

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

1. HOW CAN WE KNOW ABOUT GOD?
 - A. God reveals some truth to everyone.
 1. Through nature, God shows both His power and that He is God (Romans 1:19-20, NIV). Consider the design of the ant, the hawk, the eye and our planet. Is there a Designer?
 2. Through our conscience, God shows what He expects of us (Romans 2:14-15). Throughout the world murder, lying, stealing and adultery are condemned (unless the culture is very corrupt). Why is this so? God reveals this to our conscience.
 - B. God takes special care to reveal particular truths.
 1. He "appeared," for example, when He gave the Ten Commandments to Moses (Exodus 19:20).
 2. He speaks through true prophets (see Deuteronomy 18:18-22 for tests).
 3. He speaks through miracles (such as the pillar of fire, Exodus 13:21-22).
 4. He has spoken most clearly through His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the exact image of God (Hebrews 1:2; Colossians 1:15; 2:9). We would not know Jesus by simply looking at nature around us.
 - C. In our age, the clearest revelation of God's truth is the Bible.
 1. The Old Testament (Genesis through Malachi) comes to us through the authority of prophets ("Thus says the Lord. . ."). Jesus regarded the Old Testament as fully true, that its prophecies must be fulfilled (Luke 24:25-45). The apostle Paul regarded the Old Testament as "Holy Scriptures" (Romans 1:2; 15:4).
 2. The New Testament (Matthew through Revelation) comes to us through the authority of apostles (generally, a disciple during Jesus Christ's earthly ministry, who saw His resurrection--Acts 1:21-22). They were given special ability to recall Jesus' words (John 14:25-26). The apostle Peter considered the writings of Paul to be equal in authority to the Old Testament (2 Peter 3:16). Some New Testament writers, such as Mark, wrote under the authority of an apostle (Mark was Peter's disciple).
 3. Other verses show that the entire Bible is given by God (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20). Scripture has special ability to penetrate our understanding and conscience (Hebrews 4:12). God's words will remain after our planet has vaporized (Matthew 24:35).
 4. Since both prophets and apostles spoke from God, and God doesn't make mistakes, the Bible is without mistake, as originally given (the autographs).
 5. Over the centuries minor changes have entered the texts, but none that affect any important truth. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, beginning in 1947, showed that only few and minor changes had entered the Old Testament during 1,000 years of copying. For the New Testament, we have approximately 15,000 to 20,000 parts of the New Testament, from which, by comparing one with another and noting how old they are, we have an excellent text today. (For more information, see F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?* 1960. Grand

Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Pub. Co.; Josh McDowell, *More Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. 1981. San Bernardino, Cal.: Here's Life Publishers. ISBN: 0918956730. These books were consulted.)

6. The Bible can be shown to be true because hundreds of prophecies have been accurately fulfilled (see below, #6., part G of this paper for examples).
7. The Bible also is true because it shows the way life really is. The daily newspaper can be understood, as the Bible truly describes human nature. It perfectly fits reality, because it is perfectly true, and was written by the One who has designed the reality in which we happen to live. For example, the Bible says that anyone who has received Jesus Christ is a new person (2 Corinthians 5:17). Have you yet seen that happen?

D. Why doesn't everyone understand the truth?

1. The truth is not pleasant to some, so they refuse to accept it (Romans 1:18). And Satan (the Devil) blinds them to the truth (2 Corinthians 4:4).
2. Human wisdom cannot understand God (Isaiah 55:8-9; 1 Corinthians 19-21). If we could, our God would be fairly small.

2. WHO IS GOD?

A. God is one God (Deuteronomy 6:4--that "oneness" allows for parts within it, as in "a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." [Genesis 2:24, NIV]). And He is the ONLY God in the world (Isaiah 45:21-22).

B. Who is God the Father?

1. He is Spirit, and without flesh and bones (John 4:24; Luke 24:39).
2. He is love (1 John 4:8).
3. He treats people with justice, and no one can deliver from His hand (Deuteronomy 32:39-42).
4. He is completely holy (without sin) and awesome (Psalm 99:1-3; Isaiah 40).
5. He has no beginning or end (Revelation 1:8 [Alpha and Omega]).
6. He is the Creator of all that is (Genesis 1:1).
7. He knows everything, even what we say next (Psalm 139:1-4), and is everywhere at once (Psalm 139:7-12).
8. Nothing is too hard for God (Genesis 18:14).
9. He is a father to His children: "abounding in love," forgiving, compassionate, giving (Psalm 103:2-18, NIV).

C. Who is God the Son?

1. He is eternal (Isaiah 9:6-7; John 8:58; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:8; John 1:1; Revelation 22:12-13, 20 [Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end]). Jesus is the "I AM" (John 8:58; Exodus 3:14).
2. Everything was created through the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God, the Son. He was not created, but created ALL things, and is before ALL things (Colossians 1:16-19). He keeps the world going.
3. He claimed to be One with the Father (John 5:18; 10:30), but gave up for a time some of His powers and privileges to become man (His birth or "incarnation"), so that He (God) could die for our sins (Philippians 2:6-11).

