

Introduction: Men always have something to say about Jesus. Often, what is said is untrue or is inaccurate Biblically.

I. Religions and cults, historically

A. Catholicism

It is not enough to say that "Catholics believe in Jesus Christ" since there are true and false kinds of belief. Saving faith is a gift of God, by which His children rely on Jesus Christ for salvation. Counterfeit faith is deceptively similar, but it is powerless and useless to save. While I sincerely hope that there are many Catholics who genuinely believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, yet there are reasons for serious concern. I ask you to read carefully the following checklist and examine yourself before God whether you really believe in Jesus Christ or not.

The Catholic doctrine on the person of Christ is biblical and true. But doctrinal orthodoxy is not sufficient by itself. For salvation, it is not enough to give your assent to the truths about Christ - even the demons recognized Jesus as the Son of God. More than accepting the doctrines on Christ as true, the sinner must also entrust himself to Him. The Christian does not merely believe something about Christ; the Christian believes in Christ.

St James warns us against a "faith" that is dead, and therefore impotent to save. His warning applies equally to all professing Christians, whether they're called Catholic, Protestants, or by any other title they may choose. Someone may say, "I have faith," even though a sterile and godless life contradicts the empty boasting. My country is predominantly Catholic. Over 96% of the population is Roman Catholic, but a good number of them couldn't care less about the Gospel or the Law of God. They are preoccupied with their business and pleasure, and have no scruples to cheat, steal, slander and swear. Can that "faith" save them? Can such "faith" save anyone? Let us not fool ourselves!

Christians believe in a living Saviour. "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4). Once He died on the cross, giving Himself as a sacrifice for sin; now He lives in glory forevermore, enthroned at the right hand of God. He does not need to offer Himself over and over again, for God forgives and perfects all His people on the infinite merits of that one finished sacrifice of His Son.

Though the Roman Church formally acknowledges that Christ offered a sacrifice "once for all", yet it also teaches that the sacrifice of Christ is carried on, perpetuated and renewed daily during the mass. It is significant that a crucifix is placed over the main altar in Catholic churches, reminding the people that Christ is being offered as a sacrifice for sin during the mass.

The need to renew and perpetuate the sacrifice implies that the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary was not sufficient to take away sin. If you knock on the door and nobody answers, you will have to knock again. But if your friend answers and opens the door, there will be no need to renew your effort. Your purpose would have been achieved.

Sadly, Roman Catholic piety leads many Catholics to turn their eyes from Jesus towards Mary. They still "believe in Jesus", of course, yet their heart is not reassured. They apply to someone else. "St John Damascene had no hesitancy in addressing our Lady in these words: Pure and immaculate Queen, save me, and deliver me from eternal damnation. St Bonaventure called Mary the salvation of those who invoke her" (The Glories of Mary, St Alphonsus Liguori).

True faith in Christ is manifest in good works, yet the believer does not rely on the merits of his works for salvation. It is "to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5). That does not mean that sterile and idle "faith" can save. The apostle Paul does not contradict his own writings where he insists that faith works by love, and that those

who continue to live in sin will not inherit the kingdom of God. Rather, Paul is speaking about the Christian's motive for doing good works. Paul asserts that the Christian "does not work" for the purpose of justification. "God imputes (ascribes, reckons, credits) righteousness apart from works." The Christian rests by faith in Jesus, and God reckons the believer "righteous" for Christ's sake.

Ask him, "Does God reckon you as righteous because you do good works?"

The Christian answers, "No, my best obedience is imperfect. God reckons me as righteous because Jesus' blood washes me from all sin."

"Well then, why do you perform good works at all? Why are you so concerned with obedience?"

"I obey Christ's because I love Him and because His Spirit causes me to learn what is right.

Contrast this with the Catholic mentality. He speaks about Christ, God's love, the cross, and faith, and yet his religion will not permit him to trust in Christ completely for salvation. He is urged to do religious works and perform penance in order to expiate his sins and to merit the grace of God. Good works should be the manifestation of faith, but in this case, they are the evidence of an incomplete confidence in Christ.

B. Judaism

Jesus - The Man

Jews believe that Jesus was a Jew who was born in Bethlehem, raised in Galilee, and killed in Jerusalem. Like other Jews in his day, Jesus spoke and wrote the Aramaic language. His own Aramaic name was Yeshua.

Like other educated Jews in his day, he was faithful to the law of Moses, learned in Jewish scriptures and oral law, steeped in the spirit of the Pharisees (the leading religious teachers of his day), and expectant of the coming of the Messianic Era (which he called the "Kingdom of God"). In his day, many people called Jesus "rabbi."

Like other religious, nationalistic Jews before and after him, Jesus angered the Roman government. The Romans considered the ideas preached by Jesus to be dangerous. As a result, the Romans arrested Jesus during his Passover trip to Jerusalem. Then the Romans, upon the order of the Roman procurator, executed Jesus.

