Is Christianity Merely a “Western Religion?”

1. Introduction
   1. For all of us, Christianity is the *only* religion we’ve ever known, and the Bible is the only “holy book” we’ve ever known or experienced. Of course, we know that there are other religions in the world: Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, just to name a few. But again, we’re familiar with Christianity*, and we believe it’s the only acceptable religion.*
   2. However, there are those who argue that Christianity is merely a *western religion*, or the “religion-of-choice” of the western hemisphere (i.e. Europe and America). Meanwhile, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism are the main religions of the *eastern world*.
   3. The implication is that religion is cultural; each culture *manufactures* its own religion; each nation has its own god(s). We know that this isn’t true; again, the God we serve is not just the “American God”; He is the God of all the earth.
      1. Paul made it very clear in his sermon in Athens that the God of the Bible “has made from one blood every nation of men” (Ac. 17:26); He expects us to seek Him, (vs. 27); He has “commanded all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day” of judgment (vs. 30-31).
      2. Biblically speaking, there is just one God; salvation is found only in His Son, Jesus Christ…not in Muhammad, Buddha or Shiva.
   4. However…this morning, I’d like to approach this issue from another angle. I’d like to prove to you from a historical and cultural perspective that Christianity, or at least the God of the Bible (and thus Christianity *by extension*), is not only a western religion, it is an eastern religion, too!
2. Stories From Grandpa Adam
   1. Read Genesis 5:1-3.
      1. Refer to **Chart #1**. Explain layout of chart, using Adam as example.
      2. We don’t know how many years Adam & Eve were in Garden, but we know it was less than 130 years.
         1. 130 years till Seth born – *vertical line left of Seth’s name*.
         2. Adam then lived for an additional 800 years (5:4); 930 years.
      3. A record of generations from Adam-Noah. We could spend a lot of time analyzing every generation, but there is one simple point that I’d like make:
         1. Adam was alive during the days of Lamech, Noah’s father.
         2. Noah, of course, is one who built the ark (Gen. 6).
   2. How many of you remember some of the stories your grandparents told you when you were a kid? For some of you, your grandparents may have:
      1. Been around during transition from horse & buggy to cars.
      2. Experienced World War I and days of FDR.
      3. Days before air conditioning, TV, indoor plumbing, or telephones.
   3. The point is: stories are passed from generation to generation.
   4. *What stories did “Grandpa Adam” have to tell?* Some of the most fascinating stories of the world’s history (i.e. creation, Eden, fall)! Even though there were 7 generations between Adam and Lamech, Adam was still alive during the days of Lamech. He died when he was 930 years old. *If someone were that old today, they would have been around during the days of the Crusades!!!*
   5. So the stories of Genesis 1-3 would have been easily preserved through the worldwide flood of Noah’s day; Adam had been living during the days of his father, Lamech!!!
   6. Now let’s turn our attention to Genesis 11. Refer to **Chart #2**.
      1. Another genealogy, this one from Flood-Abraham.
      2. Read Genesis 11:10. *Shem had been 1 of 8 on ark to survive flood*.
      3. Same formula used in previous chart.
      4. As you can see, Shem actually outlived Abraham (shocking).
      5. But more to the point, notice Peleg (Shem’s great-great grandson).
      6. Read Genesis 11:16-18 🡪 Gen. 10:22-25.
         1. *What could this refer to?* Read Gen. 11:1-9.
         2. Not conclusive, but it appears that the “scattering” occurred during the days of Peleg when the “earth was divided.”
         3. If not, we know it happened before days of Abraham, so Shem (who survived the flood) was still alive during Scattering!
   7. Summary: Adam was alive during the days of Noah’s father, Lamech. Noah would have known stories of early Genesis; stories survived flood. Noah’s son, Shem, was still alive when mankind scattered all over the world. This means that the stories of Genesis 1-11 (Creation, Garden, Fall of Man, the Flood, the Scattering) would have been dispersed ALL over the world…
3. The Original Religion of Ancient China
   1. Of all the nations that exist on this earth, which one is most at odds with the Bible, and with Christianity? China! A communist country – the church has faced its stiffest and most severe persecution at the hands of the Chinese government.
   2. When you think of China’s religious affiliation, what comes to mind?
      1. Under Communist control, the current “state religion” is actually *atheism*.
      2. However, the most prevalent religion is Buddhism:
         1. Over 100 million Buddhists in China
         2. Over 20,000 Buddhist temples.
         3. *But Buddhism wasn’t introduced in China until 1st century B.C.*
      3. Daoism (Taoism) and Confucianism:
         1. Both originated in China.
         2. Daoists do believe in mystical beings and an afterlife, but Confucianists do not; both are primarily systems of philosophy.
