as Christ did in Christianity.¹²⁷ But amazingly, this allegiance to, or belief in, Christ's claim to be without sin is not limited to the Bible and Christians! The well-known, and in many ways admirable, Hindu teacher and social leader Mahatma Gandhi said of Christ's spotless life, "The gentle figure of Christ, so patient, so loving, so full of forgiveness that he taught his followers not to retaliate when abused or struck but to turn the other cheek - it was a beautiful example, I thought, of the perfect man."¹²⁸ To add to this, as previously pointed out, Muhammad and the entire Islam faith, as stated in the Qu'ran, believe in Christ's sinless life. This reference to the Qu'ran in no way implies it to be authoritative Scripture from God, but clearly substantiates the affirmation that at the time Muhammad wrote the Qu'ran, at the beginning of the seventh century A.D., Christ's reputation of perfect moral character was so widely established and believed in even in Arabia, that Muhammad felt compelled to include this teaching in the Qu'ran! **So the fact of Christ's perfect moral character is so firm in history that it has had a profound impact on, and is adhered to by, well known teachers and a world religion in addition to Christianity.** Does moral perfection, from this perspective demonstrate divinity, or equality with God? Evangelist, author, and international conference speaker Abdiyah Abdul-Haqq states that it does. Elaborating on this point, he states that Jesus' manner of obedience was due to his "...intimate fellowship with His Father, and His essential unity of nature with Him..."¹²⁹

Our conclusion to the question, "Is Christ the Son of God?": An undeniable "Yes!!!" We are able to arrive at this conclusion because of the overwhelming evidence of Jesus' resurrection, demonstrating his foreknowledge and control of events and people, as well as his power over death; plus his morally perfect life, a claim stated in the Bible and adhered to by billions of Christians and non-Christians; making a virtually untouchable case for all the claims which Jesus made, including that of being the only Son of God. Therefore the truth about the false accusation of blasphemy that the Pharisees and scribes had initially arrived at is the very reason they were not able to find anything else of which to accuse Christ; because Jesus is Lord of all, he was able to lead the perfect moral life, and therefore to leave absolutely no room for accusations; the only accusation the scribes and Pharisees could come up with ignored this obvious evidence in front of them (Christ's sinless life; the inability of anyone to rightly accuse Jesus of doing anything whatsoever wrong) and was a decision based on a false assumption with no evidence at all, decided on in jealousy, and as we have seen, their false assumption has been invalidated by Christ's reputation and resurrection. Jesus is Lord!

In demonstrating Christ is the Son of God, we have refuted the allegations of blasphemy against him, the only claim anyone has made against Christ's character. Christ did in fact lead a sinless life; the evidence of the Old Testament prophecies, the New Testament eyewitness accounts, the evidence of Christ's flawless reputation still intact hundreds of years after his earthly mission, is conclusive evidence even other religious founders and

teachers can't deny. What makes Christ's sinless life so important? Completing a previously made crucial point; **there are two main areas that cover virtually all of what every religious teacher teaches about: Morality in this life, and what happens in the next life. Jesus is the only One who demonstrated authority in morality in this life by living an absolutely perfect life. And as we have seen, Jesus is the only One who demonstrated authority in the afterlife by rising from the dead.** Anyone can teach or claim anything. That doesn't make it true. **Jesus is the only One who irrefutably proved the truthfulness of his claims in these areas and his authority to make these claims, by rising from the dead and committing no sin. Someone once said, "One's faith is only as valid as the object in which it is placed;" Jesus is the only One who proved himself worthy of our faith regarding things moral and eternal by proving himself Lord and Master of things moral and eternal.** Faith placed in anything else or anyone else will crumble.

We have been investigating and confirming Christ's character, his perfect life. However, we have in the process discovered something even more important than what he has accomplished; and that is, who Christ is: The Son of God, equal with God himself! Why is it so important that we realize that Jesus is the Lord, the Son of God? The answer lies in the deeper meaning to Christ's coming to earth and becoming a man. His initial objective is to save us from our sins, but He has a deeper objective: So that we might know him. He became one of us and came to live among us so we can see his life and get to know him personally. God greatly desires a relationship with each one of us; a relationship that starts here on earth, and continues into eternity! We can see the event in John 1:1-14, where Jesus is referred to as the "Word:" "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. And all things came into being by Him. And apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light. There was the true light, which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know him. He came to his own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh, who came to us and lived among us, dying for us and then rising from the dead, enabling us to know God: **Do you want to know God? Get to know Jesus, and you're getting to know God!** God greatly desires this relationship with us; this is his ultimate desire for us. The intensity of God's love for us and his desire for this relationship with us is demonstrated in his willingness to become a man in the person of Christ and to give his life for us. And it is through this demonstration of love that God is able to reach through to the thick and hard hearts of we human beings, softening our stubborn self-will, and enabling us to enter a

relationship with him. It is when we human beings realize who it was that gave his life for us on the cross, spiritual regulation- and rule-following can be done away with and an obedience and a trust out of love coming from the heart can begin. Through Christ, the Word of God made flesh, and his great act of love at the cross, God breaks through the barriers and speaks to the human heart, establishing this personal relationship which is by faith. God is the God of relationships; he invented relationships. Most people readily agree that relationships, people, are more important than possessions, pleasure, or achievements. The Bible states that this is because God made us this way; the second half of the greatest commandment in the Old Testament is "You Shall love your neighbor as yourself." These relationships are horizontal relationships - with other people; God wants more for us than just these horizontal relationships with others, he wants a vertical relationship, a relationship between himself and us: The first half of that commandment is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." In John 17:3 Jesus prays to the Father for us, just before his crucifixion: "Now this is eternal life: That they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." Paul said, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," I Cor. 2:2. This personal relationship with God was actually foretold of in the Old Testament by the prophets. Jeremiah says, "'The time is coming,' declares the Lord, 'When I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers, when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke My covenant, though I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord. 'This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be My people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest;' declares the Lord, 'for I will forgive their wickedness, and remember their sins no more.'" The Old Testament is foretelling of how God's will and desire for our lives and how to lead them will no longer be written on paper or tablets, but written in our hearts, each individual knowing him personally! This has been brought about by Christ, and it is through a relationship with Jesus that we know God, that we know personally his love for us, and that since we have a friendship with him we therefore know in our heart what is pleasing to him in our life and actions! Crucially, this relationship God desires to have with each one of us is our basis for entrance into eternal life with him. Jesus said, speaking of the Judgment Day of God, "Not everyone who says to Me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven," Matt. 7:21. And what is the will of the Father? It is, as both Jesus and Paul said above, to know Christ. To those who do not know Christ, Jesus says in v.23 of the above passage, "And then I will declare to them, 'I never **knew** you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.'" **But we can choose to know Christ! Jesus made a way: Christ, the eternal Word of God, who is God himself, was made flesh and made his dwelling among us, and then laid down his life for us and rose again; providing the Way to a personal relationship between God and human beings, the most awesome of all miracles, performed by the God who demonstrates that he himself has the greatest love for us; Jesus Christ said, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life**

for his friends." As Isaiah the prophet stated in the passage of Is. 9:6,7, regarding the coming of Jesus, who is referred to as the Prince of Peace and Mighty God; "the zeal of the Lord has accomplished it!"