4. He was never an angel, but is above ALL angels, as God's Son (Hebrews 1:4-6, 13). He is fully God (Colossians 2:9; Titus 2:13).
- D. Who is God the Holy Spirit?
1. He is eternal (Genesis 1:1-2, in the *beginning*; Hebrews 9:14).
 2. He is a Person, not an impersonal force (Romans 8:26-27), is God (Acts 5:3-4) and equal to the Son (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).
 3. His main work is to bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ (John 15:26).
- E. What is more evidence for the tri-unity of God?
1. God said, "Let US make man" (Genesis 1:26). Who else created humankind? He said to the prophet Isaiah, "Who will go for US?" (Isaiah 6:8).
 2. The Father and the Spirit were present at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:13-17). Christians were sent into the whole world, baptizing "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19, NIV).
 3. Other verses declare God's tri-unity: Luke 1:35; John 14:16, 26; 15:26; Romans 15:16; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:18-19; 1 Timothy 3:15-16; Hebrews 9:14; Revelation 22:16-18.
 4. While the term "trinity" is not found in the Bible, the Bible proves that God is a tri-unity. The exact name "Jehovah" may not be found in the Bible either, but may instead be pronounced "Yahweh." The four consonants for God's name (YHWH) were too holy to be pronounced by the Jews, so they took the vowels of another name for God (AdOnI, which means "my Lord") and combined the two: Y-A-H-O-W-I-H.

3. WHAT IS HUMANKIND?

- A. He/She is created in God's image (Genesis 1:27). In what ways are we different from other living organisms?
1. We have highly developed symbolic language (speech). God speaks and loves-- so we speak and love (Francis Schaeffer's insight).
 2. We can appreciate beauty (do bullfrogs appreciate the *beauty* of butterflies?). God created gorgeous flowers and birds and people.
 3. We can create complex tools and music. God also delights in creating.
 4. We know right from wrong (Romans 2:14-15), all over the world. God created those truths (Genesis 2:16-17).
 5. We can make choices (Joshua 24:15). Animals are driven by instinct (2 Peter 2:12). And God *chooses* those who follow Him (Ephesians 1:4).
 6. We are given responsibility over God's creation, including the animal world, and are made lower, but not greatly lower, than God (Psalm 8).
 7. We can, by receiving Christ, become a child of God, while He becomes our Father (John 1:12; Romans 8:14-17).
 8. Each person (not animal) will be judged by God after death (2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27).
- B. We have spoiled God's image because of sin, and are separated from Him.
1. Our first father, Adam, sinned and as the head of the human race, that sin was passed on to all people (Romans 5:17-19).

2. Each of us also sins individually (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8).
3. The payment due for sin(s): spending eternity in hell (the Second Death; Romans 6:23; Revelation 20:14). Hell is a "lake of fire" of conscious agony (Luke 16:23; Revelation 20:10, 15). There is no way to cross from hell to heaven (Luke 16:26). And it is utterly dark (Jude 1:13).
4. We cannot pay for the sins of another, or for even ourselves (Psalm 49:7-9; in hell payment is never complete). Someone can only adequately pay who has no personal sin debt.

4. HOW CAN WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD?

- A. God the Son has paid our sin debt, and provided peace with God the Father.
 1. The price to be paid for sin is death (Romans 3:23). Life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11), so blood must be spilled. Since all people have sinned, and inherit sin from Adam, the Father willed that the Son become a man, not through a human father, but by the Holy Spirit coming upon a virgin named Mary (Luke 1:35). The eternal Word of God had to take on flesh and blood (John 1:1, 14), in order to die ("Look, the *Lamb* of God, who takes away the sin of the world!," John 1:29, NIV). Spotless lambs were sacrificed as sin offerings (also as peace offerings, Leviticus 3:6-7).
 2. Jesus Christ never sinned during his entire life (1 Peter 2:22, 24), so He could offer Himself up to God for our sins (Hebrews 7:26-28).
 3. He made peace between God and us by paying our sin debt (1 Timothy 2:5-6).
 4. How do we know that Jesus is God and paid for our sins? He gave us one major sign, that He would be raised from death by His Father (Matthew 12:39-40). In proof, over 500 people saw Jesus after His death (1 Corinthians 15:3-8; John 20-21).
- B. How do I receive the peace with God that Jesus provides?
 1. Peace with God, forgiveness of all our sin(s), and eternal life with God in heaven are received *by faith* in Christ, without any personal goodness at all (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5)! God considers faith in Christ the same as personal goodness. We receive to our account the goodness of Jesus Christ, just as He received our sin (Romans 3:21-24; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Fortunately, going to heaven is not a result of joining a church, being baptized, or obeying the 10 Commandments, the Law of Moses, the Golden Rule, or any other code of conduct. "Jesus paid it ALL."
 2. Specifically the Christian believes that Jesus is Lord, and that God raised Him from the dead, and is willing to state that publicly (Romans 10:9-10). Baptism is the public identification with Christ (Acts 2:41).
 3. God commands us to repent, that is, to turn away from known sin (Acts 3:19; 17:10). God will give you the power needed to change your life (2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 4:13).
 4. Whoever would receive Christ (John 1:12) should count the cost. It may mean rejection by friends and family--it may mean losing a job or even martyrdom (Luke 14:26-27).