Yeshu - A Talmudic Tale

A story about a man named Yeshu can be found in the Talmud. There is debate whether this Yeshu in the Talmud is the same Jesus who later became a Christian divinity.

According to the Talmud, Yeshu was the son of a Jewish woman named Miriam who was betrothed to a carpenter. "Betrothed" means she was legally married to him, but she was not yet living with him or having sexual relations with him. The story says that Miriam was either raped by or voluntarily slept with Pandeira, a Greek or Roman soldier. Miriam then gave birth to Yeshu, who was considered a "mamzer" (bastard), a product of an adulterous relationship. The Talmud describes Yeshu as a heretic who dabbled in sorcery and lead the people astray. Later, the Sanhedrin (the Jewish "Supreme Court") ordered Yeshu stoned to death and his dead body was hung from a tree until nightfall after his death, in accordance with the ancient Jewish punishment for heretics.

While some believe there is no connection between the Talmudic Yeshu and the Christian Jesus, others believe there is a connection. The main inconsistency between the Talmudic and Christian story is that during the time that Jesus was killed, the Romans ruled and the Sanhedrin did not have the power to impose the death penalty. Thus, some Jews believe that today's popular Christian ideas about Jesus are based on a melding of the Talmudic story of Yeshu and the historian Josephus' writing about Jesus, which included his execution by the Romans.

C. Islam

In the Qur'an, there are many stories about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ (called 'Isa in Arabic). The Qur'an recalls his miraculous birth, his teachings, the miracles

he performed by God's permission, and his life as a respected prophet of God. The Qur'an also repeatedly reminds that Jesus was a human prophet sent by God, not part of God Himself. Below are some direct quotations from the Qur'an regarding his life and teachings of Jesus.

He Was Righteous

"Behold! the angels said, 'Oh Mary! God gives you glad tidings of a Word from Him. His name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter, and in (the company of) those nearest to God. He shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. He shall be (in the company) of the righteous... And God will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel'" (3:45-48).

He Was a Prophet

"Christ, the son of Mary, was no more than a messenger; many were the messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their (daily) food. See how God makes His signs clear to them; yet see in what ways they are deluded away from the truth!" (5:75).

"He [Jesus] said: 'I am indeed a servant of God. He has given me revelation and made me a prophet; He has made me blessed wheresoever I be; and He has enjoined on me prayer and charity as long as I live. He has made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable. So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)!' Such was Jesus the son of Mary. It is a statement of truth, about which they (vainly) dispute. It is not befitting to (the majesty of) God that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! When He determines a matter, He only says to it, 'Be,' and it is" (19:30-35).

He Was a Humble Servant of God

"And behold! God will say [i.e. on the Day of Judgment]: 'Oh Jesus, the son of Mary! Did you say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of God?' He will say: 'Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a

thing, You would indeed have known it. You know what is in my heart, though I know not what is in Yours. For You know in full all that is hidden. Never did I say to them anything except what You commanded me to say: 'Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.' And I was a witness over them while I lived among them. When You took me up, You were the Watcher over them, and You are a witness to all things" (5:116-117).

His Teachings

"When Jesus came with Clear Signs, he said: 'Now I have come to you with Wisdom, and in order to make clear to you some of the (points) on which you dispute. Therefore, fear God and obey me. God, He is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him -- this is a Straight Way.' But sects from among themselves fell into disagreement. So woe to the wrongdoers, from the penalty of a Grievous Day!" (43:63-65)

D. Mormanism

"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. For the Christ of whom I speak has been revealed in this the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times. He together with His Father, appeared to the boy Joseph Smith in the year 1820, and when Joseph left the grove that day, he knew more of the nature of God than all the learned ministers of the gospel of the ages.'" (LDS Church News Week ending June 20, 1998, p. 7).

Christians have long maintained that Mormonism teaches a Jesus that is different from what the Bible reveals. Of course, the Mormons say that they believe in the same Jesus that originally walked on the earth and is revealed in the Bible. Though they may make this claim, it is up to them to prove it. Especially in light of what Mormonism says about God and Jesus.

In Mormonism, Jesus is a creation, the product of relations between god and his goddess wife who used to be people from another world (McConkie, Bruce, Mormon

Doctrine, p. 192, 321, 516, 589). Jesus is the literal spirit brother of the devil and of you and I (McConkie, p. 192, 589). Also, in Mormon theology, God has a body of flesh and bones (Doctrine & Covenants 130:22) as does his wife and together they produce spirit offspring in heaven who inhabit human bodies on earth.

Very few, if any, of the 'different' Mormon doctrines are found in their Standard Works: the Bible, The Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants, and The Pearl of Great Price. Rather, they are taught by Mormons of high standing: prophets, apostles, members of the 70 Quorum. McConkie, for example, was a member of the 70's Quorum, a very high ranking Mormon and wrote the book, Mormon Doctrine, from which much of the documentation for this is taken.

President Hinkley, the prophet and revelator of the Mormon church, has publicly declared that the Jesus of Mormonism and traditional Christianity are not the same.