

# Christianity



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# Jesus Christ

His life and purpose

# Who is Jesus?

There is little doubt that Jesus Christ has affected history more than anyone else who has ever lived. His message has changed the lives of men and women, regardless of age, background or colour in every era of time. Despite His tremendous popularity there are still many people who have not heard all that they should about Jesus.

## Divine nature: God

To understand Jesus we have to understand something about the nature of God. Christians believe in only one God, but that there are three "persons" within the God-head.

"When we profess to believe in one God, by the name God is understood the one simple essence, comprehending three persons or hypostases." (John Calvin)

Someone tried to explain this by using this plant, which is called a shamrock.



There is only one shamrock in the picture but there are three distinct parts to it. The same can be said of God; there is one God but three distinct "persons."

The three "persons" are called the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

"To the Father is attributed the beginning of action, the fountain and source of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel, and arrangement in action, while the energy and efficacy of action is assigned to the Spirit.

"Moreover, though the eternity of the Father is also the eternity of the Son and Spirit, since God never could be without his own wisdom and energy; and though in eternity there can be no room for first or last, still the distinction of order is not unmeaning or superfluous, the Father being considered first, next the Son from him, and then the Spirit from both.

"For the mind of every man naturally inclines to consider, first, God, secondly, the wisdom emerging from him, and, lastly, the energy by which he executes the purposes of his counsel. For this reason, the Son is said to be of the Father only; the Spirit of both the Father and the Son."  
(John Calvin)

To conclude it is necessary to simply reinforce our previous statement that we believe in only one God, and that the three "persons" of the God-head are not other gods, nor lesser gods.

"We hold it detestable blasphemy to call the Son a different God from the Father, because the simple name God admits not of relation, nor can God, considered in himself, be said to be this or that." (John Calvin)

## Human nature: Man

Christians believe that about 2000 years ago the Son came to Earth, took on human nature and was given the name Jesus. When He was born on this Earth He had two natures meaning that He was both God and man at the same time.

### Birth

Rather than coming to Earth as an adult it was ordained that He should be born as a baby. The Holy Spirit, the third "person" of the Trinity, formed Jesus' body in a young maiden called Mary.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 1:17)

Jesus was then born in a stable at a town in Israel called Bethlehem. After surviving a persecution of children designed to kill Him, Jesus went to live in another town called Nazareth where he was raised by His earthly guardians Mary and Joseph.

### Teachings

When Jesus was thirty years old He began his ministry where He taught the people to live holy lives and to follow God. An example of His teachings is given below:

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. (Matthew 5:44)

### Miracles

As signs of his Divine nature Jesus also performed many miraculous signs such as healing the sick and raising the dead.

And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many

others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them. (Matthew 15:30)

## Death

Whenever any man comes teaching holiness and purity the agents of darkness do not enjoy the light that He brings. A man who had not only committed no crime but had encouraged all men to live at peace was condemned to death due to the jealousy and ambition of a few bigots who incited the masses to call for His death.

"Pilate saith unto them (the crowd), What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there; And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads."  
(Matthew 27:22-39)

## Resurrection

Despite the best efforts of evilness, the good shall always prevail in the end. On the third day after His death, Jesus rose again to live for forty days on this Earth before ascending to Heaven to be our Mediator with the Father.

"In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

"Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were

assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

"And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:1-20)

## His Purpose

For God to come to Earth to live among men was not a chance occurrence which has little lasting meaning. Rather, it is the way God chose to make salvation available to each and every person that desires it.

When Jesus died on that cross two thousand years ago He sacrificed Himself so that we could be forgiven.

All mortal men have sinned and broken God' s laws. Our hearts are naturally concerned with taking care of ourselves and our own pleasure rather than with the good of society. If man was to stand before the Judgement Throne of God he would be condemned without question.

Yet God still loves us even if we do not love Him. He loved us so much that He sent His Son to suffer and die for the sins that we had committed. Jesus Christ acts as our substitute and has endured the punishment that we deserve, meaning that we can be acquitted for our sin. Rather than each of us facing eternal damnation God accepts the death of Jesus Christ as full payment for our sins so that we can go free.

God simply wants us to ask for forgiveness for our sins, and to turn our hearts towards Him. When our hearts follow God then all good works shall follow without hesitation or unwillingness. The path that God has provided is clearly marked, we must set out to follow it.

# Why Christianity?

The Way, The Truth and the Life

# Why Christianity?

The religions of this world exhort their followers to live a life of holiness which is motivated by love and peace. This great consistency of encouraging virtue has led some men to conclude that all religions are equally valid. They argue that if all make men better then all must be right.

However, while all religions should be praised for their ethics, there are fundamental differences between them. Rather than dismissing these distinctions we must first examine them to find their importance.