Our goal in this part of this paper was to see how Christ is different from Muhammad and Buddha. What we have seen is not only substantial, but profound. As shown in this last section, while Muhammad teaches of a distant God who merely gives commands to be followed and rules to be obeyed, such as repeating a prescribed prayer five times a day and fasting at prescribed times, Jesus teaches of a God who is close by, who makes "his dwelling among us," and who makes possible obedience from the heart, coming from knowing him as a friend and Father; while Muhammad reveals the ultimate goal of life to be an eternity of sensual pleasure, thereby elevating physical gratification above love and the inherent value of the individual, Jesus teaches of a God who loves us, and who even gave his life for us in order to form a trusting personal relationship with us. And while Buddha teaches of a "truth" within, that can be reached by much personal effort and discipline, possibly over thousands of lifetimes; a "God" which is, with this kind of timeline, even more distant than the "God" of Islam, Jesus teaches of a personal God for whom we no more have to strive or perform as a requirement to connect with him than a child would to connect with his own father; while Buddha teaches of a "God" completely without a personal dimension, since "it" has no identity or personality, and we in fact lose our identity in pursuit of this "God," Jesus teaches of a personal God who identifies with us by in humility becoming one of us, spending time with us, and serving us. And as shown in the other sections of this part of the paper, Christ has differentiated himself in other very clear and virtually irrefutable ways, by fulfilling prophecies and rising from the dead. **While Muhammad and Buddha left some writings and some possibly better than average examples, Jesus historically fulfilled documented prophecies, historically rose from the dead, historically lead a sinless life, historically gave us moral and spiritual teaching without peer, historically demonstrated the ultimate example of love for both us and God, and makes the historically substantiated claim to be alive today, offering an immediate relationship with himself as Lord of all, not distant in time, not distant in space, not distant in relationship, but very near in all of these aspects; in fact, right at the front door of our life: Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me," Rev. 3:20.**

Jesus Christ Vs. Religious Cult Leaders

We have examined the teachers of other religions, using Muhammad and Buddha as examples, to see how Christ is different. But some claim a difficult seeming inconsistency arises with regards to those who come in Jesus' name, identifying themselves as Christians, or even identifying themselves as Christ Himself returning as Biblically foretold, and typically incorporating moral and religious teachings into their message, but whose actions and morality turns out to be an atrocity, and the ultimate outcome of themselves and their followers often is a tragedy. An example of this would

be the Heaven's Gate cult, whose leader convinced thirty-nine of its members to commit suicide in 1997.¹³⁰ While the deception and corruption of the cults and their leaders are usually quite obvious once the occurrence of an event such as the above mentioned tragedy has taken place, the fact that they use the name of Christ and his teachings, or other moral teachings as part of their deception, brings up some tough questions: How could this happen? These cult members had the Bible; where was God, could He not have helped them? And additionally, how can we know if an individual is teaching the truth? And in this manner, how can we know that Christ taught the truth?

As we begin to deal with this issue, it should be noted that this problem of corrupt and deceptive teachers aligning themselves with a particular religion resulting in disaster is by no means limited to Christianity. For examples of comparable occurrence from another religion, we need to look no further than the many terrorist crimes done in the name of Islam. Orthodox Muslims may or may not endorse the perpetrators of these crimes, but they do not need to for this point to be made. True Christians certainly do not endorse the cult leaders who brought about tragedies, and with whom we are dealing in this paper. Additionally, in the case of the above referred to religiously motivated terrorist acts such as a skyjacking or bombing of a jetliner, these typically represent worse tragedies than the suicidal cult leaders and their followers, since the terrorist crimes usually represent a larger and random group of innocent people (jet passengers), rather than an at least partially culpable group who foolishly allow themselves to be persuaded to participate in the commission of suicide (cult groups). For our discussion here, however, we will be focusing on the false and deceptive leaders involving and pertaining to Christianity. We have already compared Christ to, and demonstrated his superiority to, teachers outside of Christianity; we are now going to compare him to, and demonstrate him superior to, false teachers claiming to be within Christianity. In properly answering the above questions, we need to be looking at how to verify the genuineness and truthfulness of the Christian leader, or so-called Christian leader, and we need to examine also God's constant faithfulness to all people, and especially when his word is involved. Regarding our treatment of the genuineness of Christian leaders, rather than attempting to examine many different cult leaders and cults, we will take a look at one particular recent cult leader as a representative example, since in general these leaders have almost identical characteristics in their deviations from the truth. They are "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power," II Tim. 3:5a. Our representative example will be Herf Applewhite, known as "Do," the leader of the above mentioned Heaven's Gate cult. In dealing with this cult leader and his teachings, as would be the case with any other cult leader, we are first going to compare his teachings to the Bible, God's Word (as Jesus did, when confronting false teachers) and which, as we will see is to be the ultimate authority for any Christian, then we are going to use our tried and true method: Compare him directly to the Christ himself, who, according to the Bible, is **the Light**. "And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overpower it," Jn. 1:5. Shining the light of Christ not only works in revealing the truth about other major religious teachers, such as Muhammad and Buddha, but it reveals the truth about cult leaders, leaders who associate themselves with Christianity and then lead people down a false and tragic path. In the Bible, we find that regarding those who falsely use Scripture

and/or claim themselves to actually be Christ, Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits," Matt. 7:15,16b. Jesus knew these teachers would come, and he has not left us unprepared or without defense, as we will see.

The Authority of the Bible

Since we are primarily dealing with individuals who are misusing the Bible and its teachings, individuals basing their identity, authority, and claims in part or in whole on those teachings, our first step is to establish the authority of the Bible. This will enable us to put false teachers, and their false claims, into proper perspective, bringing the false into the light. As we have seen in a previous section of this paper, the Bible can be trusted to be a valid and trustworthy document; this is not what we are concerned with here. What we are concerned with here is determining the position of **authority** the Bible has according to Christ, Scripture itself, and therefore the Christian faith; what importance does it have in determining what a follower of Christ believes or how he behaves?

The Old Testament clearly places God's word, the Scriptures, as our highest authority. Is. 8:20 says, "To the law & to the testimony, if they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no light in them." The 'law' in both the Old & New Testaments is the Law of Moses (the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, & Deuteronomy), the 'testimony' is the testimony of the prophets (the remainder of the Old Testament); since this Scripture is from the Old Testament, it is referring to the sum total of God's word as revealed up to that point, demonstrating it to be authoritative; this also being the regular practice of the faithful high priests & prophets. Even more absolute though, Psalm 138:2 says, "I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth, for You have magnified Your word above all Your name." This is a profound statement; God has lifted his word above his name! A name represents the character, reputation, attributes, the very identity of an individual, including his position of power & authority; God's word, his revelation to us, is of higher authority than his name! How can God's word be of higher authority than seemingly God himself? As discussed previously, God's word is equated with God himself: Jesus, the eternal Word of God, is God (John 1:1,14)! God, who "calls those things that do not exist as though they did" (Rom. 4:17b), foresaw that Christ, the eternal Word of God, would come & live the perfect life, fulfilling perfectly all of God's commands; therefore instead of merely symbolically representing God's character, nature, & authority, as God's name does, Jesus, the Word of God, **is** God, being "the brightness of His glory & the express image of His person," (Heb. 1:3). The undeniable conclusion according to the Bible is that to give any command or teaching from any source other than the Bible a higher place of authority than God's word is to elevate such a command or teaching above God himself, which is idolatry!

