

“Why Christianity?”

April 16, 2025

INTRO:

*On February 23, 2019, a Nigerian Christian named Oluwole Ilesanmi stood outside a train station in London preaching to people as they walked by. Two British police officers came up to him and gave him a choice: go away or be arrested. "I will not go away," Mr. Ilesanmi replied. "I need to tell them the truth, because Jesus is the only way, the truth, and the life!" "Nobody wants to listen to that," said one of the officers. "They want you to go away." "You don't want to listen to that?" Mr. Ilesanmi replied. "You will listen when you're dead. You will listen when you are dead!" So he was arrested. In Western countries like Britain and America, most people think it's okay to say you're a Christian, so long as you leave other people alone. I can say that Jesus is true for me. But if, like Mr. Ilesanmi, I say that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life for everyone everywhere (John 14:6)—regardless of their culture, race, or current religious beliefs—that's seen as offensive. So what are we to make of this? Can Jesus be true for me, but not for you? **Rebecca McLaughlin** "10 Questions Every Teen Should Ask (and Answer) about Christianity" pg. 55-56*

Common Phrases:

"God is too big for one religion." "There are many paths to the same truth." "All rivers lead to the ocean."

"Different names, same God." "Truth is one; the wise call it by many names." "Religion is the finger pointing to the moon, not the moon itself." "The light is the same, even if the lamps are different."

Are all religions really the same? Just differing paths that end up in one central happy place? Let's put it to the test!

Differences in Major Religions

Last week we saw that 85% of the world population identifies as “religious.”

Christianity (31%), Islam (24%), Hinduism (15%), Buddhism (7%) = **77% OR 6.2 billion.**

“Post-Truth” – relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal beliefs. *Oxford English Dictionary's 2016 “Word of the Year”*

Either they're all right, they're all wrong, or one is right...but you can't take a “post-truth” approach to figuring it out.

- 1) Monotheist vs. Polytheistic
 - a. Christianity (Trinity, but One)
 - b. Islam (Allah – al-Samad meaning eternally independent and self-sufficient. Found in Quran.)
 - c. Hinduism (Poly or Mono...It's not centered on a single founder or rigid dogma, and beliefs can vary widely)
 - d. Buddhism (No God...focus on personal enlightenment, It's more a philosophy or way of life than a religion.)

*Claiming that monotheism fits with an all-religions-are-one approach is like claiming someone can be in two places at one time: it's possible, but only if you kill the person first and dismember the body! **Rebecca McLaughlin** “Confronting Christianity” pg. 57*

2) Ethics

*Many who believe that all religions are equally true, or at least that no one should claim his or her own religion is the truth, also affirm universal ethical beliefs: for example, that racism is wrong, that people should have freedom of sexual expression, or that men and women should be valued equally. Few think these beliefs are contingent on cultural context. But if we say to our traditional Muslim friends, "We uphold your right to be a Muslim, so long as you embrace equal roles for men and women, the legitimacy of same-sex marriage, and the freedom of your teenagers to experiment sexually," are we truly upholding their right to practice their faith? **Rebecca McLaughlin** "Confronting Christianity" pg. 55-56*

What hurts your brain to think about is how so many in the culture will claim that there is no definitive truth EXCEPT when they have opinions on particular "ethical" or "moral" positions.

3) Jesus

Judaism:

Teacher

New Testament (where all of Jesus is found) = Not Jewish Scripture

Jewish Man

Not followed or worshipped

Islam:

Prophet...One of the Greatest

NOT God or the Son of God

Born from the Virgin Mary

NOT crucified

He will return

Christianity:

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

Messiah – **John 1:41** *He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ).*

Divine – **John 10:30; 14:9** *I and the Father are one... 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?*

Savior – **John 1:29, Luke 19:10** *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!... 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*

Lord – **Matt 28:18** *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*

Human – **Heb 4:15** *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

Resurrected...**1 Cor 15:12-19** *Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope[a] in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

*But there's one thing we can all know for sure: Jesus was either physically raised from the dead or he wasn't. If we took a video camera back two thousand years and set it up outside his tomb, we'd either see him coming out or not. What we can't say is that Christians, Muslims, and Jews are all right about Jesus. He is either the resurrected King of the universe, who defeated sin and death, or he is not. **Rebecca McLaughlin** "10 Questions Every Teen Should Ask (and Answer) about Christianity" pg. 58-59*

4) Salvation

Christianity: **John 14:6** Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Islam: Faith in Allah, 5 pillars, avoid major sins, sincerity and intentions in your actions...and Allah can still decide not to let you in.

The Prophet Muhammad said, "No one's deeds will enter them into Paradise." When asked even him, he replied, "Not even me, unless Allah grants me His mercy." (Sahih Muslim)

So in short: Belief + Good Deeds + Avoiding Major Sins + Sincere Repentance + Allah's Mercy.

Hinduism: Swarga (Temp) and Moksha (Permanent)

- a. Good karma, moralistic, ritualistic
- b. Understand your true self, devotion, selflessness, meditation and discipline

Buddhism: Heaven (Temp) and Nirvana (Permanent)

- a. Ethical, good karma, meditate
- b. Follow Noble Eightfold Path, Realize Four Noble Truths, selflessness

When you approach the topic of a one-size-fits-all religion from a practical, logical perspective, the only way to smash them together is to ignore reality with a "post-truth" mindset.

Tell a Better Story

Is Christianity true? Is Christianity good?

*At first when you encounter doubts, you may try to salvage a Christian identity that remains true to at least one of the sets. Perhaps you think you can hold on to the foundational truth claims of Christianity-the resurrection of Jesus, for instance, or other statements found in the Apostles' Creed-and still remake and revise the moral vision of Christianity so that it better corresponds to contemporary notions of goodness and freedom. Or maybe you think you can focus on a renewed moral vision that includes all the teachings of Christianity that resonate with you—loving your neighbor as yourself, showing grace to the outcast, the stranger, even your enemy—while downplaying or reinterpreting some of the miracle stories that feel embarrassing in an age of technological advance. Many people want to maintain something resembling Christianity, since they believe religions are good when they provide us with purpose and make us kinder and more decent to others. But such attempts to keep part of Christianity without the whole, or to revise it according to our preferences, only leaves us unsatisfied. **Trevin Wax** "Before You Lose Your Faith – Deconstructing Doubt in the Church" pg. 9-10*

The issue that lies with all the major religions outside of Christianity is they constantly leave you unsatisfied. Unsatisfied in your day to day, life after death, and ultimately your eternity.

Acts 17:16;22-31 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. 22 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. 26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, 28 for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring." 29 Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Why Christianity? God gives us an assurance in the very thing that all our hearts long for. All the things we search for ultimately get satisfied in Jesus, His work on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead.