

HOW CHRISTIANITY IS DIFFERENT

Part 4 of 4 · Grace vs. religion, historical evidence for the empty tomb, and the reality of the risen Christ.

How is Christianity Different than all Other Religions? Don't all Religions Lead to Heaven?

Around 1920, a young C.S. Lewis walked into a symposium on religions in India and was promptly asked, "What is it that sets Christianity apart from all other religions?" Mr. Lewis looked up and promptly answered, "Grace!"

Even the whole terminology of the word religion is man-made: religion is man trying to reach up to God by some idea or endeavor he created in his own mind. While Christianity (grace) is God reaching down to man and providing a way for us to be with him.

I mean, doesn't the sacrifice of Jesus make sense? Isn't Jesus the most rational and, in fact, reasonable decision for any human ever born to make?! **Isaiah 55:8-9** Doesn't it make sense that if there is a God? "His ways and thoughts and all that He is are so high above our thoughts and all that we are." If there is a God, then He is the Creator while we are His creation. It is so arrogant and egotistical for someone to think by their own mechanisms or endeavors that they could come into the presence of an almighty, perfect God.

Perhaps my favorite teacher on the planet, and who I see as a modern day C.S. Lewis, is Dr. Ravi Zacharias who said, "Jesus performed miracles to prove who He is. Prophecy identifies Jesus as the one who would come, the Messiah. No one has ever done what Jesus has done, no one has ever affected the whole world as Jesus has. No one is mentioned in history as much as Jesus is. How much more credibility has to be shown? No man has ever done what Jesus has. He is the only one in the history of the world who ever did what He did: He died and rose again from the dead. No matter what the enemies of God might say, let them just produce His body and all Christianity goes away."

B.F. Westcott says, "The evidence compels us to conclude that Christ's resurrection is the best attested fact in history. There is no historic incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ."

Jewish scholars Pinchas Lapide and Geza Vermes (not Christians), declared themselves convinced on the basis of the evidence that Jesus's tomb was empty. Pinchas Lapide, who is one of the most respected Jewish scholars on the planet, went on to say, "In accordance with the historical evidence; Jesus of Nazareth did, in fact, raise from the dead."

You are at a fork in the road. Which path do you take? Down one way you see a whole bunch of dead guys and there is no life. Down the other road you see one who "was dead and is now alive and is now alive for evermore..." (**Revelation 1:18**) and He is beckoning you to come with Him and have life (**John 10:10**).

The resurrection of Jesus goes hand in hand with the grace of God. We were separated from God who is the author of life. now because He (Jesus) lives, we live also. Additionally, we have been brought back into union with the author of all life. No other religion makes such a claim. No other religion offers the evidence that the resurrection of Christ Jesus does. A couple very short but concise books documenting the evidence are Lee Strobel's 'The Case for Easter' and Josh McDowells 'The Resurrection Factor.' Many might die for what they believe to be true, but nobody dies for what they know is a lie.

Do you know that Jesus rose and showed himself alive in Jerusalem?! The disciples (who were cowards) were hiding in an upper room and became bold as lions while proclaiming Jesus's resurrection all through the same city where everyone was that perpetuated His death.

Why would His disciples go from fearing for their lives, to be brave unto death!? The Roman emperors Nero, Caligula, and Domitian, among others, were murdering Christians wherever they were. Yet, our early church fathers and mothers had no reason to fear death because their faith and trust was in the God who conquered death (see **Hebrews 2:14-15** and **1 Peter 1:3-4**). The fact is, if the followers of Jesus did not see Jesus alive after three days, there would be no bibles, no Christianity, and I would not even be writing this for you now. Because He lives, you and I, and all that we are, have real abundant life! TRUTH is the thing that sets Christianity apart from every other religion in this world that has been proven by science to be false.

