

Christ in Prophecy

Conference 3: “Carlson on Uniqueness of Christianity”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: Did you know that Christianity is different from every other religion in the world? Are you aware of the factors that make it truly unique? How many times have you heard someone say, “It doesn’t matter what you believe about God, as long as you believe in God.” Did you know that statement is totally false? For some great insights about the uniqueness of Christianity, stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. For the past few weeks we have been in the process of showing you excerpts from sermons presented at our recent Bible conference which was dedicated to the theme of, “Spiritual Apostasy in the End Times.” One of those presentations was entitled, “Are There Many Roads to God?” It was made by Dr. Ron Carlson who is considered to be one of Christendom’s foremost experts on cults and world religions. Let’s listen to Dr. Carlson as he talks about the uniqueness of Christianity.

Dr. Carlson Presentation

Dr. Carlson: Ah, it doesn’t matter what you believe all religions are basically the same. Have you every heard somebody say that? That is one of the most common statement I hear today as I speak on universities. Students who say that it doesn’t believe what you believe; all religions are basically the same.

Friends next time you hear somebody tell you that you will know immediately you have met somebody who is totally naïve, not only naive but ignorant of anthropology, of history, of philosophy, of religion. You see friends there is something very unique about Jesus Christ. There is something very unique about Christianity different from any religion in the world. The apostle Paul in Romans chapter 1 says that universally men and women are without excuse. He said universally people know there is a God, people have no excuse. In Romans 1:20 he says, “We know there is a God first of all by what we see in creation.” That this world is not a product of evolutionary chance but was made by a master designer a Creator.

Just before the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe I was invited at the end of the 1980's, in 1987 to, by Campus Crusade for Christ to speak in the major universities of communist Poland in Warsaw, Krakow, and Poznan on the scientific evidence regarding creation. It was always an interesting topic as I spoke through the former Soviet Union when you realize that Evolution was the mantra of the Communist Party, that man was simply an animal that the state could manipulate.

I will never forget at the University of Poznan there on the East German boarder after one of my lectures a graduate student in engineering and physics came up to me he said, "Dr. Carlson," he said, "I don't care what you say, I am still going to believe in evolution." And I rolled up my shirt sleeve that evening and showed him my wrist watch. I said, "You see this watch here, I went down to a junk yard, found some old rusty bent up twisted pieces of metal and iron and I threw them into a shoebox and I started shaking it, shook it for two weeks, two months, six months, eight months, kept shaking it all of a sudden, "Blam" all the pieces flew together. Start ticking off 60 seconds a minute, 60 minutes an hour, 24 hours a day, telling the day and date, all by chance. Amazing!" Well this graduate student of engineering laughed at me. He said, "That's impossible." I said, "You mean to tell me that this watch by chance is impossible. And yet you will tell me that this eye which sees in 3D and color, this brain that is greater then any computer on Earth, a 3 pound brain that has 120 billion cells, a 130 trillion electronic chemical connections is all product of chance?" I submit to you friends that it takes far more faith to believe in evolution then it does to believe in a Divine Designer and Creator.

It is no wonder that the Bible says that only a fool would say in his heart that there is no God. But Paul goes on in Romans 1:19 to say, "Secondly we know there is a God, not only by what we see in creation." But he said, "We know there is a God because God placed in the heart of every person a desire to know Him." You know it is very interesting folks that no matter where you go in this world. No matter how sophisticated or primitive the society, people have a desire to know God. Now where do we get that desire? If we are simply products of impersonal chance, but you see God who is personal created us as personal beings to live in a personal relationship with Him. But Paul goes on in the New Testament to say thirdly we know there is a God because God has broken into human history. God split history into BC and AD and He personally revealed Himself to us.

I just got home this last month from Cuba, and I have been to Cuba on 3 different occasions. We have had the privilege of training over 3,000 Cuban pastors and church leaders all over the island. We need to be praying for our Cuban brothers and sisters. Fidel has simply destroyed the country economically and it is the 50th anniversary of the Revolution in '59, and they say when Fidel came to power he offered change he was going to bring change to the island. The first thing he did was nationalize the banks, then he nationalized the corporations, now everybody gets paid by the government. And everybody gets paid it doesn't matter whether you are an electrician, a carpenter, a pastor, a teacher everybody gets \$12 a month. That is what they live on in Cuba \$12 a month and they give you a ration card each person is allowed 5 pounds of beans, and 5 pounds of rice a month, that is what they are living on. Most Cubans are down to rice and beans once a day. Socialism has destroyed the country. America better wake up.