In the New Testament, Christ is our perfect example, what place did **he** give to the Scriptures (i.e., the Bible)? Jesus taught that the Scriptures are our ultimate authority. When debates arose regarding religious matters, Jesus always referred to the Scriptures as

the ultimate authority to resolve the issue. For example, when being questioned regarding the way to eternal life, he refers to Scripture (Luke 10:26): "What is written in the Law, how does it read to you?" He clearly places Scripture over any teachings of elders and religious authorities in Mk. 7:9b, and in many other places, where He rebukes the scribes & Pharisees for placing their traditions above God's word: "Jesus rebuked them, saying, 'You nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition....Making the word of God to no effect through your tradition which you have handed down...'" Mk. 7:9b,13a. He also quotes the prophet Isaiah from the Old Testament (Is. 29:13) to rebuke them: "In vain does this people worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men," Mk. 7:7. See also Mk 12:24, Matt. 12:3-5, Matt. 4:4. And in correcting the Jewish teachers regarding his identity as prophesied in the Old Testament, Jesus says "the Scripture cannot be broken," demonstrating the inerrancy and unchangeability of Scripture (Jn. 10:35b). Jesus' clearest statement of God's word being our final & ultimate authority is in Jn. 12:48: "He who rejects Me and doesn't receive My sayings has one who judges him; **the word I spoke is what will judge him on the last day.**" God gave us free will to believe and follow whatever we want, but those whose beliefs and practices about God, morality, & salvation don't line up with God's word won't be going to heaven. Jesus clearly placed God's word, the Bible, as our highest authority. Paul, following Jesus' clear teaching, says, "don't go beyond what is written" (I Cor. 4:6), affirming that any teaching that conflicts with the Bible or adds anything to it that is of a fundamental nature is forbidden. Both the Old Testament & Christ Himself make it clear, the Bible is our highest authority. It is of higher authority for the Christian than national or local government or any law coming from these, it is of higher authority than any teaching or tradition of man, religious or otherwise, and of higher authority than any familial requests or demands. If any of these conflict with an absolute teaching in the Bible on an issue, Christians are to obey God's word rather than man's law or demand, just as Peter and John did in Acts 4:19, where the religious leaders threatened them with jail and beatings if they did not stop preaching about Christ, and they replied that they had no choice but to put God first and obey him. In general there usually should be no conflict government law and God's word; God's word says, "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities...", Rom. 13:1a. So God's word as a rule endorses the governing bodies, calling each of them "a minister of God to you for good," Rom. 13:4a. But governments are not perfect. There are times when it may become necessary for a Christian to take a stand against a governmental law, when it is deemed to be contrary to God's word; for example, many pastors in the former Soviet Union were jailed and put to death for continuing to preach the Bible; we read in the Bible that Jesus said to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...", Matt. 28:19,20a, but the Soviet governmental law forbade doing this. These pastors knew they had to obey God first, and in the same way God's word is to take first place in every Christian's life.

Importantly, while as pointed out above that the validity and the authority of the Bible are not the same, they are interconnected. Since we have established that the evidence indicates the Bible to be a valid and trustworthy document, that is, that it is true and

accurate, therefore its authority in truth extends not only over Christians, but over all humanity. The Bible says there is one God, and that he has fixed a day when he will judge all humanity according to what they have done with his Son, Jesus, the Word of God. Jesus made it clear, God's Word is the standard of judgment for all men. Occasionally individuals, when confronted with this message, reply, "Oh, I don't believe in God," as though that settles the issue; since they don't believe in God, then nothing the Bible says applies to them. But our decision to not believe in a truth does not affect in any way its truthfulness. God will still judge humanity on the last day, including those who chose not to believe in him. Therefore those who did not choose to place the Bible in authority over their lives in this life will find that it is authoritative over their lives at that point, as they find their eternity being determined by its teachings and the truth of those teachings and the way they led their lives in relation to those teachings!

Since therefore, the Bible is the Christian's highest authority, all professing Christian leaders and teachers and their teachings need to be held up to the Bible and its truths: "The word of God is living and active, sharper than a double-edged sword, it pierces to dividing joints and marrow, soul and spirit; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart," Heb. 4:12. Jn. 1:1,14 tells us that Christ is the Word of God; he is the only one who lived out and followed God's commands precisely. Therefore we compare everything to him; he is our ultimate authority. Teachers and leaders identifying themselves with Christ and Christianity who conflict with Christ and the Bible in what they teach or do, and continue in this manner even when confronted with their error, are to be rejected as false teachers.

The Bible vs. Do and The Heaven's Gate Cult

Do founded the Heaven's Gate cult in 1993 in Southern California. Do claimed himself to be Jesus Christ (i.e., a re-manifestation of the actual person of Jesus Christ).¹³¹ He taught that modern religions had been taken over by rebel souls (the Devil and his legions), and were using Christianity to enslave the would-be "children of the light." Only by grafting themselves onto Do could they escape. The flesh was seen as merely a vessel. Do claimed that since Christianity was corrupted by these rebel souls, he was now the only true way; "Leave all behind," he said; "Come, follow me," echoing the words of Christ.¹³² Amazingly, he openly associated himself with other self-appointed and deluded and false "messiahs" and cult groups such as David Koresh and the Branch Davidians, the Unabomber, the Freemen, and the Solar Temple - a cult group that has conducted three mass suicides since 1994, a total of seventy suicides.¹³³ Searching for signs of "higher life," he soon heard over the internet that a UFO four times the size of the earth would be coming in the wake of the Hale-Bopp comet which was regularly appearing in the night sky during the Spring of 1997.¹³⁴ Do decided that this was the sign he had been waiting for; that this ship was coming to collect them and take them to a "higher place." He instructed his followers that the way to join with the ship was to leave all behind and commit suicide. Tragically, this led to the mass suicide of almost the entire group. So once again, we want to find out how where God was in all this; how could something like this happen, and how can we know if we are following a trustworthy leader? In

answering these questions, we will show that God was in fact faithful to these cult members, we will show how the members themselves repeatedly fell short of making wise decisions, and we will show that Do was clearly a false teacher; we will do all of this by observing and applying the tools and the methods God has given us to recognize these teachers.

In examining Do and the Heaven's Gate cult, as in just about any other cult, we find the membership to be made up of individuals purportedly seeking truth, the meaning of life, and a way out from a corrupt world and from their own problems. First of all, and speaking objectively to begin with, when seeking truth, especially as new seekers, most would agree it is always wisest to go to the tried and true writings and teachings handed down by the "ancients" over time. The Bible teaches, for example, not to stray from the "ancient paths," in Jer. 18:15: "And they have stumbled from their ways, from the ancient paths, to walk in bypaths, not on a highway." So it is usually unwise to commit our lives to any deviant and untested teacher or teaching with no confirming evidence and no established ordination or credentials. Jesus' identity, arrival, and mission, as we have seen, were all foretold of by Old Testament Scripture, and he was attested to as being a prophet from God by his contemporary John the Baptist (John the Baptist says, "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who is higher in rank than I, for He existed before me,'" Jn. 1:30), and John himself was affirmed to be a prophet by the people: "...for they are convinced that John was a prophet," Lk. 20:6b. Do was an "independent," not affiliated with nor ordained by any established church or institution, with nothing but his own word and "charismatic" personality to give him any authority to teach. Jesus also submitted himself to Scripture, as we have seen above in the discussion regarding the authority of the Bible, while Do did not. An example of Do's insubmission to Scripture is found when we look at what Jesus says in Matt. 24:4,5,23,26,27: "And Jesus answered and said to them, 'See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name saying, "I am the Christ," and will mislead many... Then if anyone says to you, "Behold, here is the Christ," or, "There He is," do not believe him... If therefore they say to you, "Behold, He is in the wilderness," do not go forth, or, "Behold, He is in the inner rooms," do not believe them. For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes over to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.'" When Christ returns, he will clearly not be in any one location such as in a room, or among some trees; it will be a worldwide event which will happen in the sky. Do's claim to be Christ appearing in his second coming is categorically false, showing him to be a false teacher. Do twisted (distorted the meaning of) the Scripture of Jesus' second coming when he applied it to himself; denying the truth of what the passage said about the second coming, and fraudulently using it for his own gain. The teaching of the second coming of Christ is in the Bible and was available for the cult members to use. Therefore the followers of the Heaven's Gate cult in their search for truth unwisely committed themselves to a figure who was completely without traditional established authority as a Christian leader, and they unwisely made this commitment without investigating for themselves the teachings of the one piece of established authority which their leader represented himself as submitting to and was purported to be using as their guide (the Bible). It may be argued that these individuals may not have known the Bible well enough to be aware of these

passages. First of all, nevertheless, the answer was there and available to them with a little bit of seeking. Second of all, if a leader to whom one is considering committing their life, or on whose teachings one is considering basing one's basic beliefs, is making a claim as fantastic as being the Christ, a claim putting him above the ranks of all the historical figures for the last 2000 years, clearly, some investigative work is in order; the gospels are a total of 120 pages - do your homework! Once again, if these members had taken these basic wise steps, disaster could have been prevented. An alternate question arises; were they really after the truth?

Our first point above regarding investigating the Heaven's Gate cult began objectively, because we were speaking, to begin with, of people who were not necessarily Christians to begin with, but were seekers in general; as we began to discuss their membership with the Heaven's Gate cult, we were able to begin speaking subjectively regarding Scripture, since the Bible was to some extent regarded as their guide. From this point on we will be speaking subjectively regarding Scripture; this is a group claiming in one form or another to be Christians, therefore the Bible applies. Second of all, then, to reiterate what Christ said above, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits." Jesus states that their fruits (deeds, their values, the type of life they lead), will reveal the truth about them. This allows us to compare the character of the teacher with what the Bible teaches that makes a follower of Christ. John says in I Jn. 2:7b,8, "By this we know that we are in him: The one who says he abides in him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked." Our life should reflect that of Christ's; one of love and purity. Did the Heaven's Gate leader Do fit this criteria? Do openly associated himself and his cause with suicide, and with other cults which practiced suicide. In fact, while on the internet (for the business which the cult operated), his followers were instructed to actually market suicide as a positive alternative to the people of internet suicide prevention groups!¹³⁵ This belief of Do's was no sudden surprise to any of his cult members. Suicide is the murder of one's self. The Bible teaches that all life is valuable; "For You created my innermost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You, because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well," Ps. 139:13,14; and that murder is wrong: "...and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him," I Jn. 3:15b (although a penitent murderer will be forgiven by God, I Jn. 1:9). Do's fruit was bad, through and through. His continual teaching and his final act and the final act of his members, as taught by him, was **murder!** He fails John's test of being in Christ (a Christian) - he was clearly not walking as Christ walked - he was not a Christian at all according to the Bible's standards, let alone a Christian leader. Once again, the members of the cult had this standard, the Bible, available to them; and surely they had at least heard the Ten Commandments in their lifetime, including, "You shall not murder," (Ex. 20:13), this Biblical command being well-known to pagans as well as Christians in this society, and also most other world societies today. They failed to take any wise action, but continued following a leader whose teaching was in direct conflict with what at least most of them would have known to be the teaching of the Bible, which they were professing as their guide. At the point they became aware of Do's pro-suicide beliefs, this is where, for most of them, they made a **voluntary** choice to be deceived. The Bible

speaks of this very occurrence: "For a time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away from the truth, and will turn aside to myths," II Tim 4:3,4.

Regarding Do's specific teachings about having this "knowledge" about the Christian church in general being corrupted by evil rebel souls from the devil, and of following himself, Do, as being the only way to reach the next life, amazingly, we can see in the Bible teachings against a first century cult with almost identical teachings!¹³⁶ I & II John are letters written by the Apostle John to a particular church (and ultimately to Christians in general) to combat the teachings of this cult, and to assure them that Jesus was all that was necessary for salvation; "These things I have written to you... that you may know that you have eternal life." This first century cult John was writing to refute in his letters I and II John, were known as Gnostics, and claimed that receiving Christ as Savior and believing in him was only the first step; some additional secret "knowledge" ('gnosis' is Greek for 'knowledge') was needed to reach eternal life. Do, as we saw, also made this claim. The Gnostics were teaching that Jesus was only spirit, not flesh and blood, and that the flesh is corrupt. Do also taught that the flesh of the Christian church without him was corrupt. John's letters, especially I John, refute everything Do taught on this subject, John's letter, which is God's word, therefore classifies Do as a precursory antichrist (I John 1:18,19), making it clear that Jesus did come in the flesh as a real human being, demonstrating that the flesh in and of itself is not corrupt, and because Jesus was a real human being, his death on the cross was a genuine death, and therefore a tangible act of love and all that was necessary to get us to heaven; no secret knowledge needed here! "What was from the beginning, what we have seen with our eyes and our hands have handled, concerning the word of life... we proclaim to you now, that you may have fellowship with us," I Jn. 1,3a; "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God," I Jn. 4:2b; "This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins," I Jn.4:10. Because all of this is true, John is able to assure the Christians that they need no further "secret knowledge:" "But you have and anointing from the Holy One, and you all know," John says, in I Jn. 2:20; Christians "know" because they have Christ, the Word of God, in their hearts. Again in I Jn. 2:27 John says, "As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him;" Christians have no need of a spiritual teacher with any new teaching, because they are taught by the Holy Spirit. This epistle in the Bible refutes point by point just about every teaching of the Heaven's Gate leader Do. Once again Do was blatantly contradicting and twisting the Scriptures, rather than submitting to them, and once again, the truth was there in the Bible available for these members, had they put forth any effort to seek it out, and/or taken a stand on this effort.

