

The Claims of Christ
Part II

This article is a continuation of Part I

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Christ linked His statement to the statement made in the Old Testament. Here He links Himself to God. In His *Incarnation, He put on what He was not. He put on human flesh. He adds a new nature to His divine nature.* The statement literally reads: “Before Abraham came into being, I AM” (John 8:58). The same contrast of verbs is used that appears in (John 1:1 and 1:14). “Came into being” involves a crisis in time, a definite act. “Am,” like the other form of the same verb in (John 1:1), means timeless being. There never was a time when the Son was not. He could always assert, “*I am.*”¹ He claimed to have power and sufficiency. He made an open and outright claim to be God. The master takes up humanity and deals with His people. Yet this statement does not violate the integrity of Christian monotheism in holding to the Son to be one with God the Father. The Jews and the people there understood the statement, the statement could not be made without consequences, the Jewish people who heard the statement, picked up stones to stone Him because they took the statement to be an assertion of deity (John 8:59).

What does it all signify? It means that, fundamentally, the message of Jesus is *Himself*. He did not merely declare the Gospel. He Himself is the Gospel. He is the absolute answer, the final goal of our human heart-quest.

Plow through the main periods of philosophy; the ancient, the middle and the modern, starting with Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, on into the modern period, beginning with Rene Descarts (1596-1650), David Hume (1711-76), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Karl Marx (1818-83), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), George Hegel (1770-1831), and finding a temporary zenith, its apex in Jean-Paul Sarte, Albert Camus and Bertrand Russell. But none of them had the abiding answer or the final word for the human heart. None could give an answer for what is life for? “Why was it given? These have been the one great puzzle for human books and human brains; and ancient philosophy and mediaeval learning and modern culture alike have failed to tell us what these mean.”²

No man, no book save one, has ever told the world who He is and what He wants from man; so man is not left on his own to face uncertain light, and to carry out, for himself, the life that he thinks best. Only in Christ, man has found the secret philosophy he never knew. The certainty of an absolute—God is there, and He has made a noise in the world—“He became flesh and dwelt among us . . . (John 1:14). He has revealed Himself in the Incarnation—the act whereby God became Man in the virgin birth, and is called “Immanuel -- *God with us*” (Matt. 1:23).

Christ exposes the philosophy and the emptiness of the human heart, and the emptiness of the germ and the tenor of man made religions. Human religion and human philosophy are shifting sand. Study through the life and writings of Confucius, the life and theories, philosophies of Buddha and his break from Hinduism, the life of Mohammed along with his Koran; you will discover, there is: no “I am,” no “I say,” and no “I will,” as Christ made these pronouncements with certainty. They were religious

¹ Tenny, p.149.

² Henry Drummond, *The Greatest Thing In The World*, (Collins Clear-Type Press, London), p.137.

innovators, religious philosophers, the would-be-pathfinders, all were groping in the dark to find the way, the truth and the life. Christ claimed with finality, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). “No man can come unto Me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. . .” (John 6:44). “. . . no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father” (John 6:65).

In the history of the human race and among all religious leaders, no one else truthfully ever made such august, profound and startling claims as these:

- “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35)
- “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12)
- “I am the door of the sheep” (John 10:7)
- “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11)
- “I am the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25)
- “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6)
- “I am the true vine” (John 15:1).

Was Christ aware of their immensity and intensity? Other religious leaders of the world pointed men away from themselves, saying “that is the truth as I understand it, follow that.” But there is no certainty in that. Whereas Christ said: “I am the way, the truth and the life . . . come unto ME” (John 14:6; Matt.10: 30-31). He made His claim and He lays down His doctrine with complete authority!

His Direct Claims

He made a direct claim to apply the fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture to Himself. He claimed: “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21, a Scripture text taken from Isa. 61:1-2). When He uttered these words, all eyes were riveted on Him with mute silence as He spoke in the Jewish Synagogue.

He made a direct claim to forgive sins, He declared to a paralytic man on his sick bed, “My son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:1-12). His second declaration of forgiveness of sins is found in Luke 7:36-50. The third example of His direct claim to forgive sins is found in John 8:1-11. Here, in the tenor of the context, the Master told the woman taken in the very act of adultery by the Jewish leadership, “. . .neither do I condemn thee.” It was the same as saying, “I forgive you.” Only God can forgive sins, and Christ claimed to be God.

In John 5:39, He made the claim that “. . .*All Scriptures point to Him.*” Christ went on to say in John 4:26, here He made the claim to be the Messiah of the Old Testament. He said: “I that speak unto thee am He.” Christ’s entire ministry was colored by this sense of fulfillment (Luke 10:23-24; Matt.13:16-17).