But the one thing holding the country together is the Church of Jesus Christ is growing like wild fire. And I was speaking in churches down there one Sunday over 3,000 people jammed into a church in Camaguey, Cuba. Another church we were in had 2,000 people jammed in Sunday morning. Hunger for the Word of God over in Cuba it is exciting how the Church is growing. My book, *Fast Facts on False Teachings*, which is out on the table in the foyer is the first Christian book that's been allowed to be printed in Cuba since the Revolution in 1959. We have now printed in Spanish over 8,000 copies printed in Cuba. It is a real miracle how it happened, and God is still involved in doing miracles folks.

First time I went into Cuba they had invited me speak to 250 key pastors from 14 different denominations and they wanted me to come speak on the cults and they are having a real problem with different cultic groups and false religions. And my book, "*Fast Fact on False Teachings*", I thought Lord it is in Spanish is there any way I can bring it into Cuba. And they had told me that the Cuban government does not allow anybody to bring anymore then three books of anything into the country. Well I knew that my God was bigger then Fidel and I went to Wal-Mart and I got 2 soft side suitcases, I was able to put 125 copies of my book in each suitcase in Spanish, 250 books for the 250 pastors I was going to speak to the key leaders from all over Cuba. And I checked it for Havana, got to Havana and the carousel went around an old Russian carousel and my suitcase with my clothes came off, everybody else's suitcases came off. They were going through customs and I could see that the Cuban soldiers were opening every bodies suitcases going through everything looking for anything that you were not allowed to bring in. And I was thinking, "Lord I don't know how you are going to get 250 books through the Cuban soldiers."

Finally the carousel stops and my two suitcases with the 250 books never came off. And everybody else had already gone through customs. I was standing there alone in the baggage area, so I go to the end of the carousel and I pull back the flap and look into the storage area, and here is a big x-ray machine. They had been x-raying every bodies bags coming into Cuban. And sitting on top of the x-ray machine were my two suitcases with my 250 books. And I was thinking to myself, "Now what would Dr. Reagan do?" You know I thought he would probably go get the books. I am looking under there and I am looking back there and it was one of those God moments, you know we have a lot of God moments. And it happened to be 12 noon, and the Cuban soldiers who had unloaded the plane had left for lunch and there was nobody back there and I am looking around and there is nobody there. I thought, "Well they probably forgot to put them back on the carousel." I got down on my hands and knees, I crawled through the opening ran back, grabbed my two suitcases off the x-ray machine threw them under the opening, crawled back under the hole, and pulled up the handles. And here I have three big suitcases now and there was a partition they had not seen me do this, and the soldiers in custom where on the other side of the partition I come walking up, and when I come walking up the Cuban soldiers are visible angry at me, I mean visibly mad. And I am praying the whole time, "God I don't know how you are going to do this." And just praying, "Some how God you are going to have to help me." And I walk up and they are physically angry and what they were angry about is I had delayed them from going to lunch. And I walk up and they said, "Hurry just go, get through." I just walked right through, they never looked at my suitcases.

We got to the seminar I spoke for a week a wonderful time with these pastors and at the end of the seminar I gave them each a copy of my book in Spanish and they said, "How in the world did you get this into Cuba?" I got to tell you real quickly what happened. It started to be passed around Cuba and they said we would like to print this. And one of the ways Fidel has maintained control is he took away every bodies printing presses in Cuba, nobody is allowed to print anything except the Communist government. But there is one church that's been allowed to have a little printing press in their basement for Sunday School material and the Communist are aware of it, so the Pastor is a real brave Baptist pastor, they said, we want to print this. I got the plates down to them, and they started buying up all the paper in Cuba. They wanted to buy up 200,000 sheets of paper and I had sent them down money to buy up the paper. And they were buying up all the paper there is not a lot of paper in Cuba.

Well it wasn't long before the Communist had discovered that somebody in Cuba is buying up all the paper and they traced it to these three pastors and they called them to Havana to the communist headquarters, and the pastors assumed they were going to be thrown in jail, they had spent a lot of time in jail. And they were called before the Minister of Religious Affairs, Fidel's right hand person for the last 50 years and they had decided to take an aggressive stand they handed him a copy of my book in Spanish and said, "This is what we want to print." The head of Religious Affairs for the Communist government starts thumbing through my book, I have chapters on cults, world religions, evolution, atheism, and they were looking through it and all of a sudden he stops. And the head of Religious Affairs, Fidel's right hand man he starts reading the book they don't know what he is reading the three of them are sitting in front of him. And for 45 minutes he reads my book.

Come to find out it was another God moment. That afternoon that very afternoon the President of the Mormon Church in Salt Lake City was flying in on a private jet with his 2 top officials from Salt Lake City, they've been trying to get Mormon missionaries into Cuba because Fidel hasn't allowed any new religions that weren't there in '59. They were flying in that afternoon to meet with the Minister of Religious Affairs he didn't know anything about Mormonism. He gets this book in the morning and he is thumbing through it and finds a chapter on Mormonism sits there for 45 minutes and reads the whole chapter. That afternoon folks the President of the Mormon church, Gordon B. Hinckley flies in to Havana meets with the Minister of Religious affairs, Minister of Religions affairs tells the President of the Mormon church you guys are a cult we're not letting you into our country and kicked them out. God is still in the business of parting the Red Sea folks and the Walls of Jericho are still coming down, in ways we could never plan or anticipate.

But Paul goes on in the New Testament he says thirdly we know there is a God because God broke into human history. God split history into BC and AD and He personally revealed Himself to us. When I was with the Cuban pastors I shared with them one of my favorite stories I have shared around the world. It is one of those great stories that no matter what culture you are in people identify with it. And I told them about the father and son who were walking down a dirt path one day and they came upon an ant hill that someone had stepped on and smashed those ants. I don't know do you have ants in Texas? And the little boy who is four years old, looked up to his daddy and said, "Daddy wouldn't it be good if we could go down and tell those ants we

love them, you know tell those ants we care about them and help them with their sick and their wounded.” And the father put his arm around this little boy and he said, “Son, son the only way that we could tell those ants that we love them, that we care about them is to become an ant. To live like an ant and talk like an ant, and then by our lives they would know what we are like.”

You see 2000 years ago God looked down on a world that He created a world that He loved. And God said I want to tell you how much I love you. How is God going to do that? And God said, I will become a man, and I will live like a man, and talk like a man, and by my life you will know what I am like. But before He did this, He began to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah through the Jewish nation. By giving us in the Old Testament over 300 prophecies, 67 major prophecies, 270 minor prophecies and ramifications in the Old Testament concerning who the Messiah was going to be so there would be no mistake.

I was recently on a flight from Los Angeles, to Auckland New Zealand, and I had been invited to speak in all the major universities in Auckland and Wellington and Christ Church by the National Apologetic Society of New Zealand. It is always interesting when you get on a plane for 11 hours to see who you are going to be sitting next to. And we were on a big 747 and I was, my son and I, my son who is pastor in the Twin Cities I was sitting on the aisle and he was sitting across from me on the other aisle. And next to me in the center and window seat, I sat down for an 11 hour flight and sitting next to me was a 75 year old Jewish couple from Long Island, New York. 75 year old Jewish couple from Long Island, New York, both Ph.D.'s in Sociology.

I will never forget the man had a tattoo on his arm where as a child he had been in a concentration camp in Nazi Germany. And we began to talk and I was asking them why they were going to New Zealand and just a dear couple, we had a wonderful conversation. And as we were talking when they discovered that I had spent a year studying at Jerusalem University College in Israel, boy that opened up all kinds of conversation about the Jewish nation, and Israel, and we just had a wonderful time.

Well we were about an hour into the flight and I thought, “You know I might as well just go to the heart of the issue, you know.” And they were a dear couple we were having a wonderful conversation and I said to them, when I told them what I did and who I was, I said, “Can I ask you a question that I have often wondered?” They said, “Sure.” I said, “Tell me why is it so difficult for Jews to accept Jesus Christ as the Jewish Messiah?” I figured I might as well just go to the heart of the issue. Why is it so difficult for Jews to accept Jesus Christ as the Jewish Messiah? Marty Goetz was talking about his own family. And they said, “What do you mean?” I said, “Well you know throughout the Hebrew Scriptures the Jewish prophets gave us over 300 prophecies concerning who the Messiah was going to be, so there would be mistake.” And they said, “What do you mean?” Well I got out the Bible and we started going through the Bible there, we had an 11 hour flight.

We went to the Jewish Scriptures, we went back to Genesis chapter 3, Genesis 3 tells us that this one who is coming is going to be of the seed of a women. Now that was unique because for everyone else is of the seed of a man, but this one would not have a human father. We then read in Genesis that Noah had three sons, what were there names? Ham, Shem, Japheth. Watch what God does. God eliminates 2/3 of the nations of the world and He tells us that

through the line of Shem He would bring His anointed. We then read in Genesis 11 and Genesis 17 that one from the line of Shem out of the area of the Chaldeans one whose name is Abraham, says out of Abraham will come forth a Messiah and it says through him all the nations of the Earth will be blessed. We then read in Genesis that Abraham had two sons, what were there names? Isaac and Ishmael. Watch what God does, God eliminated 50% of the descendants of Abraham and He tells us that through the line of Isaac he would bring His anointed. We then read in Genesis that Isaac had two sons, what were there names? Jacob and Esau, watch what God does. God eliminates 50% of the descendants of Isaac and He tells us that through the line of Jacob He would bring His anointed. In Genesis 49 we then read that Jacob had 12 sons, what were there names? [Laughter] The 12 tribes of Israel now watch what God does. God eliminates 11/12 of the descendants of Jacob and he tells us that through the line of Judah He would bring His Messiah. We then read in Isaiah chapter 11 it says, one from the tribe of Judah from the root offspring of Jesse, out of Jesse will come forth the Messiah. We then turn to 1 Samuel 17 and it tells us that Jesse had 8 sons, watch what God does. God eliminates 7/8 of the descendants of Jesse and He tells us through the line of David He would bring His anointed.