Do, in claiming to be Christ, advocating murder, and teaching a completely errant doctrine was self-conflicting and corrupt from the beginning. Despite general wisdom which says to be careful and do some investigation on whom or what you devote your life

to when seeking the right path, and despite these above teachings and clear warnings, and many others, from Jesus and John and many others in the Bible about false teachers and true vs. false doctrine, and some clear methods of distinguishing and discerning them, these members either disregarded these teachings, or did not bother to make the small amount of effort required to seek them out. The Bible itself was either not consulted for wisdom to take the right path, or else if it was, no one had the courage to assert themselves and take a stand against a clearly false teacher. And as previously stated, most would have been aware of the commandment against murder in the Bible even without seeking it out. Therefore wisdom to attain to the right path was not only not sought nor stood up for, it most probably was not even the true goal for the Heaven's Gate members. **Do, as is the case with other cult leaders, made use of this lack of initiative and lack of desire for true wisdom, in order to establish control, leading them to do whatever he said!**

Contrast their outcome with the promise to those who truly set their hearts on genuine wisdom: "**How blessed is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding. For its profit is better than the profit of silver, and its gain than fine gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire compares with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who hold her fast.**" Prov. 3:13-18

By comparing the teachings of our leaders with God's word, as Jesus did and as the Bible instructs us to do, and by comparing their lives and their "fruits" with the standards for a Christian leader which we find in God's word, and by desiring the truth with all our hearts and having the courage to stand up for the truth, we can avoid being deceived by false teachers, and have the long life and happiness the above proverb describes.

Christ's Leadership vs. the Leadership of Do and Typical Cult Leaders

Taking a look at the typical profile of a cult leader, typically the cult leader will claim a special status or qualification that makes a distinction between himself and others, including other religious authorities; putting that leader and his teachings as "not to be questioned." How can they do this? Very simply; usually the leader will have a somewhat charismatic personality, but the important thing is that since it is the leader's group, he makes the rules. This is part of the criteria of joining, and membership is usually at will, so members by joining agree to this stipulation. Do claimed to be the Christ who had returned with new information (that is, that religions, and Christianity in particular, had become corrupted by the devil, and that only through him could individuals escape this corruption). Cult leaders also typically isolate their membership from society, breaking their ties of family and friends. This greatly strengthens their leader's influence, control, and authority. Do demanded that all Heaven's Gate members sever relationships of family, friends, and community, and as we have seen he did not

submit himself to Scripture, and his teachings either twisted the Scriptures or were in complete contradiction to it. He also did not obey the governmental "law of the land;" he was openly promoting suicide and ultimately committed it himself, and caused it to be committed by others. Cult leaders, rather than being law-abiding good citizens and good examples, often defy and break the law.

Jesus, while asking for personal allegiance from his followers, as we have seen, still submitted himself to the Scriptures. God's word was his ultimate authority. He did redefine certain ceremonial and dietary laws, such as in Mk. 7:18,19, pertaining to foods, "And He said to them, 'Are you too so uncomprehending? Do you not see that whatever goes into the man from the outside cannot defile him; because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?' (Thus He declared all foods clean.)" But this had to do with ceremony, and not morality, and was consistent with the intent of the law. He did in fact redefine moral laws as well, but he did this by changing the depth of their implication, not their intent. For example, he said in his Sermon on the Mount, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery;' but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart," Matt. 5:27,28; endorsing the command against adultery, but strengthening the implications. Amazingly, even while he was redefining the law and teaching the greater depth of it, which was part of what the Old Testament said would be his mission as the Messiah and bearer of the new covenant ("I will write my laws on their hearts"), Jesus still simultaneously kept the Old Testament law perfectly in order to be an example, and because the new covenant would not be fully inaugurated until his death on the cross. For example in Matt. 8:2-4: "And behold, a leper came to Him, and bowed down to Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.' And stretching out his hand, He touched him, saying, 'I am willing, be cleansed.' And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, 'See to it that you tell no one, but go, "show yourself to the priest," and present the offering that Moses prescribed, for a testimony to them.'" Jesus quotes the Old Testament law of Leviticus 13:49 and instructs the healed man to follow it and to perform the offering of the law of the Old Testament, which Moses had written down, even though these practices were about to become obsolete. Paul says, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes," Rom. 10:4.

And rather than setting himself up as the unquestioned and unquestionable leader, as cult leaders as a rule do, Jesus always encouraged honest and sincere questions and seeking. At the beginning of Mark 4 Jesus teaches a parable (a story to demonstrate a spiritual or moral principle) to the people, and then ends with "He who has ears to hear, let him hear," Mk. 4:9b. Some of the people then come up to Jesus to ask for understanding: "And as soon as He was alone, His followers (lit., those about Him), along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables. And He said to them, 'To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but those who are outside get everything in parables, in order that while seeing, they may not perceive; and while hearing, they may not understand...'" Mk. 4:10-12a. Here Jesus not only encourages questions, but teaches the people that the **key** to spiritual growth is to come forward and ask when something is not understood. Those who ask learn the truth, but those who do not bother coming

forward to ask, remain imperceptive and without understanding, **by their own choice of inaction.** And with regard to challenges to his teachings, "traps," or debative questions from his enemies, Jesus never avoided these, but remained in the "public arena" to demonstrate that he had nothing to hide and was not afraid of the opposition. In fact, in just about every synagogue, as well as other places, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes questioned and confronted him. For example, from the first three chapters alone of the book of Mark, representing the first year of Christ's three years of ministry, we find the following far from all-inclusive list of confrontations of Christ by his contemporary religious counterparts: Mk. 2:6b,7a, "...scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 'Why does this man speak this way?'" Mk. 2:24, "And the Pharisees were saying to Him, 'See here, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?'" Mk. 3:2, "And they were watching Him to see if He would heal on the Sabbath, in order that they might accuse Him;" Mk. 3:22, "And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, 'He is possessed by Beelzebul,' and 'He casts out demons by the ruler of demons.'" Jesus and his disciples were no strangers to public debates and challenges. And they were quite accustomed to the manner in which the debates typically ended: "And they [Jesus' enemies] were unable to catch Him in a saying in the presence of the people; and marveling at His answer, they became silent."

Jesus' practice was clearly to remain integrated and involved in society. Where were the disciples and Jesus every Sabbath and many times during the week? In the synagogue! Luke 4:16 says, "...and as was His custom, He entered into the synagogue." Jesus' integration and involvement with the communities around him is further demonstrated by his statement at his arrest (Matt. 26:55): "At that time Jesus said to the multitudes, 'Have you come out with swords to arrest Me as though I were a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me.'" While Jesus, having nothing to hide, operated in public in daylight, it was his enemies who came out at night to arrest him. And while there are exceptions, it was not a pre-requisite that Jesus' followers cut ties to families or friends. While Peter, James, John, and the others had to leave their families temporarily in order to travel around with Christ; "Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will their be for us?'" Matt. 19:27; "Jesus answered, 'And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life,'" Matt. 19:29; this was for the logistical purposes of travel and effective ministry, not for isolation; in Mk. 1:30a,31, for example, Jesus and the disciples are at Peter's home, and Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law; "Now Simon's mother-in-law was sick with fever...And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them." and we also learn from Paul that all the disciples had been reunited with their wives once Jesus' earthly ministry was complete: "Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas [Peter]?" I Cor. 9:5. So in following Christ, then and now, the occasional call to leave family is usually due to logistical constraints, and not for isolation or deliberate separation, although there are exceptions to this. The fact is, Jesus was so integrated and involved in society that it sometimes got on his disciples' nerves; but when it did, it always turned out that it was their own short-

sightedness that was to blame. For example, at one point when the disciples are sick of all the crowds being around them and they ask Jesus to send the crowds away, partly for lack of food, Jesus first feeds them, 5000 men, plus women and children, and does so miraculously from a total of five loaves of bread and two fish; "and they all ate, and were satisfied," Mk. 6:42,44. The disciples learned a lesson of servanthood, and to depend directly on God to meet the need. Jesus also was a good example in society, obeying the governmental "laws of the land," rather than disregarding them and committing crimes, as cult leaders often do. As previously mentioned, the Bible exhorts to obey all governing authorities. Jesus never committed, nor advocated committing, a crime; he even paid his taxes, and even when his nation, Israel, was at that time in subjection to an enemy nation, Rome, meaning that some of the taxes paid would be paid to the Roman government! Matt. 17:24,25a,27 gives an example of Jesus paying the temple tax to the Jews: "When they had come up to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, 'Does your teacher not pay the temple tax?' He said, 'Yes.' And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, '...lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.'" And Mk. 12:14-17 gives an example of Jesus advocating paying taxes to Caesar (Rome): When they had come, they said to him, 'Teacher, we know that You are true, and that You care about no one, for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?' But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, 'Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it.' So they brought it. and He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' and Jesus answered and said to them, 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's' and they marveled at Him."

In summary, Christ's leadership example was to fully submit himself to Scripture, to permit and even encourage honest questions, to be continually available to challenges and confrontations, to be high profile and involved in society and in the church, to be a law-abiding citizen, and instead of having anything to hide, to be a good example to all, relating the exciting message of God's love and salvation openly to as many as possible. Do and typical cult leaders are quite different, picking and choosing the Scriptures they wish to submit to (if any), while ignoring, twisting and concealing the rest, and, as stated, they are separate from society and are the unquestioned leaders, avoiding confrontation because they know their deeds are evil. Jesus said, "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God," Jn 3:20,21. God was faithful to those cult members in leaving them the example of Jesus, the perfect leader. We can use Christ's example of leadership as well, as a means of testing our leaders and determining if they are genuine, and thereby avoiding the deception of cult leaders. Are they themselves fully submitting to all of God's word, and honestly, without twisting it? Are they integrated and involved in society, unafraid of questions, law-abiding, and openly living a good example, excited about God's love and

desiring to share it with others? The answer should be yes to all of these if they are claiming to be followers of, and especially leaders for, Christ.

God's Universal Provisions

We are going to finish this second part of this paper, "Jesus Christ vs. Religious Cult Leaders" by focusing on the specific situation of people who have joined a cult who have little or no benefit of a Christian background or exposure to the Bible; the question is: These people appear to have at least made an effort to move away from ignorance and rebellion against God, and toward Christ and the Bible, by joining a leader of a group which is making claims of being Christian, or pertaining to Christianity; so why did not God guide them to the true church; why did he seemingly allow them to be deceived? On the surface, this can seem to be a difficult question, but the key to the answer for the most part lies in the question itself; in that these individuals often **appear** to have been making an honest effort, but were they in truth actually making an honest and whole-hearted search for the Truth? **The Bible promises, "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart," Jer. 29:13a.** Therefore, to answer our question, we need to determine the genuineness of these individuals' efforts. To do this, we need to look at God's universal faithfulness and provision to all men, comparing it to their actions.

First, God has given all men a conscience. As stated, cult leaders typically isolate the cult, placing themselves as the unquestioned ultimate authority. Because the members have placed themselves in this position of submission to one individual as the ultimate authority, they are greatly disadvantaged in doing what is right. While they have a conscience, the very fact that they have made commitment of submission to their cult leader quite often has compromised the operation and effectiveness of their conscience, in part because they would have already ignored the witness of their conscience' warning against unwisely submitting to an individual with unconfirmed integrity, and in such an absolute manner. That we have a conscience is evidenced both inside and outside the Bible. Paul says in Rom. 2:14,15, referring to non-Christians and non-Jews (Gentiles), and taking the "law" to mean the Old Testament moral law given to the Jews, "For when the Gentiles who do not have the law do instinctively the things of the law, these, not having the law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing them or else defending them..." As far as Christians are concerned, Peter says, in I Pet. 3:16, "...Keep a good conscience..." The conscience, therefore, is a tool God has given us to keep us on the right path. Outside the Bible there is further clear evidence of the existence of the conscience distinct from animal instinct. "Historically, almost every culture has recognized the existence of such a faculty. Ancient Egyptians, for example, were urged not to transgress against the dictates of the heart, for one 'must stand in fear of departing from its guidance.'"¹³⁷ But while the concept of the moral conscience is so established in history and cultures, the recent "new age" movement has made arguments against the concept of existence of the human conscience, and its distinctness from mere animal instinct.

The typical argument against the existence of the conscience and its distinctness from instinct says that there is really no distinctive difference between the two; the conscience is really no more than a highly developed set of instincts. Webster's dictionary defines instinct as "a complex response to environmental stimuli without involving reason," and adds that it is "inheritable and unalterable."¹³⁸ The goal of instincts is to both preserve the individual and the group or species.¹³⁹ The "new ager" argument says that the conscience, being a merely a more developed set of instincts, is therefore merely a more sophisticated tool for the preservation of the individual and species. But Webster's defines conscience as a knowledge by one's inner self of the moral right and wrong of one's own actions.¹⁴⁰ Comparing the two definitions, we see that the conscience uses reason, and is concerned with morality (decisions of right and wrong), while instincts (in general, pertaining to animals) **do not make use of reason**, and are concerned with the physical preservation of the individual or the group or species. Two different goals, two different means used to reach those goals. So which argument is supported by the evidence in the world around us? We see in humankind at times, although rare, one individual of more "worth," or usefulness to society (i.e., physically stronger, smarter, etc.) surprisingly giving his life for another weaker individual, who is clearly of less usefulness to society, with everyone affirming this a noble and admirable act. Yet self-preservation would rule out the logic of this act of the stronger individual, and survival of the species would not be served by this act either. So what, then, are the motives of such an illogical act? Human beings who have gone on to perform this act, as well as others, claim its motives are shearly out of love for and an inherent value for the fellow human being, not dependent on the individual's ability to contribute to society; survival and preservation goals are distinctly absent! Indeed, survival of the species and self-preservation offers no explanation for this type of act. The only explanation is a moral conscience sensitized by a personal love for or value of a particular individual, or love for and the inherent value of and dignity of human life in general (amazingly, human beings have been known to give their lives for individuals they do not even know). We do not see this type of action occurring regarding instincts: the closest we come to is where, for example, a mother bear may die while fighting to protect its young; but the goal is still an inherited response for the preservation of the species; the lives of the young, being less able to defend themselves, more numerous, having a greater length of life ahead of them, and still having a reproductive mission to fulfill, are of more value for the preservation of the species. The conscience, therefore, cannot be merely a more developed instinct, as typical "new agers" say, but is in fact a separate moral tool superior to and separate from instinct, and according to the Bible, given from God.

