

Why Christianity?

There are many religions across the world, how is it that anyone can claim that any religion could be singled out as the only one that is true? First, let's look at the possibilities for how many religions can be true.

Are all religions the same?: It has been proposed that all religions are true and are thus worshipping the same God. Generally speaking, religion is about love, submitting to the culture's relevant religious institution, and doing the right things in order to go to heaven. That sounds like a compelling argument, but does it really prove all religions are the same?

Not at all. First of all, love is a very strange and vague concept across cultural lines. Some cultures do not even have language that describes romantic love. Strike one. Second, certain religions were founded more or less to reform a currently existing religious institution. By doing this the new religious sect declared that the old order was wrong. Strike two. Third, not all religions teach that you can earn your way to heaven. Some don't teach that there is an alternative to heaven. Others yet don't teach in a truly structured kingdom that is like heaven as the West defines it. And so on and so forth. Strike three. So on those three points we are encountering some serious complications for those who claim all religion is the same. Now, let's briefly look at two popular religions of today that people sometimes try to say are the same.

Christianity and Islam. They both have their roots in Judaism and share certain Biblical traditions in common and also herald Jesus as being the greatest man ever to walk the face of the planet. And yet, they are far from the same. First of all, the stories of the Old Testament are significantly different in each respective tradition. Second, Islam teaches that Christianity believes in polytheism (the belief in multiple gods) while Christianity claims it only believes in one. But then the most significant of the differences comes with their understanding of the identity of Jesus Christ. Islam teaches that he was the greatest prophet of God but not someone who ever claimed to be divine or to be God's Son. Christianity, on the other hand, has it written in the New Testament, over and over again that Jesus is the Son of God and that he is fully divine. The differences in their perceptions of who Jesus is/was are so different that Christianity teaches that Jesus was crucified, died, and rose from the dead, while Islam teaches that he was never crucified nor did he die, but it only appeared that Jesus was crucified (meaning that there had to have been someone else who agreed to take Jesus' punishment for him) but he was actually lifted up to heaven before he could be apprehended by the authorities. One says Jesus died and rose, the other says that he never died but was lifted to heaven. In terms of doctrine, these differences are like night and day. Not all religions can be correct due to direct and intentional contradictions with other religions. Hardly even two religions can be the same.

Are all religions are wrong?: Another popular movement of today is that *all* religions are false. This is a simple concept to grasp, thus it will take only a brief description. There are so many religions in the world that bear significant differences from one another and that are backed by absolutely zero real world evidence that all religions must be man-made constructs. Some say religion was once necessary and was a result of evolutionary advantages for those who abided by an orderly religious system. Today, many of those advocates now say religion is no longer needed. Ultimately, it is seen by this movement that not all religions can be correct, but they can all be wrong.

One religion is right: It is highly recommended that you consult C. S. Lewis' classic work, *Mere Christianity*, for the details of this argument. In it he explains away all other possibilities, of which, only a few will be discussed in this section. Starting off broad and then narrowing it down to the specific how can we deduce that only one religion is correct?

The first question to ask would be, "Is there one God or many gods?" This question will significantly narrow the playing field once it is answered. Ultimately, if there are multiple gods, one must ask, "Where did all of these gods come from?" The revelation in this instance is that the gods are a common entity within the universe so it cannot be assumed that there is anything totally unique about them. They could have evolved from nothing or maybe they were created by something else. This *something else* would have to be something greater than them in order to create them. This alone renders the idea of multiple gods useless because ultimately a greater being than the gods must itself be a greater or even the greatest God.

What about two gods? In religions that make use of two gods, normally it is assumed that one god has a preference for governing the world through goodness and the other governs the world through cruelty. Aside from the above argument, you must also be curious as to how we can really define good and evil. If good is God's ideal, then how can either of these deities be considered evil? One promotes the ideas of peace, love, and happiness. The other promotes ideas of chaos, hate, and bitterness. To us it appears obvious which one appears good and which appears evil, but when two gods are equal to one another *good* becomes a matter of preference. Add on top of that, the question of, "Why two and not three?" This is a very complicate problem that needs solved.