In John 10:30, He claimed to be “. . . equal with God,” because He had the nature of God. He further claimed and said that to *know* Him was to know God; to see Him was to see God; to receive Him was to receive God; to hate Him was to hate God; to honor Him was to honor God (John 8:19; 14:7; 12:44; 12:45; 14:6; 14:1; Mark 9:37; John 15:23; 17:3; 5:23).

He made an-indirect claim to give life (John 5:24; 10:10; 14:6). Peter, the disciple confessed to Christ: “You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). It is a true quality of life that can only be found in Christ.

He made a declaration of truth with an originality that grew out of His own knowledge. He had no pride of learning, or show of scholarship; nor was there any necessity for elaborate reasoning. “His masterly idiom, “verily, verily,” was the signature of a king—a king whose royal dictum cannot be contradicted. . . . Have you ever noticed that Jesus never had to go back and correct himself? He never once had to modify or improve a former utterance.

He never once argued. He never once had to reason a thing out. He never drew a mere inference. He never used the word *perhaps*. He never “arrived at a conclusion.” He never needed to “arrive” by processes of induction or deduction. He was always *there*. His knowledge was absolute. Therefore, all the way through His life and teachings there is certainty, simplicity, profundity, yet transparency, authority, finality.”³ It was C. S. Lewis who wrote:

*A Man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You cannot shut Him up for a fool; you can spit at Him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great teacher. He has not left that open to us*⁴

To make the claims Jesus made, one has to ask soberly: Was Jesus might have been insane? Was He a lunatic? Does His conduct suggest lunacy? But if neither His conduct nor His teaching suggest lunacy—then how do you explain His claims? Would the charge of lunacy be explained by those who were sent into the world by Him to teach, and preach forgiveness through Him—stand up in a court of law? Jim McGuiggan wrote:

“Take a moment and think about it. How did the son of a Jewish carpenter manage to affect our world so powerfully? How many millions of church buildings and edifices have been erected to his name in the last 20 centuries? How many millions would you guess? How many millions of books have been published either in favor of him or against him? (For no one publishes countless thousands of books against one who doesn’t matter). How much music has been written to lift the heart to thinking of him? How many hospitals, rest homes, orphanages, nursing homes and health organizations has this Galilean inspired?

What can be said about the life of Jesus? Who can even touch the hem of the garment of the subject? How do you appraise one whose words have dominated the civilized world since their utterance? . . . At this very moment there are millions upon millions of people whose lives are dominated by the word of this Galilean. He is prayed to and prayed through by numberless millions in every generation. He stands astride the world like a colossus. Where his influence has not been there is poverty, filth and a cancerous naturalism. Where his principles are stifled there is crime rampant, slums abounding and vice prevailing.

³ Sidlow, p. 23.

⁴ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (Fontana, 1969), pp. 52-52.

*His name is sung in countless buildings set up to his glory. His name is the last on the lips of millions as they make their way into the other world. His book has no peer, his church is deathless, his morality unprecedented, his code of ethics immeasurably above all the rest, his influence unbelievable, his authority universal, his love beyond knowledge, his followers unbeatable and uncountable, his benevolence incalculable.*⁵

Sir Winston Churchill, former Prime Minister of England, who on his last visit to the United States said: “The one and only true hope for our twentieth-century world is to return to the teachings of Jesus Christ.”⁶ Who would ever dream of saying that the one and only hope for us is to get back to Krishna? Or to Confucius? Or to Buddha? Or to Mohammed? Or to Kali? Or to the poor benighted Nietzsche, with a courage that takes your breath away.

Or the delusional, fortitude of Freud, or any other great figure of history? Many millions of intelligent human beings make the mistake about the Lord—and they see only a man. Because He comes in human guise as “the Friend of sinners,” without crown, or scepter, or royal insignia, they see only a *man*. Oh, how blind we can be! How many of us have seen only a man instead of recognizing in Him the All-Sufficient-Savior-King, trusting in the infinite value of His redemptive work on the Cross –alone!

Summary

We have claims made by Jesus that force us to make a decision about Him and we have the example of a life and reputation that appeals to us and draws all kinds of people to Him.

The claims of Jesus Christ of Nazareth demonstrated that He was unique among men. No one has ever pointed out a real flaw in His behavior (John 8:42), even though He lived and died under great pressure. No one has even given a system of higher morals and ethics. He refuses no one. He challenged the champion fault-finders of His day to point out *sin* in His life, “Which of you convicts Me of sin . . .” (John 8:46). The religious leaders found no sin in Him, and they remained mute before Him!

He says: “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). Truly He is, and has been the central figure of all time.

⁵ Jim McGuiggan, *If God Came*, (Montex Publishing Co. Lubbock, 1980), pp. 101-102

⁶ A—BUS, not sure where this quote was taken from.