Having demonstrated that the conscience is, without a doubt, of Divine origin, regarding the operation of the conscience, regarding cult members, once the initial typically unwise decision has been made to join the cult, the compromised position the typical cult members have placed themselves in when submitting to a leader who demands unquestioned authority, as the cult leader brings in false teaching which the members' consciences would most likely be telling them is wrong or dangerous, the members typically choose to ignore this witness of their conscience, and defer to the leader's

judgment, due to his position. Regardless of cultural background or past exposure to the Bible or to Christianity, any honest seeker would realize that he would be able to read the material (the Bible) himself, to verify the integrity of the leader, as to whether that leader is accurately representing, teaching, and himself following, true Biblical Christianity; and especially when one is committing one's life to the cause (the cult), this seeker's reason and conscience would be there to convict him that this would be the only wise thing to do, and to fail to take this step would be very unwise. However, out of the desire to remain with the cult, demonstrating motives of possibly of a need for acceptance, belonging, or purpose, or a combination of these, and also demonstrating the lack of genuine motives of an honest search for the true God, the leader's demands for absolute unquestioned obedience are followed, their conscience is ignored, and little or no effort is made to verify the leader's integrity in light of what the Bible says. Once this unwise path is begun on the part of these members, unquestioningly following the leader, the isolation from society, which is an almost universal demand of the cult leaders, is a great disadvantage to its members in ever getting back on the right path, and away from the reckless and dangerous ideas and teachings of the cult leader. In remaining connected to society and a variety of relationships, if an individual has questions or trouble in following his own conscience and distinguishing what is right, he can speak with friends and others or consult with a variety of authorities (the Bible, clergy, doctor, counselor, lawyer, older friends, etc.). Isolation from society further allows the conscience to be numbed, not having the usual reminders of what is good and right. Prov. 11:14 says, "Where there is no guidance, the people fall, but in an abundance of counselors, there is victory," and Prov. 20:18b says, "Prepare plans by consultation."

Second, arising from our God-given conscience and reason, we have governmental laws, which is the criminal and civil justice system, which each society establishes, creating along with this the "laws of the land;" our societal standard of right and wrong from a standpoint of keeping the peace and allowing the society to function safely and be productive. These laws serve as reminders to do what is right, deterrents against doing wrong (forms of punishment back up these laws), and as correction when the law is broken (punishments). A typical cult leader will often place himself above the law of the land, rather than submitting to it, and as the absolute leader, will usually insist the cult members do the same when so directed. As pointed out, the Bible teaches we are to submit to governing authorities, and it is only in rare instances that the Bible will advocate breaking a governmental law, and this is only when it is in clear violation of a crucial principle of the Bible, such as preservation of human life, or the spread of the gospel. The law is there to remind everyone what is right in society.

Third, God reveals himself through creation: Rom. 1:18-20: **"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse." Creation makes manifest to all human beings that there is one**

God, that he is all powerful, that he created us and loves us. This as well is the Bible's response to those who say "What about those who have never heard?" i.e., about Jesus or the gospel message. **Paul says, "They have heard,"** (Rom. 10:18); this sounds like a pretty bold claim, but he then refers to the beginning of Psalm 19 to prove this fact: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world," Psalm 19:1-4. This is a profound assertion of the Bible: Wherever there are human beings with speech or language, the message has reached them; the gospel message is the good news that the One true God who created all things loves us, and desires for us to believe in him and follow him, in a faith relationship with him, trusting in God for our salvation by grace through faith rather than by works. Most of the believers of the Old Testament didn't know how God would make propitiation for their sins; they hadn't heard of Jesus, he hadn't been born yet; but they trusted in God to provide the atoning sacrifice for their sins by grace, and they were saved. As David said, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity," (Psalm 32:1,2a); Peter says in I Pet. 1:10-12, "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things into which angels long to look;" even the prophets of the Old Testament who "made careful searches and inquiries" were given few details as to how God would bring about the salvation of the gospel; they had to have faith that God would somehow pay the price for their sins, and they were saved by their faith, as were other the believers in the Old Testament who had never heard of Jesus. The fullness of the gospel message, of Christ's redemptive work on the cross, was not revealed until the New Testament: "Which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets," Eph. 3:5. **In the same way as the Old Testament believers, people who live in the remotest parts of the earth are able to go to heaven without necessarily ever having seen a Bible or having heard of the name of Jesus if they by faith believe that there is a God, and if by faith they do what pleases him and trust that he has provided a way by grace;** the sufficient gospel message being proclaimed to them by creation, their conscience, the God-given model of the human family as an example of grace relationships, and the Holy Spirit, who convicts the hearts of all men of their need for God's redemptive work in their lives (Jn. 16:8-11). While it is true that Jesus' perfect life, sacrificial death on the cross, & resurrection is the only way anyone, past, present, or future, is saved ("and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world," (I Jn. 2:2); Jesus Christ is, in fact, "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world," (Rev. 13:8b), see also Acts 4:12), knowing of these facts isn't necessary for salvation according to the Bible. This fact of the universality of the gospel is demonstrated by John in Revelation, where his vision he received from Christ demonstrates there will be at least one person

from every nation, tongue, tribe, & people in heaven, this by necessity including people who have never heard of the name of Jesus; Rev. 7:9,10. God is just and offers everyone access to eternal life.

Nevertheless, this doesn't in any way negate the urgency that believers have of proclaiming the gospel message of salvation through Christ: While some will believe without hearing about Christ's death on the cross, the Bible makes it clear, many more will believe when they are told of Jesus. Jesus is the climax of God's gospel story to us, the **"Greatest Story Ever Told!"** "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," Jn. 1:17. Grace abounds, enabling more people to believe when they hear the story of Jesus, his love for us, his death on the cross to pay the price for our sins, and his resurrection victory! "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ," Rom. 10:17; Jesus is "the true light, that give light to every man," Jn. 19. Jesus said, "All authority on heaven and earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age," Matt. 28:18b,19,20.

Fourth, in addition to the individual conscience, and the governmental "law of the land" originating from the conscience, also in part originating from the conscience God has given the collective sense of morality, or moral code, to humanity to keep us on the right path. To take a more detailed look at this, in every society, Christian or non-Christian, today and in the past, we find a general standard of "right" and "wrong" that is at times separate from, and goes beyond, our legal "right" and "wrong." While this standard has not always been the same in every society, "these differences never amounted to anything like a total difference. If anyone will take the trouble to compare the moral teachings of, say, the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Hindus, ...and Romans, what would really strike him will be how very like they are to each other and to our own..."¹⁴¹ Societies have almost without exception agreed on basic moralities such as the evils of selfishness, murder, theft, adultery, suicide, dishonesty, etc. "Men have differed as regards to what people you ought to be unselfish to, whether it was only your own family, or your fellow countrymen, or everyone. But they have always agreed that you ought not to put yourself first. Men have differed as to whether to have one wife or four. But they have always agreed that you must not simply have any woman you liked."¹⁴² Rom 2:14,15 above talks about this basic societal morality or standard that even societies who have not had contact with the Bible show that they still have; a sense of the basic teachings of the Bible and its moral teachings operates in their hearts; their establishment of their own moral "law" shows this to be true. "...even a cursory study of anthropology show us that every culture has had some type of belief system. Human kind is incurably religious."¹⁴³ This morality contained in every society, coming in the form of religious teachings and writings such as Christianity and the Bible, Islam and the Qu'ran, Hinduism and the Upanishads, Buddhism and the Tipitakas, etc., as well as in the form of historical and cultural traditions and teachings, acts as a guide to doing what is right, and is given ultimately from God. While according to the Bible the various religions themselves are not from God - only Christianity is - these religions demonstrate the existence of this moral code,