If there cannot be multiple gods, if there is a God, there must only be one. One God would have the sole authority to determine moral absolutes. In the first chapter of the Bible, God does exactly what you would expect of a Creator God. As he is creating the world and the rest of the universe, he makes distinctions: Sky from land, land from water, light from darkness, etc. This is because he arranged things according to his desires and his nature. The chaos that would ensue between two creators would be unimaginable. It would be more likely that creation would never happen. Monotheism seems to be the most reasonable system to believe in.

Three major monotheist religions: Among monotheist religions, there are three that really stand out: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. To simplify the process of narrowing down who God would be between these three religions, let us first reflect upon who we, the human race, are.

Islam and being created in the Image of God: We are beings that have been created by God and are held accountable to him. Nobody seems to think that animals or plants are accountable through divine judgment, so we can rule out the possibility that we are not something special in the order of creation. Islam teaches that we are NOT created in the image of God.¹ If God is good, created the world to be good, intended mankind to be above all other animals what was the purpose in doing so? What standard can mankind strive toward to please God? Why is mankind held to a different standard than that of God himself? Or, for that matter, why would mankind be held to a different standard than that of God himself?

¹ http://www.discoveringislam.org/man_image_of_god.htm

There are many more questions that could plague this difference between Islam and the other two monotheistic religions, but for now these are sufficient.

The major difference in perspective between Islam and the other two in this instance is that it does not believe in a God that will enter into a personal relationship with his followers. God is transcendent, untouchable, and unfathomable above everything else. The idea that God could enter into a personal relationship with his creation, according to Islam, is absurd. Mankind must simply submit to God's rule.

In Judaism and Christianity, there is a personal element. God must reveal himself to those who would become his followers. It is through this direct and special revelation that anybody could come to know God. The knowledge of God in the context of these two religions is an intimate matter. It is not merely hearing and obeying, it is the Creator walking alongside those that he has created to bear his likeness. In this respect, it makes perfect sense that mankind would be accountable to God. Bearing the likeness of God means that we have an understanding of the universe that nothing else in creation can possess. Both religions teach that we once only had a nature that was purely good until we disobeyed God by eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. In doing that, we betrayed the relationship we had to our Creator, made it possible for mankind to commit horrible acts of wickedness, and opened the door to God's divine judgment upon our lives. I think that this makes plenty more sense than God arbitrarily creating a creature like mankind that is higher than the animals, that is spiritually accountable to God, but has no direct relationship to him.

Judaism and the missing Messiah: One of the major drawbacks to Judaism has been that they have not yet received the Messiah they have been expecting. As a result many of Jews have either chosen to abandon religion, change their concept of how to understand God, or simply enjoy the study of Tanakh as something to connect them to their cultural heritage. There are those who still await the coming of Messiah, but it seems as though this has been a major drawback for their religious practices and beliefs in the modern era.

Christianity and the Jewish Messiah: Christianity was nothing more than a continuation of the Jewish faith when it was founded. Jesus himself, aside from being heralded as God by Christians, was brought up in the Jewish tradition. His teachings came from the Old Testament teachings (back then they would not have been called the Old Testament, though). Jesus was and is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies that taught that a King would come from the line of the Jewish King David. He would be the King over all people and is even referred to as "mighty God" as prophesied by the prophet Isaiah (9:6). Therefore, Jesus is a continuation of the Jewish faith and he has taken it in the direction that God has wanted it to go since the dawn of time.

There is so much more to this discussion that what has already been listed. This section will be updated in the future to include more depth to the reasoning as to why Christianity is the way to God. Much of what is added will be in response to questions that are posed by the readers, so please, let me know what you think!

More information may be added in the future. Feel free to submit questions concerning why Christianity? to preacherbill174@gmail.com.