         3. *Didn’t emerge until 5th century B.C.*
   3. And so the modern religions and philosophies in China can be traced back as much as 2,500 years. *But did you know that China claims 4,500 years of unbroken civilization?* According to the Biblical timeline, this would have lined up with the scattering of mankind, and the confusion of the languages in Genesis 11.
   4. So the question is, what was Chinese culture like when they arrived from Shinar, thousands of years before Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism?
   5. Prepare to be amazed…
   6. During the first three dynasties (kingdoms) in China, the Chinese were monotheistic.
      1. They commonly called this God *Shang-Ti* (heavenly ruler).
      2. The earliest account of religious worship is of Emperor Shun in 2230 B.C. – “He sacrificed to Shang Ti.” (“Book of History” compiled by Confucius).
      3. The following is from a recitation script which was used in the annual border rituals; this would have been recited by the Emperor who also served as High Priest: *“Of old in the beginning, there was the great chaos, without form and dark. The five elements had not begun to revolve, nor the sun and moon to shine. In the midst thereof there existed neither forms nor sound. Thou, O spiritual Sovereign, camest forth in Thy presidency, and first didst divide the grosser parts from the purer. Thou madest heaven; Thou madest earth; Thou madest man. All things with their reproducing power got their being.”*
      4. Notice another quote regarding their worship of Shang-Ti: *“Thou hast vouchsafed, O Ti, to hear us, for Thou regardest us as a Father. I, Thy child, dull and unenlightened, am unable to show forth my dutiful feelings.”*
      5. And finally, this ceremony would conclude with the following: *“…Thy sovereign goodness is infinite. As a potter, Thou hast made all living things. Thy sovereign goodness is infinite. Great and small are sheltered [by Thy love]. As engraven on the heart of Thy poor servant is the sense of Thy goodness, so that my feeling cannot be fully displayed. With great kindness Thou dost bear with us, and not withstanding our demerits, dost grant us life and prosperity.”* This is very similar to Isaiah 64:8, “But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand.”
      6. In light of this information, we learn that not only were the ancient Chinese monotheistic, but *it looks like* the God they called “Shang Ti” (heavenly ruler) is the same God of Genesis, of the Bible.
   7. As fascinating as all this is, “you ain’t seen nothin’ yet.”
4. Discovering Genesis in the Chinese Characters
   1. Let’s spend some time studying the ancient Chinese language. **Chart #3.**
      1. I’m sure you’ve seen the Chinese characters.
      2. The Chinese culture (and it’s language) is the oldest in the world; dating back 4,500 years to 2,500 B.C.. Predates the time of Moses by 700-1,000 years (Moses wrote Genesis); so Chinese characters (language) was in existence for up to 1,000 years *before* Genesis was written.
      3. **Chart #3**. Explain characters. Each character composed of *root symbols*.
   2. Let’s take a brief step back for just a moment and focus on the flood of Gen. 6.
      1. Refer to **Chart #4**.
      2. We’re not going to go over all of this, but since we’re talking about China, notice China’s flood legend. It’s called the Hihking Classic.
         1. The entire land was flooded; the mountains and everything.
         2. One family survived in a boat. There was Fuhi, his wife, three sons, and three daughters; they survived flood and repopulated world.
         3. The Chinese consider this man the father of their civilization.
   3. Is this all coincidental? The **ancient history** of China, the **Chinese symbols** which predate Moses and confirm stories of Genesis 1-11, and the **flood legends** from China and across the globe? I don’t think so!
5. Christianity is Not Merely a **Western Religion!**
   1. It may be that Christianity is so much more common in the western world; America often called a “Christian Nation.”
   2. Christianity is rooted in the Old Testament; the Father of Jesus Christ is the God of the Old Testament, the God of Genesis – we can see the stories of Genesis rooted in the ancient cultures of this world.
   3. Thus, in China (for example), the roots of Christianity were there before Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism; modern Communist govt. is persecuting a faith that matches the original faith of ancestors! *What happened?*
   4. An illustration of something Paul wrote in Romans 1:20-25. The cultures of the world have long since drifted from their roots.
6. Conclusion
   1. Are you worshiping and serving the God of the Bible?
   2. The Chinese called Him “Shang-Ti.” The Heavenly Ruler. As Emperor Shun prayed to Shang-Ti in 2230 B.C., “*As engraven on the heart of Thy poor servant is the sense of Thy goodness, so that my feeling cannot be fully displayed. With great kindness Thou dost bear with us, and not withstanding our demerits, dost grant us life and prosperity.”* Do you agree? Humble yourself before this Heavenly Ruler!
   3. Extend invitation…