

## Don't All Religions Lead to God?

### A. Knowing the Challenge

1. All religions worship the same God, just by a different name.
2. All religions are basically the same—they all teach about love, acceptance, goodness, etc.
3. It really doesn't matter what you believe, or who you worship, as long as you have faith in something (this makes your own faith the object of your worship)
4. Christians are arrogant for claiming that their religion is the only true religion (or that Jesus is the only way to heaven)

### B. Knowing the Truth

1. Not all religions believe the same things—we will look at each religions view of God, the after-life, and salvation:
  - a. God:
    - 1) We believe in a personal, knowable God who exists as One God who in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (The Trinity)—2 Corinthians 13:14: **“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”**
    - 2) Judaism also teaches that there is only one God, Yahweh, but they reject the Trinity
    - 3) Islam is also mono-theistic but worships Allah, who is similar to Yahweh but distinctly different in other ways
    - 4) Jehovah's Witnesses claim to be Christians who worship Jehovah, but they reject the Trinity claiming that Jesus was created by God and that the Holy Spirit is merely an active force
    - 5) Mormons claim to be Christians as well, but they are polytheistic (many gods) and believe that God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit are three distinct deities (not one God in three persons), and that God has a wife called the Heavenly Mother. They also believe that they can ascend to godhood themselves just like Jesus did
    - 6) Hinduism is also polytheistic and believes in both male and female gods—in some cases MILLIONS of them
    - 7) Buddhism is mostly agnostic and doesn't believe in a personal God or gods
    - 8) So, we can see that not all religions believe the same thing about God
  - b. The after-life:
    - 1) In Christianity we believe in the eternity of the soul (meaning that it lives on after death) and that after being judged each person will spend eternity either with God in peace and happiness (e.g. Heaven) or separated from Him in torment (e.g. Hell/Lake of Fire):
      - a) 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.”**
      - b) Matthew 25:46: **“These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”**
    - 2) In Judaism there are many varying opinions on the afterlife, but in some traditions the truly righteous ascend to the Garden of Eden. The rest descend to Gehinnom for a period of time (a year?) where they are purified before they ultimately ascend to the

Garden of Eden. Only the truly wicked never make it to Eden and are either destroyed or suffer eternal torment.

- 3) Mormons believe that after death each person will be judged and then sent to one of four kingdoms based on their Mormon works: The first three are referred to as kingdoms of glory—the celestial kingdom (the best and highest heaven reserved for the best Mormons who get to experience the presence of God the Father), the terrestrial kingdom (for moderate Mormons who only get to experience the presence of Jesus the Son), and the telestial kingdom (for sinners who might still be redeemed after death, and who enjoy only the presence of the Holy Spirit, but not the Father or the Son). The fourth is called Outer Darkness which is where Satan and his demons live and is reserved for those who had perfect knowledge of the divinity of Christ but rejected Him anyway.
- 4) Jehovah's Witnesses believe in a Heaven, but that only 144,000 will spend eternity there (ruling with God and Jesus). The remainder of those who are saved will enjoy paradise on Earth in a king of renewed Garden of Eden. They reject the concept of Hell and believe that the soul is annihilated.
- 5) Buddhists strive for nirvana which is a state of perfect peace and happiness and therefore do not see heaven or hell as a place as much as a temporary state of being or experience on their journey to nirvana.
- 6) Hindus strive for something called Moksha which refers to escaping the cycle of reincarnation and entering into a state of wholeness or completeness
- 7) So, we see that not all religions believe the same thing about life after death

c. Salvation:

- 1) As Christians, we know that we are saved by the free gift of God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ (God's atoning sacrifice)—Ephesians 2:8-9: **"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."**
- 2) Orthodox Judaism teaches that salvation is the result of living a holy and righteous life devoted to Yahweh (e.g. works)
- 3) Islam teaches that salvation is based on Allah's grace and man's works (their five pillars)
- 4) Mormonism claims that salvation is by grace, but only after you've done all you can do by trying your best, denying yourself of ungodliness, putting an end to sins and committing them no more, etc.
- 5) Jehovah's Witnesses claim that salvation is by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, but they must prove they are worthy of salvation by their works and their endurance (e.g. if they don't endure in their works they can lose their salvation).
- 6) Buddhists attain nirvana through a lifetime of dedication to the Noble Eightfold Path (right understanding, right thought, right speech, right conduct, right means of making a living, right mental attitude or effort, right mindfulness, right concentration/meditation)
- 7) Hindus achieve their concept of salvation through four paths: Karma (The Way of Action) which refers to giving up self and serving others, Jnana (the Way of Knowledge) which refers to the study of Hindu ideas; Bhakti (the Way of Devotion) which refers to acts of worship; and Raja (the Royal Way) which refers to physical acts like yoga.
- 8) So we see that not all religions believe the same thing about how to obtain salvation

2. Since all religions teach something different, they can't all be true:

- a. Logic dictates that two opposing ideas cannot both be true

- b. For instance, as Christians we believe that Jesus is the Son of God but Muslims reject that idea--we can't both be right.
  - c. So, since every religion teaches something different, they can't all be right. In fact, there are only two options:
    - 1) Only one can be right
    - 2) Or, they're all wrong
  - d. This is especially true of Christianity because of its exclusive claims—if it is right, then all other religions must be wrong:
    - 1) Deuteronomy 4:35, 39: **“To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him... Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.”**
    - 2) Isaiah 46:9: **“Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me,”**
    - 3) 1 Timothy 2:5: **“For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”**
    - 4) John 14:6: **“Jesus said to him [Thomas], ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.’”**
    - 5) Acts 4:12 (Peter): **“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”**
3. So, how do we know that Christianity is true and the others are wrong?—Four **PROOFS**
- a. The **FIRST PROOF** is the impact that Christianity has had on the world—in spite of the constant severe opposition and persecution it has faced since Jesus was crucified:
    - 1) It's the largest religion in the world
      - a) It's estimated that there are over 2.2 billion people in the world that identify as Christians (Islam is second with 1.2 billion)
      - b) Consider this: how did a man whose public ministry lasted only three years, who was crucified as a criminal, develop such a following, especially when His handpicked disciples were all put to death as well?
      - c) Within 10 days of His ascension, 3000 Jews were converted to Christ (**Acts 2:37-41**)
      - d) Then, in spite of severe opposition and persecution by both Jews and Roman authorities, within a few weeks that number grew to over 5000 (**Acts 4:4**; NOTE: it says “5000 men” so it was likely more when you factor in the women)
      - e) Within the next 300 years, despite constant attempts to destroy Christians and Christianity, they became so prevalent that it transformed the entire Roman empire, one of the greatest, most powerful, most morally corrupt and brutal world powers in history
      - f) Throughout history, Christians have been persecuted around the world more than any other single people group—great article by the Catholic church regarding attempts to stamp out Christianity (<https://www.catholicvote.org/23-persecutions-that-failed-to-destroy-christianity/>)
      - g) Yet, in spite of this Christianity spread throughout Europe and into the west and became the basis for Western Civilization and continues to be the largest religion in the world.
    - 2) In the West, it's the basis for our civil rights, our form of government and even our laws