5. If you have Jesus, you can be sure *right now* that you have, right now, eternal life (1 John 5:11-13).

5. HOW DOES A CHRISTIAN LIVE?

- A. Jesus Christ gradually becomes our life (Colossians 1:18).
 1. We need to live in constant dependence upon Jesus (John 15:1-7).
 2. The purpose of our life becomes to glorify God in everything (1 Corinthians 10:31). The highest way to do this is to live a life of love to God and people (Mark 12:28-30; Romans 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 13:13). Love is the mark of a true Christian (John 13:35).
- B. A Christian lives in obedience to Jesus' commandments, and grows strong by meditating upon the Bible (John 14:21; 1 Peter 2:2).

6. HOW IS CHRISTIANITY DIFFERENT FROM OTHER RELIGIONS?

- A. Our God has no limit, yet is personal.
 1. He is a "Father" to believers (Psalm 139:7-18; Romans 8:15-16; Luke 11:2)
 2. He is not just a Creator who has walked away, or a tribal god.
 3. The Lord "stoops to look on the heavens and the earth . . . [yet] He raises the poor from the dust . . ." (Psalm 113: 4-9, NIV).
- B. Our God is free from sin.
 1. God is holy (Isaiah 6:3), not a super man, complete with faults, as with some Hindu gods and goddesses (Kali), and many religions which worship spirits (animism).
- C. Our God is One--a Tri-unity
 1. He is not a god above other gods (henotheism), or one god among many (polytheism), or on the level of spirits or demons (animism).
 2. These scriptures affirm the Tri-unity: Genesis 1:26; Isaiah 6:8; Matthew 3:13-17; 28:19; Luke 1:35; John 14:16, 26; 15:26; Romans 15:16; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:18-19; 1 Timothy 3:15-16; Hebrews 9:14; Revelation 22:16-18.
- D. Jesus Christ is the only God-man in the world (John 1:1-3).
 1. He is the prophet who also claimed to be God (Luke 24:19; John 10:30). Buddha, Mohammed (Islam), Confucius, and Mahavira (Jainism) didn't, and are dead.
 2. Jesus calmly said that he was the *only* way to get to the Father (John 14:6). Religions increasingly teach that many ways exist to God (Baha'i, Hinduism [New Age]), or combine elements of various religions (Seventh Day Adventism appears to combine elements of the Law with Christianity). Mormonism combines Christianity with humanism (we can become gods, but will be under the first god [henotheism]). Christian Science combines parts of Christianity with Hinduism and Sikhism combines Islam with Hinduism. "All who ever came before Me were thieves and robbers, . . . Jesus said (John 10:8,NIV). This dealt with religions in existence before Christ came, with the exception of Judaism. Regarding those who followed Christ, He said that, "No one comes to the Father, except through Me." (John 14:6, NIV).

3. As G. Campbell Morgan has shown, Jesus is the only religious teacher who actually lives in his followers. Others receive teachings--Christians receive Christ (John 1:12), and become His ongoing life on earth (*The Acts of the Apostles*. 1924. Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, p. 31; John 14:20).
 4. Priesthood controls many religions. Jesus is the Christian's High Priest, and Christians are themselves a "royal priesthood" (Hebrews 5:1-10; 1 Peter 2:9).
- E. Good Deeds: Other religions require some kind of good deeds to find acceptance with "God." Jesus paid to the Father the full debt which our sin created, by giving His life (1 Peter 2:24). Jesus' work of seeking and saving the lost was completed on the cross (John 19:30; Hebrews 10:5-10). Jesus was once asked, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." (John 6:28-29, NIV). We are saved by faith in Christ, plus nothing. Faith that saves will be accompanied by good deeds (James 2:17).
- F. The Holy Spirit is a person, not simply a "force."
1. The Jehovah-Witnesses and New Agers teach an impersonal Spirit. But the Spirit can be lied to and grieved (Acts 5:3; Romans 8:26-27; Ephesians 4:30).
 2. His power is not used for the Devil, as is "white" and "black" magic, and other demonic forces.
- G. Our holy book, the Bible, is unique.
1. It contains predictive prophecy, many written hundreds of years before fulfillment. Prophecies concerning details of the birth, life and death of Christ have been fulfilled in detail (Micah 5:2; Isaiah 40:3; 35:5-6; 50:6; 53:2-10; Psalm 22:16-18; 16:10; 68:18; Zechariah 14:4).
 2. Prophecies concerning cities and nations such as Tyre, Edom, and Israel have been fulfilled (Ezekiel 26:1-14; Jeremiah 49:7-22; Ezekiel 37:1-14). God, who controls the future, isn't reluctant to speak of it, which is an unanswerable test to the truth of the Bible.
- H. With thousands of cults (heresies upon Christianity) and religions in the world, we must understand God's Word to determine what is really true. The Holy Spirit will teach a Christian (1 John 2:27).

To receive the most benefit from this study, look up the verses, check off ones read, and memorize those most helpful to you.

Questions or comments? Feel free to contact:

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