

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

Lesson w/Answers

Apologetics - Questions Every Christian Should Know the Answer To

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001 many years ago, I received a variety of questions from folks; and I thought that it might be helpful to others to pass along some answers that we should all be equipped to provide as we witness to those around us who have been affected by horrific events like this.

You may want to attempt to respond to the questions below before consulting the answers. I hope that you find these both helpful and reassuring.

1. How can we as Christians say that we have an exclusive way to heaven? Surely Gandhi and the followers of Hindu, Buddha, and the teachings of Muhammad/Islam all worship the same God; and all seek peace, joy and love. How can Christians say they are the only ones who know the truth?
 - a. ANSWER 1: We are the only faith who serves a living Savior—a God who came to earth as man, died, rose from the dead and is alive today.
 - b. ANSWER 2: Jesus teaches us the following, taken from Matthew 7:15-23: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity." We can take this passage today and look at the fruit produced by various religious movements. On the surface, we see that perhaps many wonderful works are done, or perhaps that many evil works are done. We can also see that at the root of all we do should be the accomplishment of God's will, not man's. In John 3:16, God promises salvation to all those who proclaim Christ as their savior.
 - c. ANSWER 3: Christ tells us that "narrow is the way" and "few there be that find it." There is only ONE way to God—through Christ his Son. Yes, Christianity is exclusive; yes, many are lost and will be lost; and because of this, Christ told us that we would be persecuted as he was. While doing good works pleases men, and may make for a great religion, it will not buy us an eternity with God. This will only happen if we are doing His will. He tells us: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Accepting Christ as our personal savior and doing the will of God is the only way to heaven. There is no other way—no matter who you are, or who you follow.
2. When the Angel of The Lord spoke to Hagar, this was the root of the Muslim religion. If this is the case, when Muslims pray to Allah, are they in reality praying to the one true living God?
 - a. ANSWER 1: First, Hagar's son, Ishmael WAS NOT, and IS NOT, the root of the Muslim religion/Islam. He was the father of the Ishmaelites, or in modern terms the father of the Arab race. Muhammad came from the Arab race, and thus it is said that Abraham is the father of the three great religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
 - b. ANSWER 2: The followers of Islam pray to a god so different from the one true God that there is no doubt that the two are not the same. First, Islam does not believe in a Trinity, a triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They do not believe that Christ is God in the form of Man and is equal with God. Second, they see Christ as only a prophet. Third, they see God as wrathful, extremely harsh, and not a God of love. Fourth, they believe that their God is neither spirit nor physical. Fifth, they do not believe that it is possible for a person to have a personal relationship with God; and for them, it is blasphemous to even suggest this. And, finally, they do not believe that God resembles any of His creation—something which runs completely counter to everything God teaches us about Himself and His creation. So, while Muslima may use the word God ("Allah") in their prayers, they are praying to something completely different from the one true, triune, living God.

3. The Angel of the Lord said in Genesis 16:12 that Ishmael would live in hostility. Does this indicate that the Muslims will be the army of Satan in the end times?
 - a. ANSWER 1: This is fascinating to consider, and can easily take hold in people's beliefs, since Muslims appear to want to eradicate both the Jews and the Christians. However, if we assumed that this question was correct, we would admit that we do not understand End Times.
 - b. ANSWER 2: During the last days, the Antichrist will establish, or attempt to establish, world domination through the power of politics; i.e., via a world government and the power of economics, including a unified currency, and the power of religion (a one-world religion). All of these look strikingly similar to the Roman Empire and its form of government, for which the leader Emperor and Caesar) was not only the political leader, but also the religious leader and a god himself. To this end, the Antichrist's army will demand allegiance and worship of the Antichrist—something that runs counter to the teachings of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Today, we can find people from all three of these religions choosing death over declaring their allegiance to any other except their chosen faith. Given this, I do not believe that Muslims nor, as some would propose, the Catholic Church, are a part of the Antichrist's army or his one-world religion. He will demand total worship of himself and his own religious organization and army. What we are likely to see is the slaughter of millions who profess their faith in Christ, and in particular the millions of Jews who will recognize Christ as the Messiah during the tribulation. They will be slaughtered and driven from the land as will all Christian converts during that time—but by Satan's own army, one that is yet to come.
4. What defines someone as being a "Christian," i.e., as being "born again"?
 - a. ANSWER: To answer this, let's look at the following scriptures:
 - i. Romans 12:2 - "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing, and perfect will."
 - ii. 1 Corinthians 2:16 - "'For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ."
 - iii. 2 Corinthians 5:17 - "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"
 - iv. Philippians 2:5 - Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.
5. Is it possible to be a Christian without being "born again"?
 - a. ANSWER: Absolutely not. Christ tells us that unless a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. To answer this further, let's look at the following scriptures:
 - i. John 3:3 - "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."
 - ii. 1 Peter 1:23 - "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."
6. Must being saved happen at a specific moment, or can it be gradual?
 - a. ANSWER 1: A person is saved the moment they confess their sins and accept Christ as their savior. 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. ANSWER 2: However, it can take a lifetime for us to give our lives over to the "Lordship" of Christ and begin to live the Christian life. It is not until we completely trust in the Lordship of Christ that we will truly live that Christian life.
 - c. ANSWER 3: Proverbs 3:5-7 - "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil."
7. When someone asks why you are a Christian and why they should believe as well, what should your response be?
 - a. ANSWER: For each Christian, their reasons will be as individual as each of us. At the core of all of us, however, is a knowledge that we have sinned; and when we hear the gospel message, we are convicted by it. I accepted Christ on belief and faith that what the Gospel said was true. Later in life I learned a great deal more about Christ, God, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible; and today I have many reasons to believe. Fundamental to our faith is this: that as was prophesied thousands of years before, Christ came to this earth exactly as the scriptures said that he would, and he did exactly what they said he would do. He died and rose from the dead—the only person to have power over death—exactly as the scriptures foretold, and exactly as he had said. All of this was witnessed by hundreds, perhaps thousands of people and was recorded not only in the Bible but in other secular material as well. If all of this occurred exactly as foretold, then it is reasonable that everything else that he said—and what the Bible foretells—will also take place. Christ IS real, the Bible IS true, God IS on His throne, and Christ WILL COME AGAIN. Believe it! I do. We don't need blind faith; we have Christ—a living and real savior who is coming again in judgment and in victory.
 - i. 1 Peter 3:15 - "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."
 - ii. John 20:31 - "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