which comes in part from the conscience, as Rom. 2:14,15 indicates, and also from the wisdom found in God's creation around us. While these different religions are evidence of the existence of God (who will save people from these other religions, if they seek him) and are evidence of God's gifts of morality and wisdom to all men, they are also evidence of man's sin and stubborn self-will. Is. 53:6a says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way." God gives mankind morality, wisdom, and additionally he sends his Holy Spirit to draw all men to himself as the true God through Christ: "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin and of righteousness, and of judgment," Jn 16:8. But people often refuse God's true revelation of himself, and instead create their own "god." "God created us in his image, and we have decided to return the favor," as evangelist Cliffe Knechtle put it.¹⁴⁴ Men often pick and choose what truths of God they want to "hear," or accept, and which they want to reject, and which they want to alter. The result is the different religions and "gods" of the world, most of them containing some truths of the true God, and a moral code which to a large degree resembles what is found in the Bible, but being in actuality a false religion and false "god" who is not able to save (the Bible says there is only one way: "He who has the Son has the life, he who does not have the Son does not have the life," I Jn 5:12; "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding. This is the true God and eternal life," I Jn. 5:20). Nevertheless, these moral codes do include general wisdom which can guide people to do right and not wrong, legally and morally. People who submit to cult leaders, and join and remain with cult groups, no matter what cultural background they are from, have during their lifetime been exposed to a moral code or belief system, which is ultimately a gift from God, but have chosen to disregard the wisdom and guidance they have received from it upon entering the cult, or upon continuing with the cult, making often one decision after another they know in their heart to be wrong, foolish, and dangerous.

Subtle Cults

While we have been focusing on the extreme types of cult leaders and cults who are typically anti-social, committing illegal and dangerous acts, as well as being unscriptural in their teachings and practices, such as Do and the Heaven's Gate cult, there are cults that are far more subtle in their deviations from the truth, yet as the Bible says, they are "having a form of godliness, but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" II Tim. 3:5. These cults can appear much like a Christian church, and they and their leaders can even be integrated in society (unlike the typical extreme cult leaders), and yet still be false teachers. These cults can be recognized and avoided using some of the same methods as for the extreme cults; when joining any group or institution claiming to be Christian, its leaders' character and teachings should be tested and compared with Christ and the Bible, as demonstrated in this section. In regard to these subtle cults, the best strategy is to specifically focus on their teachings about God, Christ, and salvation in the Bible, determining whether or not they line up with God's word, as well as the leaders' integrity in following what they teach. A common characteristic virtually all cults share, both extreme and subtle, is that they deny the Deity (Godhead) of Christ. As we have seen, the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus Christ is the Lord of All; he is the Creator God

(as the Bible says, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," Col. 2:9). Since the Christian's goal is to know Christ, a basic and necessary step to knowing Christ is first of all knowing **who He is**. These cult groups have 'a form of godliness,' appearing like a regular church, but in denying Christ's Deity, they are 'denying its power,' because they are denying the power of the life-changing message of the true gospel, that **the Lord of All himself gave his life for us**, the ultimate demonstration of love enabling a personal relationship with the Lord; therefore they prevent the possibility of a true relationship with Christ for the cult's members. Therefore if the group or institution and its leaders do not teach that Jesus is equal with God, or if they contradict the Bible in other areas, they are a cult of false teachers, and as the Bible says, "from such people turn away!" Once again, God knows the heart, and God is faithful. While these cults and cult leaders may not be as readily distinguishable as the extreme cults and cult leaders, the Bible is still there to test the leaders' teachings and fruits, and the Bible promise still holds: "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart," Jer. 29:13a.

God has given tools to all mankind, demonstrating his faithfulness to everyone in giving guidance to everyone to choose wise paths, and to stay away from foolish and destructive teachings, such as those of cult leaders. As we have seen, people who end up in these disaster-prone cults are largely responsible for, if not completely responsible for, their own predicaments and resulting tragedies. They did not just suddenly find themselves in their dangerous environments, as much as some would like to make it sound was the case; they were not just "ordinary folk" who were all of a sudden "innocently duped," nor were they honest seekers, searching with all their hearts for the true God; if their were, as we have seen, God is faithful, and would have rescued them. Instead they were almost always individuals who deliberately made one unwise decision after another, turning away from the true faithful God's provision of the individual conscience, societal encouragement, societal standards, and cultural moral codes, compromising these for a new thrill or adventure, or an easy form of acceptance.

Most importantly, God has given us Jesus, who gave his life on the cross and rose again. Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as my Father taught Me, I speak these things," Jn 8:28b. When we focus on Jesus, his perfect example of obedience to God and his demonstration of total love for us, and we compare the teachings and lives of our leaders and ourselves to Christ and his word, and then do our best to seek and follow Jesus courageously and with all our heart, and to choose Christ-like leaders, we will have no need to fear, for God's guidance is sure: "The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them his covenant. My eyes are continually toward the Lord, for He will pluck my feet out of the net," Ps 25:14,15.

The Way

In answer to our question in the introduction to this paper, "How can we know who is right and what is the truth?" We can know because God demonstrated it in Jesus with irrefutable proofs. The truth is, no one can compare with Jesus. Jesus is the only one who fulfilled prophecies, having his coming, identity, and accomplishments a fore-ordained plan of God verified by documented history; he is the only one who rose from the dead, demonstrating his absolute authority over man's most feared and certain earthly outcome, and affirming his claim to be the source of all life; he is the only one who led a perfect life, demonstrating the authority of his moral teachings, never doing anything wrong and always showing perfect love and compassion to those in need, being the perfect example as a human being and a leader, to show us how to stay on the right path and free from deception, but more than that, **as the perfect example of love Jesus served us and saved us by paying the ultimate price for us on the cross, not for something he had done wrong, but for things we had done wrong, from which we were helpless to save ourselves.** And through this ultimate act of love, Jesus did something else no one else could do: He made the way for a relationship between us human beings and God, the eternal Creator of the universe! As Christians, we can actually call the God of all creation our best friend and our Father, having a loving relationship with him through Christ, growing closer to him every day. But there is only one way we can have this relationship, and only one way to eternal life: The night before Jesus was crucified, as he was having dinner with his disciples, knowing all the events that were about to occur; his betrayal and arrest, his crucifixion, his resurrection, and later his ascension to heaven, Jesus began to tell his disciples about how he would soon be returning to heaven to prepare a place for them; he says, "'And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, you may be there also. And you know the way to where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me,'" Jn 14:3-6. Far from being a way, **Jesus is the Way, the only Way, to know the true God,** to spend eternity with him, and to avoid eternal destruction. Have you received Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, and entered into a personal relationship with him? If not, this is the most important decision you will ever make, so receive Christ now!

To receive Christ and become a Christian, pray to God:

"Lord Jesus, please forgive me for my sins, and forgive me for doing things my own way all of my life. Thank you for dying on the cross paying the price for my sins, and rising from the dead. Please come into my life, and take control of the 'throne' of my life, and make me the kind of person you want me to be. Thank you for saving me. Amen."

If you prayed this prayer, and it represents the desire and decision of your heart, Christ has come into your life, as he promised, and you have been saved for eternity. He is your Master and your best friend, and he will never leave you (Josh. 1:5). Do your best from now on to follow him with your life. Find a Christian, and tell them of your decision, then find a church which preaches God's word, and attend it regularly. Below is a 'GROWTH' tool to help you grow in your relationship with Christ:

Go to God in prayer daily

Read God's word daily

Obey God moment by moment

Witness for Christ in word and deed

Trust in God for every detail of your life

Holy Spirit: Allow him to empower and guide you

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