

Is Christianity the only true religion?

When we talk about Christianity we are talking about faith in Christ Jesus. When we make reference to believers we are talking about true Christ followers. This is important because many people argue against Christianity from the incorrect frame of reference. They tend to cite individuals who misrepresent Christianity. Let's talk about Jesus and not those who falsely use His name. Jesus has already said in Matt 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" In this message I am building a case for why raw Christianity as defined by God, is the only way.

1. Christianity is exclusively true

"Truth is defined as conformity to fact or actuality, reality" ("The American Heritage Dictionary," 3rd Edition). With either/or logic or the law of non-contradiction if $1 + 1 = 2$ then it can't = 3. If I say the answer is 4 and Brian says the answer is 2, then either he is right, or I am right, or, in this case, there could be a third alternative that we are both wrong. But we cannot have different answers and both be right. This is because the answer 2, which corresponds to reality, is exclusive (i.e. there is only one true, right answer). **What good does it do to tell someone about Jesus if he doesn't realize that you are saying, "This is true for everyone, everywhere, at all times and it is not compatible with any other system of beliefs."** Chuck May

Truth by nature is exclusive. Contradictory religious claims cannot be all true simultaneously.

Chuck May illustrates how other religions may sound inclusive but in reality are not. For example, he describes how Buddhism was born out of Hinduism because Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) rejected the Hindu doctrines of the caste system and the authority of the Vedas. Another way to say this is, you are excluded from being a Buddhist if you accept the Vedas or the caste system as true. All truth is exclusive. You can't affirm anything without excluding its opposite.

John 14:6 "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

It is easy to say this but hard to prove. In this message I will unpack why Jesus qualified to say this.

Acts 4:12 "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

1 Timothy 2:5 "For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."

John 3:36 "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them."

1 John 5:11-12 "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

2. The Historicity of Jesus

Christianity is evidence based. The historical aspects of our faith are crucial. There is archaeological evidence of events that took place in the Bible. There are many miracles that were verified. There is also the transformative aspect of our faith; individual transformation and also societal impact and transformation.

The Historicity of Jesus is a major reason why we can embrace the Christian faith.

As quoted by Shaun in the section on the veracity of the bible: *The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who was not a Christian, wrote in 93-94 A.D.: "At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good, and [he] was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders."* *Antiquities of the Jews, XVIII.iii.3*

Lee Strobel *In light of the convincing facts I had learned during my investigation, in the face of this overwhelming avalanche of evidence in the case for Christ, the great irony was this, it would require much more faith for me to maintain my atheism than to trust in Jesus of Nazareth.*

3. The Authenticity of the Bible

The Bible is true historically as seen by archaeological evidence.

The Bible is true scientifically. Nothing in scripture has been invalidated by science. Many scientific principles are found in the Bible.

Isaiah 40:22 – The roundness of the earth

Isaiah 55:9 – The infinite extent of the sidereal (starry) universe

2 Pet 3:7 – The Law of Conservation of mass and energy

Eccl 1:7 – The hydrological cycle

Jer 33:22 – The vast number of stars

Heb 1:3 – The equivalence of matter and energy

Psalm 102:25-27 – The Law of increasing entropy

The Purity and perfection of the Law is something we see in the Bible. **A religion can't be deemed true and divine if it invents and tolerates idols and approves forms of wickedness in opposition to the law of God and sound reason.** The antiquity of biblical doctrine is a major reason why we can stand on the Word. The law came from God and His principles are from the beginning. We also see in the harmony of Bible doctrine. These truths have been preserved despite persecution and heretics. In scripture we also see miracles that the Devil cannot imitate.

4. The Historical Resurrection of Jesus

If you examine the question of the resurrection, ask yourself, why would the apostles die for a lie? What's the probability? We have to understand the resurrection in the context of the persecution of the day. Peter had just been in the flesh denying his association with Jesus. That's very real. What made him preach so powerfully at Pentecost if it was not the fact that he had witnessed the resurrection of Christ? He attests to this in his Epistle.

2 Peter 1:16 For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."

Can you prove to me that He didn't rise from the dead?

1 Corinthians 15:14 "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith."

1 Corinthians 15:17 "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."

1 John 1:1 "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life."

The eye witness nature of the accounts in the bible help us to see its veracity. What is also significant is that the Bible is not based on one single person's revelation unlike other religions (Mormons, Islam, Buddhism etc).

Think of how Lee Strobel, the atheist journalist who did a two year investigation of the resurrection, speaking to scholars from both sides culminating in his conversion and the book, The Case for Christ.

Recommended reading: The Christ Files – John Dickson; The Historical Evidence of Christianity - Warner Wallace

5. Christianity is the most coherent worldview

Every worldview, even secular ones, is based on faith assumptions. There are a lot of gaps in many worldviews but Christianity has the most coherent worldview as it answers all the basic questions of life. Christianity makes the most sense of the world providing coherent and satisfying explanations of reality, human nature and morality. Christianity addresses and answers the fundamental existential questions about origin, meaning, morality and destiny.

A. Origin: Where do we come from?

Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

John 1:3: "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

B. Purpose: Why are we here?

Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Ephesians 2:10: "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

C. Morality: How should we live?

Micah 6:8: "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Matthew 22:37-39: "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

D. Suffering: Why do we suffer?

John 16:33: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Romans 8:18: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

E. Destiny: What happens after we die?

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

1 Corinthians 15:52: "In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."

The Christian worldview is extremely unique in what it offers.