8. Isn't it unfair that millions died before anyone could tell them about Christ or God? Consider the African or Amazon tribes in jungles and people living in really remote places. How can they not go to heaven when they did not have a chance to learn about God?
- a. ANSWER 1: First, we can rest assured that God knows the hearts of every person ever born on the face of the earth, and that He desires that all men be saved.
 - i. 1 Timothy 2:3-4 - "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."
 - b. ANSWER 2: Secondly, God tells us—as we ourselves know already—that He makes himself known through His creation and that everyone is without excuse. All know, or can know, that God exists if they want to.
 - i. Romans 1:17-20 - "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.' The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature" have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.
 - c. ANSWER 3: And finally we know from the story of Abraham four thousand years ago that he knew God while living in the Ur of the Chaldees—not because of the church down the street, not because of the Bible, not because of a witness who visited, but because the knowledge of God's existence has been since creation with Adam and Eve, and has been passed through each generation. It is supported and evidenced by the creation of God himself. People are lost because they choose to be. People sin because they choose to sin. But they cannot hide from God, no matter where they live or how they live. God is everywhere present, and man knows it.
9. Were the events of September 11, 2001 a precursor to the end of the world? They appear to fit some predictions by Nostradamus that appear to foretell the destruction of New York.
- a. ANSWER 1: First, as we have since discovered, the whole "Nostradamus thing" was a complete hoax, i.e., what he is being quoted as writing, he never actually wrote.
 - b. ANSWER 2: Second, even if what he is purported to have written was true, you certainly would not call New York "the city of God."
 - c. ANSWER 3: Third, Paul tells us that before the beginning of the Great Tribulation and the return of Christ, a great apostasy will break out in the Christian church, i.e., when lies are taught as truth. This has not happened.
 - d. ANSWER 4: Fourth, we know that before the Great Tribulation, a peace will overcome Israel as a result of a peace treaty made with the Antichrist—a peace so reassuring that the Israelis will lay down their weapons and return to a rebuilt Temple and their system of sacrificial worship. This has not happened.
 - e. ANSWER 5: Fifth, reactions like we experienced around September 11, 2001 were typical of what Christ warned us about in these days—many will think that they know the truth, or that someone else does, and we should follow their wisdom.
 - i. Matthew 24:24 - For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible.
 - f. ANSWER 6: Sixth, Christ tells us that no one knows when he will return, and that man cannot begin understand or see the truth in the events around us.
 - i. Matthew 16:1-3 - The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times."
 - g. ANSWER 7: Finally, Christ warned of disasters of varying kinds—wars, famines, earthquakes—all of which are horrific; but he said these were only birth pains and that we should continue to be faithful in our walk. He also told us that when he returns, there will be no doubt and that until that time, he will comfort us. We should be on guard these days not to overreact, not to take anything that anyone says on face value; but rather to depend entirely on Christ and God's written word. There is still much work to be done in the kingdom. Perhaps in these trying days there is opportunity to save another lost soul. Let's focus on that.

10. When we get to heaven, will we recognize one another?

- a. ANSWER 1: While we can't quote any scripture that expressly says yes, I believe that enough Biblical evidence exists which implies that clearly we will. I believe that we will not only recognize loved ones, we will recognize everyone in heaven. No one will be a stranger, and we will all know each other from the moment we get there. Notice how in the verses below, everyone knows everyone, even after death. And notice how Christ relates the story in terms of individuals, not just some faceless spirits of the dead.
- b. ANSWER 2: Luke 16:19-31 - "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."
- c. ANSWER 3: Read the passage that follows. Notice that first of all Peter recognized Moses and Elijah—even though they had never met, as Moses, for example, walked the earth some 1,500 years before Peter. Also notice that Moses and Elijah were recognizable; again, not just some faceless spirit.
 - i. Matthew 17:1-4 - "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."
- d. ANSWER 4: In summary then, I believe that we will not only recognize our loved ones, and they us, but we will know everyone there. We will be in heaven with millions of instant loving "family" members—all of them "adopted sons of God." I will be looking for you there as well.

May God bless and comfort you in these days and in the days ahead, as we struggle to understand and to minister to a lost and dying world.

In Christ,

Wes