We then turn over to Micah 5:2, Micah 5:2 says, "This one who is coming who is going forth for all eternity He is going to be born in that little town of Bethlehem less than a 1,000 population at the time." We then turn over to Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 7:14 says, "That a virgin will conceive." Now folks that eliminates a lot of people. [laughter] That a virgin will give birth to a son, and you shall call his name what? Emmanuel, God with us. We then turn over to Isaiah 9:6 a very interesting passage we read at Christmas, Isaiah 9:6 says, "A child will be born, but that child is going to be a Son who is given, and His name will be called the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

We then turn over to Isaiah 52 and 53, it says that He is going to be rejected by His own people the Jews but accepted by His enemies the Gentiles. You know folks that eliminates a lot of Jewish leaders. We then read in Zechariah that He is going to be betrayed by a friend sold for 30 pieces of silver, not 29, not 31 but 30 pieces of silver. Which is interesting when gold was the monetary standard of the day. David writing 1000 BC in Psalm 22 tells us that He is going to be crucified. Which is interesting folks because crucifixion was never practiced until 200 BC and it was never practiced in a Jewish providence until 63 BC. And God begins to pinpoint throughout human history precisely who the Messiah was going to be. This Jewish couple they kept saying to me, "You mean that's in our Bible, that's in our Bible?" Here they were 75 year old Ph.D.'s Jews from Long Island had never in their life had anybody explain to them Jesus the Jewish Messiah. They kept on saying, "That's in our Bible."

Over 300 prophecies now I have just given you 13. Do you know mathematicians have figured out the probability of having just eight of those prophecies fulfilled in one person is the same probability as if you were to take the entire state of Texas cover the entire state three feet deep with silver dollars, the entire state three feet deep with silver dollars? On one of those silver dollars place an "X" throw it down in the middle of Texas, bulldoze it under if you like. Then take a Texan put a blindfold on him, spin him around in circles, set him out in the state covered three feet deep with silver dollars. You know the probability that he would pick the one with the "X" on,

on the first pick is the same probability that only eight of those prophecies would be fulfilled in one person. Folks you want to know something, all 300 plus were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

[Clapping]

Please understand folks you have no excuse historically for rejecting Jesus Christ. People often ask me, you know what is so unique about Jesus Christ. He possessed no certificates or degrees. He never traveled more than 150 miles from where He was born, he lived and moved among very common people. He was not an author, He wrote no books, He composed no poems, He compiled no documents, He edited no newspapers, He contributed in no periodicals. The only sentence He ever wrote was a single line in the sand which disappeared the same day no letter was preserved. He never used a fountain pen or a typewriter, or Microsoft Word. But folks do you know that more books have been written about Him and His words than any other man?

He has affected the lives of more people than all the authors of all the ages put together. The story of His life has now been translated into over 2,500 languages and is read yearly by billions of people. He was not an orator, and yet no other person ever spoke like this man. His discourses have become the theme of millions of addresses. His words are simple and clear, very few adjectives are used, yet His sentences abound with beauty, meaning and grace.

In fact today His saying are hammered into polished marble, they are chiseled into imperishable granite, they are rod into enduring bronze tablets, they are fashioned in stained-glass windows of numberless churches, they are etched in rich mosaics upon temple walls and they are set today in arch domes of colossal cathedrals. His words are literary gems, in fact He stands today as an equal seer of all literature. Shakespeare, Milton, Emerson, folks they all bow their heads in His presence, recognizing His superior. He was not a poet, and yet He has inspired thousands of poets out of their most sublime expressions. He was not an artist or sculpture or painter and yet He was the inspiration for Raphael, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Hoffman, and the list goes on and on. He was not a musician and yet He was the inspiration for Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven, Mendelson, Bach, Handle, Marty Goetz, Jack Hollingsworth, pretty good company. He was not a doctor and yet he healed the sick, He opened blind eyes, He unstopped deaf ears, He cleansed the leper and folks he raised the dead. He was not a statesman, you know he never held nor aspired to an official position. He did not delve into politics, but He did found a Kingdom. He was not a general, and yet He became the conqueror of the world. And in a war or in peace and good times or better, remains true to this folks, that no single word grips the hearts of men like the name of Jesus.

Closing

Dr. Reagan: I sincerely hope that presentation was a blessing to you. And I hope you will be back with us again next week when we will be sharing another of the conference sermons with you, one by Mike Gendron, an expert on Christian doctrine. Until then, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near."

End of Program