

"WHO IS JESUS ANYWAY?"

Lesson 1

Apologetics – Giving a Defense of What We Believe

For our first lesson in this study, we will focus on "Apologetics," i.e., giving a defense of the Christian faith.

Before we look at the specific questions for this week's lesson, let's consider the question of Christ's authenticity in a broader scope. That is: that a question around Christ's validity typically has many underlying questions or motives, and the answers given in defense of our faith will cover a wide area as well.

Consider the question "Is Christ the only way to be saved?". Typically, two types of people ask this question. The first type is the person who is actually very skeptical and sees his or her own belief system as superior and does not wish to allow themselves to be confronted by an absolute truth greater than themselves. For them, the need to confess sin and acknowledge God's sovereignty as Christians do is a threat to them and their belief system. Thus, any answer given will be seen with a slanted view.

The second type of person asking this question is the true seeker, someone earnestly looking for any indication that the truths they seek can be found in Christ.

Many people, including myself years ago, will tend to tackle the defense of their faith by taking on the argument using "blind faith" as reason enough, even though the Bible does not call us to have a faith that is blind at all. These same people will also attempt a point-by-point argument of each theological or structural difference between Christ-followers, and say the followers of Islam or Buddha. The difficulty here is that each religion can offer up someone who had a life changing event and now feels strongly that that event occurred because of their faith in _____ (you fill in the name of the religion, including Christianity). They then argue that if their faith changed them that dramatically, then the teachings of that religious belief must be true; so how can Christians claim that Christ is the only way to heaven?

However, I believe, as do many others, that while our changed lives validate that Christ is indeed living in us; our changed life in and of itself does not necessarily, prove that Jesus is the Messiah. We need more, and that more is found in the Bible. The Bible is the one and only source for our faith in Christ and the one and only true word of God—the God who sent His only son Jesus to live and die for us and to be raised from the dead. If the Bible is an accurate document, testable and verifiable, then everything in it is true, including the fact that Jesus is who he said he is—and that through Him leads the only path to heaven. You will readily see that there are many evidences of Christ's authenticity if we consider things in a broader scale for a moment and not just focus on an individual's experience or changed life as proof of Jesus being the Messiah.

In defense of your faith, have you ever considered the Jews? Where did they come from, how did they get where they are today, and what is in store for them next? Didn't Christ have a Jewish heritage? Doesn't the fact that we can trace their entire history back some four thousand years ago tell us a lot about the accuracy of the Bible, about God, and about Jesus?

How can we answer some of the common questions the world around us is asking. If Christ really is who he claims to be there must be proof—what is it? Called the study of Apologetics, after the Greek word Apologia, the defense of our faith is something all of us should understand. I pray that through this study your faith will grow deeper, and that the lost who study with us, and live around us, will come to know that Christ really is the Messiah and really did come to save even them.

As we look at our lesson this week, let's consider all the evidence that supports our faith, beginning with the fact the Jews, their sacred text which is the root of our Bible, and the creation around us all point to Jesus as the Messiah and God as the God above all gods. The accuracy of the Bible, tested and proven time and time again; the survival and growth of His chosen people, the Jews; all of the fulfilled prophecy in the Bible; and so much more points to Jesus as our Messiah, our Savior. And

it points to the coming fulfillment of more prophecy, as the world faces judgment and Christ returns to establish His earthly kingdom.

For help in answering the questions below, read the following verses:

- John 4:25-26
 - John 10:30
 - John 14:6
 - John 19:28-20:30
 - John 20:29-31
 - John 21:24-25
 - Matthew 16:15-17
 - Matthew 26:62-64
 - Luke 24:6-8
 - 1 Corinthians 15:1-8
 - 1 John 1:1-3
 - Acts 1:1-3
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See if you can respond to the following:

1. How can Christians say their way to eternal happiness is the "only" way?

2. How do I know Christ even existed to begin with, he could be just a story made up to fit someone or some group's agenda?

3. Why wouldn't it be more "reasonable" to assume that the "god" or "gods" that other religions and cults worship is actually the same god that Christians worship, just with a different name?

4. How can you say that the Bible is the only source of truth about God? Isn't it simply the way that he communicated with Christians, while he communicated with Mohammed through the Koran, and Joseph Smith through the Angel with the golden tablets?