Mohamedism (Islam) makes historical claims about the Bible and Jesus. Only the Quran (the Muslims holy book) was written 600 years after Christ. Every honest historian from the history departments of the top universities considers a writing 'mythified' (filled with fantasies and fabrications) if it was written 200 years or more after the incident. The Islamic book of miracles (the Hadith) was created 200 years after Mohammed because Mohammed did zero miracles and even admitted as such in the Qur'an (see Surah 3:181-184). The Hadith is proven to be science fiction (as many Islamic scholars admit) and was created because Christian apologists made clear: "Every prophet that is truly of God is proven by signs and wonders from God." So, the Hadith was created 200 years after Mohammed; and is just as true and real as Harry Potter or the Lord of the Rings.

Muhammad married Aisha at 6 years old and consummated at 9. The Proof: Sahih Bukhari 5134: "The Prophet... had sex to complete his marriage when I was nine." Aisha narrated that she was playing with dolls when he came to her (Bukhari 6130). This questions the moral example of the "Perfect Man" for all times.

Napoleon Bonaparte, the great general, said, "I know men and Jesus Christ was no mere man: me, Caesar, Charlemagne all founded empires. But what did we find them on? Force, violence. Jesus Christ founded his empire on love, and even today millions of people will die for Him."

God does not act contrary to His character- ever! Read Surah 9 in the Qu'Ran and you will know: Allah is not the God of the bible. What is different between Jesus and Islam? In Christianity, God gives (sacrifices) His only son for you (**John 3:16**). In Islam, Allah asks you to sacrifice your son to him.

Hinduism teaches that the universe is eternal and has always been. Science, with the Big Bang, has proven Hinduism to be fictitious. Are you aware that in India (2020), Hindus are currently committing ethnic cleansing and are murdering both Muslims and Christians across India?

Buddhism is impressive philosophy that I enjoy reading! I loved how Buddha warned and ordered all his followers: "Do not ever worship me as a God! I am not a God!" I love honesty! Every genuinely good person does.

> Did you know that in all these man-made religions, you are not allowed to try and test and research them and you are not allowed to investigate them? The devil knows he is a liar! God says in the book of psalms, "Come and try me and test me. Taste and see that the Lord is good." A real God wants you to investigate Him! As our God promises, "If you seek Him with all your heart, you will find Him." A God who is love is desperate for you and desires a relationship with you so much He is willing to come and die for you in order to secure it.

The truth, when it is clearly known, has the highest claim to authority because it demands compliance. Only the scriptures in the Bible have the support of miracles, and prophecy, which prove it to be the true authority. -William Lane Craig

The contemporary embarrassment about the missionary movement of the previous century is not, as we like to think, evidence that we have become more humble. It is, I fear, much more clearly evidence of a shift in belief. It is evidence that we are less ready to affirm the uniqueness, the centrality, the decisiveness of Jesus Christ as universal Lord and Savior, the way by following who the world is to find its true goal, the truth by which every other claim to truth is to be tested, the life in whom alone life in its fullness is to be found. -Bishop Lesslie Newbigin

Everything beautiful, good and true, wherever found, originates in the logos- the true light- Jesus Christ. -Justin Martyr

To every other religion: “God is some strict dictator that is sitting far off and watching us suffer in loneliness and pain while He judges us...” Jesus is Immanuel- “God with us!” In our pain, in our depression and addictions, He is our ever present companion in our loneliness. There is no place you could go that He cannot reach you. There is nothing you have ever done that could make Him love you any less. He loves you! He loves you! He loves you! God says, “You are to die for!”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, “God is not ashamed of human lowliness but goes right into the middle of it, chooses someone as an instrument, and performs the miracles right there where they are least expected. God draws near to the lowly, loving the lost, the unnoticed, the unremarkable, the excluded, the powerless, and the broken. What people say is lost, God says is found. What people say is condemned, God says is saved. Where people say ‘no!’ God says ‘yes!’ Where people turn their eyes away in indifference or arrogance, God gazes with a love that glows warmer than anywhere else. Where people say something is despicable, God calls it blessed. When we come to a point in our lives where we are completely ashamed of ourselves and before God, when we believe that God especially must now be ashamed of us, and when we feel as far away from God as ever in all our lives, that is the moment in which God is closer to us than ever, wanting to break into our lives, wanting us to feel the presence of the Holy and to grasp the miracle of God's love, God's nearness and grace.

