

Who is the Traditional Christ?

In an astounding public admission in 1998, the Mormon Prophet testified that the Christ he believed in was not the same as the Christ in which most Christians believe. "In bearing testimony of Jesus Christ, President Hinckley spoke of those outside the Church who say Latter-day Saints 'do not believe in the traditional Christ.' 'No, I don't. The traditional Christ of whom they speak is not the Christ of whom I speak'" (*LDS Church News*, June 20, 1998, p.7). Therefore, who is this traditional Christ in whom President Hinckley did not believe?

How is the traditional Christ of the Bible different than the Christ of Mormonism?

1. The traditional Christ of the Bible is the only true and living God, equal with the Father in all ways.

John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The "Word" in this verse is identified in John 1:14 as Jesus Christ "...the only begotten of the Father who was made flesh and dwelt among us." In John 1:1, the verse is not saying that Jesus Christ is "a" God, but God himself equal with the Father.

In John 10:30 Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." In the original language (Greek) this could be translated "I and my Father are one thing." What "one thing" was He talking about that was common to both Christ and the Father? In verses 31-33 of that same passage the answer is clear. The Jews took up stones to stone Him because He was claiming to be God equal with the Father.

The LORD speaking through the prophet Isaiah in Is. 43:10 said, "...before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me." It is clear from this verse there is only one God who exists anywhere. This one God is identified to be three persons in the New Testament (Mt. 28:19; Acts 5:3-4); God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. There is only one God, but the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are separate persons, each one fully God. This biblical description of the one true and living God who is three persons is incomprehensible to us. But if a person rejects this God and worships another God, how can he be saved?

2. The traditional Christ of the Bible is the creator of the universe.

John 1:3 says that Christ personally did the work of creation (also see Hebrews 1:1-2). The origin of the universe has been described by scientists as a "big bang." That theory presupposes that the elements and atoms and substance that makes up the universe were already in existence. Scientists have no answer about how those elements came into being and most scientists assume matter is eternal.

However, the Bible teaches that God is eternal, rather than matter. God brought all matter into existence out of nothing. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." That verse assumes that God existed before the universe. Psalm 33:6 says, "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." Verse 9 says, "For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." And Hebrews 11:3 says, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

3. The traditional Christ of the Bible is also the creator of all the angels including Lucifer.

Colossians 1:16 says, "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible... all things were created by Him, and for Him." We are also told in Ezekiel 28 that Lucifer (the covering cherub) rebelled against his creator (Christ). He thus became Satan or the devil and will be cast into the Lake of Fire in the future.

4. The traditional Christ of the Bible is the only priest after Melchisedec.

Matthew 27:50-51 says that when Jesus finally gave up the ghost and died on Calvary, the veil in the temple that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn in two from the top to the bottom. The implication is that it was purposely torn by God himself. Under the Mosaic Law the only access to the worship of God was through the sacrifices and service of the Aaronic priesthood. The High Priest was the only one allowed to enter the Holy of Holies beyond the veil where God's presence dwelt. He could only do this once a year on the Day of Atonement with a sacrifice for himself and for the nation.

As a result of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, Hebrews 7 tells us that there was the necessity for a "change" of the law. Christ was not of the tribe of Levi, but of Judah and was a priest after Melchisedec (verses 11-12). Therefore, the Aaronic priesthood has been "disannulled" (or made null and void; see verse 18). As the sinless Lamb of God, Christ's one sacrifice for all men for all time did not need to ever be repeated. And since He is alive forever more, He is a priest forever after this order. Therefore, He is the only priest after Melchisedec and His priesthood cannot be passed on to any other man. Hebrews 7:24 clearly states: "But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." The word "unchangeable" is a word in Greek which can be translated "cannot be passed on."

5. The traditional Christ of the Bible came to seek and to save that which was lost.

In Luke 19, Zachaeus, the tax collector who was considered a great sinner by The religious leaders of the Jews. He realized his sinfulness and received Jesus into his house. He then believed in Jesus as his Messiah and Savior. He also proved his faith was real by restoring what he had taken. The religious leaders (though just as sinful) because of their pride and self-righteousness never considered themselves sinners or lost. The statement by Jesus in Luke

19:10 was for their benefit as well as all those today who are self-righteous. He said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

The implication is that no matter how good and religious a person is, unless they admit they are lost and justly condemned as wicked sinners in the sight of a Holy God, they will not be saved. John 3:18 teaches that those who have not truly trusted in Jesus Christ alone as their personal Savior are condemned already. We are all born with a sin nature and are dead spiritually and lost unless and until we are saved by grace alone through faith in Christ.

6. The traditional Christ of the Bible justifies the ungodly.

Romans 4:5 says, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." In other words, if someone is hoping that by obeying commandments and living a better life it will help them gain any part of their salvation they will be rejected by God. Only those who trust in Christ and His sacrifice alone, apart from any works they do will be counted right in God's sight. The good news about Bible salvation is that God forgives and "justifies" (or declares right) those who are ungodly and unworthy, when they put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

7. The traditional Christ gives the gift of eternal life to those who are unworthy.

Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. "Wages" are something you deserve for what you've done. In the case of sin, the wages of sin is death. This is not only a reference to physical death, but also to eternal death. Matthew 25:46 says, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." However, the next verse says, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." No matter how good or religious we may be, we are all sinners and none of us can ever be worthy to gain eternal life. The word "redemption" means payment of a price. If we trust in Christ's payment on the cross to be sufficient to pay for all our sins and all our salvation, apart from any works we can do, we receive the gift of eternal life. It is a true gift given to unworthy sinners who trust in Him. He not only gives us eternal life now and for all eternity when we believe, but also forgives all our sins and gives us a new life in Christ.

John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The word "have" is in the present tense and means we have it now when we believe. The evidence that a person has truly been saved by grace alone through faith in Christ is a new love for God and desire to obey His word and do His will. If a person says they believe in Christ but there is no evidence that it is real in their life, then they probably are not saved and didn't trust in Christ alone with all their heart to be saved. True saving faith in Christ brings regeneration, eternal life and the forgiveness of all our sins.

Would you like to know the traditional Christ and have Him as your Savior? Then, turn from sin and religion and any hope that you can gain any part of your salvation through obeying commandments and living a good life. To be saved now, trust and believe with all your heart that Christ suffered and paid the complete penalty and price for all your sins, then died in your place and rose bodily from the grave. If you will do this, God will save your soul, forgive all your sins and give you eternal life.

M. J. Bardon