God-centred faith is about God showing favour to those who did not earn it and who do not merit it. This is Christianity, and there isn't another religion like it. Christianity is not merely a religion (a set of rules and rituals to get done in an attempt to pacify or appease God). It is a relationship with Him that is lived out on a daily basis. The purity and perfection of the Gospel shows us that **Christianity is the only religion that demonstrates how people are delivered whilst God's justice is fulfilled.**

2 Cor 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

6. The Pre-eminence of Christ

Buddha didn't rise from the dead, nor did Confucius or Zoroaster. Muhammad didn't fulfill any detailed prophecies. Alexander the Great didn't raise the dead or heal the sick. And though there is far less reliable information written about them, people believed in them. Matt Slick

The Divinity of Jesus is a major aspect of His pre-eminence. Jesus claimed to be God. None of the others did. He claimed to have authority over the law, creation, sin and death. Jesus was without sin. There is no evidence of Him sinning. Jesus seemed to know far more about God than others did.

Exodus 3:14 "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you."

John 8:58 "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

John 10:30-33 "I and the Father are one." Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" "We are not stoning you for any good work," they replied, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

John 14:6-7 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

John 14:9-10 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work."

John 17:5 "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."

Revelation 1:17-18 "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: 'Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

Christ is alive today, Mohammed isn't, Buddha isn't. How can you worship someone who didn't defeat death. **In no other religion does the leader die for his followers so that they may live.** This gives one religion created by God so unique that it can only come from Him. The God of the Christian faith is not a God we would invent. Many religions worship fallen men who were flawed. How do they reconcile this? Many religions have principles and values that are wicked according to common law, yet people still pursue them.

Jesus claimed He could forgive sins *Mark 2:5 "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'*

Luke 5:20 and Mark 7:48 also illustrate this phenomenon.

Even demonic spirits acknowledged who Jesus was. We don't hear this about anyone else. There is no account stating that leaders of the false religions are feared in the Kingdom of Darkness.

Mark 1:34: "Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was."

Luke 8:28: "When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, 'What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!'"

7. The Thread of Fulfilled Prophecies in the Scriptures

Which prophecies do we count? There were Messianic prophecies and also types, symbols, allusions and indirect references. For example, the Passover Lamb is a type. When the children of Israel looked up to the bronze serpent on the pole to get healed that was a type of the cross. Jesus also acknowledged how He fulfilled prophecy.

Luke 24:27: "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

Jesus explains to His disciples that the entire Old Testament points to Him.

John 1:45 "Philip found Nathanael and told him, 'We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the Prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.'

Philip identifies Jesus as the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets.

John 5:39 "You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me."

Peter Stoner, Chairman of the Departments of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena College, was passionate about biblical prophecies. With 600 students from the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Stoner looked at eight specific prophecies about Jesus. They came up with extremely conservative probabilities for each one being fulfilled, and then considered the likelihood of Jesus fulfilling all eight of those prophecies.

The conclusion to his research was staggering. The prospect that anyone would satisfy those eight prophecies was just 1 in 10 to the power of 17. In Science Speaks, he described it like this:

"Let us try to visualize this chance. If you mark one of ten tickets, and place all of the tickets in a hat, and thoroughly stir them, and then ask a blindfolded man to draw one, his chance of getting the right ticket is one in ten. Suppose that we take 10 to the power of 17 silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state.

"Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote using their own wisdom."

Stoner considers 48 prophecies and says, "We find the chance that any one man fulfilled all 48 prophecies to be 1 in 10^{157} .

One scholar, J. Barton Payne, has found as many as 574 verses in the Old Testament that somehow point to or describe or reference the coming Messiah. Alfred Edersheim found 456 Old Testament verses referring to the Messiah or His times. Conservatively, Jesus fulfilled at least 300 prophecies in His earthly ministry.

In conclusion, let's follow the example of the constancy of the Martyrs. Martyrs continued to testify in the midst of pain. The patriarchs, prophets and human scribes of the Scriptures lived admirable lifestyles, many worthy of emulation. This type of holiness cannot be said of many pioneers of false religions. **The excellency of Christianity is seen in how many enemies it has.** I don't see Jehovah's Witnesses going through this. You don't hear of worldwide persecution of Buddhists.

Reflection Questions

1. How does the exclusivity of truth as described in the text apply to the claims made by Christianity?
2. What distinguishes true followers of Christ from those who may misrepresent Christianity, according to Matthew 7:21-23?
3. How does the historical evidence for Jesus' existence and resurrection support the claim that Christianity is the only true religion?
4. What role does the authenticity of the Bible play in establishing the truth claims of Christianity?

5. How do the scientific principles found in the Bible reinforce its authenticity and reliability?
6. In what ways does the coherence of the Christian worldview address fundamental questions about origin, purpose, morality, suffering, and destiny?
7. How does the pre-eminence of Christ, including His resurrection and divinity, set Christianity apart from other religions?
8. What is the significance of the fulfilled prophecies in the scriptures, and how do they support the truth claims of Christianity?
9. How does the transformation of individuals and societies through Christianity provide evidence for its truth?
10. Why is it important to focus on Jesus' teachings and actions rather than the actions of those who misrepresent Him when evaluating the truth of Christianity?

Assignments

1. **Essay Assignment:** Write a 2,000-word essay on the historicity of Jesus, analyzing the archaeological and historical evidence for His existence and resurrection. Discuss how this evidence supports the claim that Christianity is the only true religion.
2. **Research Project:** Conduct a research project on the scientific principles found in the Bible, such as the roundness of the earth (Isaiah 40:22) and the hydrological cycle (Ecclesiastes 1:7). Present your findings in a detailed report, explaining how these principles validate the Bible's authenticity and reliability.
3. **Presentation Assignment:** Create a presentation on the coherence of the Christian worldview. Include discussions on how Christianity answers fundamental existential questions about origin, purpose, morality, suffering, and destiny. Use scriptural references and real-life examples to support your points.