- 3) Modern science has its roots in Christianity—nearly all of the founders of modern science were Christians like Keppler, Boyle, Pascal, Pasteur, Newton, etc.
  - 4) Modern education is a result of the Protestant Reformation and again finds its roots in Christianity. Prior to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, most education took place in the home and literacy among the masses was exceptionally low. With the reformation, however, came the idea that each person needed to learn to read so that he or she could read and study the Bible. Most public schools in Europe and here in America were started and run by various church denominations. All but one of the 123 colleges in Colonial America were Christian.
  - 5) Hospitals, orphanages, nursing homes, homeless missions, soup kitchens, etc. all owe their beginnings to Christianity as most were originally started by churches and were an out-growth of Christian charity
  - 6) No other religion has had such a world-changing impact
- b. The **SECOND PROOF** is the life of Jesus:
- 1) He led a sinless life:
    - a) 2 Corinthians 5:21: **“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**
    - b) Hebrews 4:15: **“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”**
  - c) There are hundreds of prophecies made about the Messiah in the Old Testament that were all fulfilled in Jesus (including where he would be born, how he would be betrayed and for how much, how he would die and when, etc.)
  - d) He performed miracles—Jesus even told his enemies that if they couldn’t believe His claims, at least believe in Him because of the miracles he performed (John 10:37-38): **“If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; 38 but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.”**
  - e) He claimed to be the Son of God and died for it
  - f) He rose from the dead as HE predicted He would
- c. The **THIRD PROOF** is the evidence that the Bible is the Word of God
- 1) It has an impeccable record of fulfilled prophecy
  - 2) It has proven itself to be historically accurate
  - 3) It has proven itself to be scientifically accurate
  - 4) Its contents are supported by external sources (e.g. science, archeology, history, secular writings, etc.)
  - 5) It’s internal consistency and unity is unmatched among all other religious and secular writings
  - 6) All of this points to its divine inspiration
- d. The **FOURTH PROOF** is the uniqueness of Christianity
- 1) It’s the only world religion that is based purely on God’s grace and not our works: **“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast”** (Ephesians 2:8-9)
  - 2) It’s the only world religion that is based on a relationship with God, rather than on some system or process for attaining salvation or nirvana:

- a) Muslims have their code of law the Five Pillars
  - b) Buddhist have their Eight Fold Path
  - c) Hindus have their Four Paths
  - d) But Christians find salvation in a relationship with God (1 John 5:12): **“He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”**
- 3) It’s the only world religion that stands or falls on undeniable historical events, including the most important one--the resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:14): **“And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith is also is vain.”**

C. Knowing How to Respond
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Q: Don’t all religions pretty much teach the same thing?

A: Actually, they don’t and there are probably more differences than there are similarities. For instance, many religions believe in more than one God, but the Bible says that there is only one God (Isaiah 46:9). Some religions teach that God is very distant and not relational, but the Bible teaches that God loves us and desires to have a relationship with us, and says that if we draw near to Him He will draw near to us (James 4:8). Most religions also teach that we have to earn God’s favor, or earn eternal life, but that leave us guessing how good is good enough. However, the Bible tells us that, none of us are good enough, and that we are saved by God’s grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). It also tells us that **“God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him not perish but have eternal life”** (John 3:16). This brings up a good question for us. Since all religions teach something different about God, and since they therefore can’t all be true, which one do we believe? That’s where Christianity stands out from all other religions. There are all kinds of evidence that the Bible and Christianity are true. I’d love to share some of them with you.

Q: It really doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you have faith in something.

A: You know, I find that statement rather interesting because there aren’t a whole lot of other areas where we’d say that. For instance, when it comes to things like science, history, math and other subjects we don’t say it doesn’t matter what we believe. For instance, if someone were to say two plus two equals five we wouldn’t say, “Well, that’s okay as long as they really believe that.” Instead, we’d say he’s wrong because two plus two doesn’t equal five. Likewise, when someone says the earth is flat or we never landed on the moon, we say they are wrong because those things are just wrong. Shouldn’t we hold our faith to the same standard of truth, especially if it involves what happens to us after this life? Eternity is a long time so I want to know that what I believe about life after death, God, faith, etc. is true. I want to know my faith is true. So, it does matter what you believe. If what you believe is false then your faith is useless. That’s one of the things about Christianity that is different from all other religions. God gave us a way to test what’s written in the Bible. We can test it archeologically. We can test it historically. We can test the prophecies contained within its pages to see if they came true. So, we can know if it’s true, which means that when our faith is built upon the foundation of the Bible, it’s not meaningless or useless. It’s based on something that’s true.