

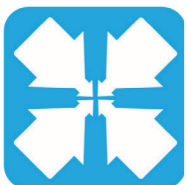
How we can know Christianity is true

1

If Jesus has the authority of God then we can know that Christianity is true.
How do we know Jesus has the authority of God? Follow the questions and answers on this chart.



1. The authority of Jesus is established by His miracles and teaching culminating in the resurrection.
2. The resurrection is established by the eyewitness testimony of the Apostles and others.
3. There are many reasons to trust the testimony of the Apostles and other early Christians.
4. We know have an accurate and reliable summary of what they wrote 2,000 years ago in the documents that make up the New Testament.



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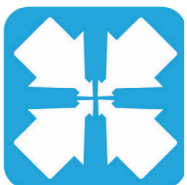
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1. Jesus has the authority of God

A major focus of the Jesus teaching in the Gospels (particularly Matthew) and the disciples teaching in the Epistles, establishes and demonstrates the unique authority of Jesus.

Authority Established by the Miracles of Jesus

- **Authority to Heal** (Jesus has power over disease, paralysis, blindness, etc.)
 - Matt 9:1-8 “6 But that you may know that the Son of Man has **authority** on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Rise, pick up your bed and go home.” 7 And he rose and went home. 8 When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such **authority** to men.
 - Others Matt 8:5-13, Matt 9:20-22, John
- **Authority over natural world** (weather, water, food, trees, fish, etc.)
 - Matt 8:23-27 “**27** And the men marveled, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?”
 - Others Matt 4:18-22, Matt 14:15-21, Matt 16:32-28, Matt 17:27
- **Authority over demons**
 - Matt 8:28-31 “**28** And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes,[e] two demon-possessed[f] men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. **29** And behold, they cried out, “What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?” **30** Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. **31** And the demons begged him, saying, “If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs.”
- **Authority over death**
 - Raising of Lazarus John 11: 40-44 **40** Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?” **41** So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. **42** I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.” **43** When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” **44** The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth.
 - Jesus own resurrection proving He defeated sin and death (Matt 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20)
 - Also 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 “3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.



2. Eyewitness testimony of the public events around the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus gives credibility to the claims of Christianity

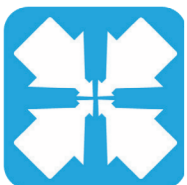
In contrast to other religions and cults, Christianity is not based on private events with few or no additional witnesses. Jesus teaching, death, resurrection, and the events around the start of Christian church were all very public with eyewitnesses that follow Jesus and reject Him!

Consider the following comparisons:

- World Religions
 - Islam
 - Muhammed received private revelation from an angel
 - Hinduism
 - Fusion of various traditional beliefs that started with the upper class caste in India
 - Buddhism
 - Based on the teaching of an enlightened one
 - Animism
 - Wide range of traditional belief but based on fear and power of spirits and ancestors
- Cults
 - Mormonism
 - Private revelation from an angel to Joseph Smith
 - Jehovah's witnesses
 - Private group that "rediscovered" true Christianity and eventually claimed they received prophetic revelation (which has consistently failed)
 - Christian Science
 - Founder Mary Baker Eddy claimed she was receiving private revelation

Contrast the info above with 1 Corinthians 15: 12-19

12 Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? **13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.** **14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.** **15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.** **16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.** **17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.** **18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.** **19 If in Christ we have hope[b] in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.**



3. Eyewitness Testimony of the Apostles is trustworthy

The Apostles show us we can have their T.R.U.S.T.

— **T**ell embarrassing details about themselves.

- Often did not understand exactly who Jesus was or what He was teaching (often when others did)
- Rebuked Jesus and argued with one another
- Women disciples were often more bold and the first witnesses at the tomb
 - Hide in fear when there is danger (ie: Consider that Peter affirmed Jesus is the Christ, then says he will never let Jesus die, then he is told “get behind me Satan”, then a few weeks later is terrified of women saying he was associated with Jesus, then hides away after Jesus dies, and then a few weeks after that he is willing to suffer and even die)

— **R**emain humble ambassadors

- When given the power to do miraculous deeds they continue to point to Jesus as the source of the power and they continue to focus on the message of the Gospel as the core focus
- Do not build up for themselves wealth, power, or wordly things
- Deal with others claiming to be better leaders (ie: Paul and the “Super Apostles:” 2 Cor. 11 and 12)

— **U**nyielding under persecution

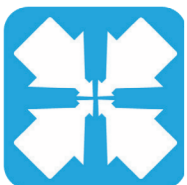
- Once they begin spreading the Gospel they face and bear up under persecution from:
 - Jewish leaders
 - Jewish people
 - Roman authorities

— **S**how Jesus as focused on the wrong people given the cultural context of Jewish culture at that time

- Remember that Christianity is the messianic fulfillment of Judaism and started amongst Jews yet:
 - Jesus eats and spends time with “tax collectors and sinners”
 - Women and children consistently get Jesus focus and attention including female disciples
 - The three wrong people are identified as having unique faith
 - Roman Centurion (Matt 8), Cannanite Woman (Matt 15), and Samaritan woman (John 4)

— **T**estify with their deaths

- You might be able to get people to make up a lie for wordly gain but once death is likely most would recant, yet the early Christians did not get wordly gain and were willing to face death without recanting their teaching about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus



4 We have what the Apostles wrote 2,000 years ago

In the New Testament we have the sole secure deposit of Jesus and the Apostles teaching which we can trust has been accurately preserved

Three Key Points

1. The New Testament is a collection of writings from eye-witnesses who directly interacted with Jesus

2. The Bible is not passed down like a game of telephone where we are relying on a copy of a copy of a copy repeated over 2,000 years. Instead, modern translations go back to early Greek manuscripts and then translate from those into various languages.

- Hundreds of early manuscripts spread across the ancient world with minor variations that do not effect any significant theological point or teaching
- Copies are closer in date to the originals and greater in number than any other texts of the ancient world

This means we have good reason to trust that we have what the New Testament authors wrote (and from the previous session we know we have good reason to trust they are telling us the truth).

*Also, it is important to remember the power is in the truths of the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles found in the Bible, not the actual word (like a magic incantation), so translation can preserve the power of the Bible!

3. There are three types of ancient writings that some will call Christian but they are not all equal

I. The documents you find in your Bible from Matthew to Revelation

- Agreed upon as canonical and inspired by almost everyone who would call themselves a Christian
- The sole secure deposit of Jesus and the Apostles teaching

II. Other writings from the early church which are valid historical documents that are generally understood to affirm biblical teaching but not considered inspired or canonical

- Didache, Shepherd of Hermas, Epistle of Clement, etc.
- A modern comparison might be a commentary on 1 Timothy or book on discipleship though these early writings have closer ties to the early teaching of the church

III. Writings that use the name of a prominent early church leader (James, Thomas, Mary) that are usually Gnostic in origin. They are often made up stories which teach unbiblical theology but may use some elements of known Jewish and Christian writings.

- *A modern comparison might be "God Calling" a book that supposedly contains new teaching from God by two anonymous listeners who entered a trancelike state and something took over their bodies and wrote using their hand*