What God, when someone He created, rebelled against Him and was separated from Him as a result of that rebellion, would pay the price for that rebellion, taking the punishment on Himself- even death on a cross? The love of this God is so great beyond human comprehension (there are no words to describe divine love) that Jesus is so desperately and immeasurably in love with you that He does not want heaven without you?! (See **Romans 5:6-8**)

> Did you know that if there is any other way to get to heaven, then I don’t want anything to do with God! Have you seen the movie ‘The Passion of Christ’? It is the most accurate depiction of what Jesus went through to save us. The ‘cat o' nine tails’ He was whipped with 39 times had barbs in the shape of large fishhooks. The ‘crown of thorns’ had inch-long spikes pushed in His head. If there is any other way for us to get into heaven, that means that God allowed His one and only son to suffer through a living hell for nothing. If that were true, God is evil hearted, and I don’t want any part of Him.

All religions begin the same way. One man rises up alone and claims in his book to possess divine revelation. But the Bible is not merely one book; rather, it is an entire library of 66 books written by 40 plus authors over a period of 1600 years, living on 3 continents and speaking 3 different languages. What are the chances they would agree? Yet these books contain historical records, spiritual parables, timeless counsel, songs of worship, and prophetic visions that all unite to tell the complete story of God's redemptive purposes for time and eternity, from beginning to end. The scriptures are complete. They connect our origins, our history, our morality, our relationships, the nature of God, the way to know Him, and what happens beyond the grave. All of it. All in one place. No book has changed so many lives and so powerfully rocked the world. No book has educated so much ignorance, initiated so much good, propagated so much love, and reprimanded so much evil.

> *"So great is my veneration for the Bible that the earlier my children begin to read it, the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens to their country and respectable members of society. Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their only law book, and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited! What a utopia! What a paradise would this region be!" -Former President John Quincy Adams*

Oxford University's expert on historical evidence, Professor Richard Swinburne, says, "It is 97% likely that Jesus Christ miraculously rose from the dead." God would not ever raise a liar from the dead. Our God confirmed just who our Lord and Savior Jesus is: "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to God except through me." -**John 14:6**

If you are on trial, the evidence presented is what is going to either convict, or acquit you. Evidence, the proven facts point towards truth. If you were put on trial for something you are innocent of, evidence would definitely matter to you! Does it when it comes to God?

> In closing, I am documenting some of the greatest minds in regards to evidence in the history of our planet.

Sir Lionel Luckhoo is an attorney in the Guinness Book of World Records with 245 consecutive acquittals. In researching the evidence, he said, "I say unequivocally that the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt."

After reviewing the evidence from a judicial perspective, Lord Darling, former Chief Justice of England, concludes: "There exists such overwhelming evidence, positive and negative, factual and circumstantial, that no intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the resurrection story is true."

> *"Let's assume that the written accounts of His appearances to hundreds of people are false. I want to pose a question. With an event so well publicized, don't you think that it's reasonable that one historian, one eye witness, or one antagonist would record for all time that he had seen Christ's body? The silence of history is deafening when it comes to the testimony against the resurrection." -Tom Anderson, former President of California Trial Lawyers Association*

> *"For me, the historical evidence has reinforced my commitment to Jesus Christ as the Son of God who loves us and died for us and was raised from the dead. It's that simple." -Edwin Yamauchi, one of the world's leading experts in ancient history*

Harvard Law School Professor Simon Greenleaf, who wrote the most respected book on evidence in history, 'The Treatise on Evidence,' investigated the gospels of Christ Jesus and concluded, "A person who rejects Christ may choose to say that I do not accept it, he may not choose to say there is not enough evidence."