

# "WHO IS JESUS ANYWAY?"

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Lesson 1 w/Answers

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.

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

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- 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:*

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1. How can Christians say their way to eternal happiness is the "only" way?
  - a. ANSWER: See John 10:30 and John 14:6. We say this because Christ told us that this is so. There is no other way to God or heaven but through Jesus, period—none, no other way but one, Jesus.
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?
  - a. ANSWER: No one denies the Jesus existed. Numerous people witnessed his birth, his life, his death on the cross, and his resurrection. Many may argue that Jesus didn't actually die on the cross or that Jesus was not actually the Messiah, but the fact that Jesus is a real person has never been in question. It is the exclusive claims of Jesus that make Him and his followers controversial. Jesus tells us that the world hated him, and that they will hate those who follow him, including us; but that does not make the truth any less the truth. Jesus lived, died, and rose again so that we could be saved and spend eternity with Him.
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?
  - a. ANSWER: The lie that all world religions and religious writings are just different ways that the same God speaks to many peoples has been around for ages. The difficulty with that view point is that what these religions believe about God and what their sacred writings teach about God all contradict each other. For example:
    - i. Buddhism says that there is no God, and everyone can be "godlike" on their own.
    - ii. Islam says that Christ was just another prophet, and that he is not the only way to God.
    - iii. Christianity says that there is a personal God, and that Christ is the only way to Him, per John 14:6. If all three were different paths to the same place, how can they then also contradict each other?
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?
  - a. ANSWER: No; the difference between the single experiences of individuals that no one ever witnessed versus the writings of these people is that none of them are verifiable, testable, documentable, or repeatable; and none of them were witnessed by others. The Bible, as God's Holy Word, is all of those things. The truths of it can be verified; the prophesy of it can be documented and attested to regarding its validity. The accuracy of the Bible can be measured. Prophesy, for example, attests to its validity. In contrast, the Koran, for example, and other religious writings do not use prophecy or make statements that can be independently tested or verified—but the Bible does.

5. Christ never actually died, he actually passed out or slipped into a coma was put in a cave and a day or so later got up and left.
    - a. ANSWER: Studying secular history, and correlating the Bible references to Jesus' crucifixion and death on the cross, point to the fact that he did indeed die on the cross. John 19:28-20:38 gives specific detailed evidence of his death, including the fact that Roman soldiers, trained in the use of crucifixion as capital punishment, declared Jesus dead—something they had no motivation to lie about. In fact, their duties required them to ensure he was dead before he could be taken down from the cross. Christ's disciples didn't make up the story or bribe the guards to lie about his death. This death was witnessed by many onlookers and mockers who wanted him dead; and the Roman soldiers carried out their duty. It is a fact that Jesus died on that cross.
  6. Christ never actually claimed to be the Messiah—his followers did.
    - a. ANSWER: Not true. In point of fact, several times during his ministry, Christ stated that he was the Messiah to numerous people. See John 4:25-26, Matthew 16:15-17, and Matthew 26:62-64.
  7. How can you actually "prove" Christ is who he claims to be?
    - a. ANSWER: We can easily prove that Jesus is the Christ and that the claims Jesus made are true. Read Luke 24:6-8, John 19:28-20:38, Acts 1:1-3, 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, and 1 John 1:1-5. Many witnessed Jesus "live" firsthand. His disciples, sinners from all walks of life, and the ruling people of Jesus' day all experienced him firsthand and reacted to his claims. Some recognized him as the true Messiah, some were in fear of him, and many wanted to maintain the status quo and denied that he was God in the flesh. We also know that Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection were all fulfilled prophecies. Furthermore, we know, based on the amount of evidence and these same prophecies, that Jesus was and is all that he claimed, and that the unfulfilled prophecies about him will also come to pass just as all of the prophecy before him did. He will come again!
  8. If Christ is who he claims to be, how can I "know" that I am "saved?"
    - a. ANSWER: We know that we are saved because the Bible tells us so. If everything else in the Bible is accurate and true, then so is our salvation through Jesus. 1 John 5:13 tells us as much. The very people who lived, ate, slept, worked, and studied with Jesus himself have written these words to assure us of the truth that Jesus lived, died and rose again so that we may be saved. Believe it!
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In the next lesson, Apologetics Continued, we will look at some more specific questions that people ask and how to answer them.

May God bless you as you study with us this week.

In Christ,

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