While we should never condemn anyone for their beliefs it is our duty to earnestly seek after the truth. Until we commit to one belief we will be unable to meet death with any confidence. Our ideas will be misty, our beliefs will be a haze. Until we accept one truth we will be in a constant state of confusion.

By investigating some of the prominent distinctions in the religions of this world I hope to demonstrate why I believe that Christianity is as close as we can get to the Truth.

## Existence of God

The world in which we live is a great signpost directing us to the Almighty God. Nature is a quiet but striking testimony to a powerful, wise and loving Father. The Author and Director of the Universe has made Himself known in the divinely ordered world in which we live. We can think of God as the grand and powerful "watchmaker" of Nature.

"The wheels of the watch are all admirably adjusted to the end for which it was made, the pointing of the hour. All their various motions conspire in the nicest manner to produce this effect. If they were endowed with a desire and intention to produce it, they could not do it better. Yet we never ascribe any such desire or intention to them, but to the watch-maker, and we know that they are

put into motion by a spring, which intends the effect it produces as little as they do." (Adam Smith)

To ascribe to chance what has been designed with such brilliance is sheer folly and opposes both Reason and the senses. When we admire the creature we should be drawn to praise the Creator.

## Human nature

The Christian religion has one doctrine which sets it apart from every other on Earth. While other religions place their hope in human merit, Christians realise that we are poor and miserable sinners. This is a doctrine which no man wants to hear as it humbles our pride, and drives a nail through our vanity.

Nevertheless before we can feel the relief of salvation we must realise our own helplessness. There is no-one righteous, no not one.

"Let any man select from the whole course of his life the action which he deems most excellent, and let him ponder it in all its parts; he will doubtless find in it something that savors of the rottenness of the flesh, since our readiness in well-doing is never what it ought to be, but our course is always retarded by much weakness." (John Calvin)

While many men do not descend into the depravity which the lowest do, still no-one is pure and holy. We do our duties not with delight and thanks, but with a reluctant heart.

Every other religion in the world says that we can work our way to Heaven and into God' s favour. They say thãour efforts can please a holy and pure Judge that hates every taint of sin.

But who will dare stand before the holy Throne of Judgement? Who can expect the commendation of the all-knowing God who penetrates the heart and sees our darkest secrets? Can you?

## The Solution

Only when we humble ourselves and realise our own impurity can we begin to seek salvation. That salvation is possible because Jesus Christ came to this Earth to die for us. He endured our punishment so that we could go free and not be held accountable for our impiety.

All that God asks is that we admit our sin and ask Him for forgiveness. By turning to God our lives will be transformed as we seek to do what He wants, and not what our flesh desires.

While others tell us that we can please God by our own works, our consciences admit that this would never be possible. Only Christianity can supply relief from this hopelessness. That relief has been provided by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who gave up His life so that we might be free.

## Jesus Christ

There are also signs of the Truth of Christianity from the life of Jesus Christ who lived on this Earth 2000 years ago. By examining his life we can see that Jesus was unlike anyone else who ever lived.

Of the followers of Jesus, four have written an account of Jesus' life, death and resurrection which are recorded in the Bible. It is accepted that there was no collusion between the writers. I believe that these records are a fair representation of Jesus' life, therefore, from these records I will try to show why Jesus was so unique.

## Miracles

During Jesus' life He performed dozens of breathtaking miracles such as healing the sick, walking on water and turning water into wine. These are just a short introduction to the many supernatural signs and wonders which Jesus Christ displayed while He was here on Earth. These miracles testify to the awesome power of God which Jesus Christ possessed.

## Prophecies

Before Jesus came to Earth, God had chosen the Jews to be a special people. Many Jewish prophets, who lived hundreds of years before Jesus, were given an insight into His life. These prophecies are contained in what Christians call the Old Testament. The fact that Jesus fulfilled these prophecies is a strong sign that He was the Messiah whom God had promised to the Jews.

## Teachings

Jesus Christ has often been called the Great Teacher. Using a mix of parables, symbols and exhortations Jesus has given us a guide to a pure and happy life. He has encouraged us to love our enemies and serve others before ourselves. If only those who called themselves Christians fully followed His teachings their lives would be a much better advertisement for the Christian religion.

## Christ' s Death

Despite Jesus' message of love and peace, He was unpopular amongst some Jewish leaders who arranged with the Romans to have Him killed. During His death His hands were pierced with nails, and He was forced to wear a crown of thorns. He was hung on a cross suffering a slow and agonising death so that we could be saved. Instead of each of us being punished as we deserve to be, Jesus Christ suffered our punishment for us.

When Jesus died, God showed his power. He brought darkness over the world for three hours. "The earth shook and rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They ... went into the holy city and appeared to many people."

## Christ' s Resurrection

Jesus Christ then rose from the dead after three days. If we believe in the resurrection then we cannot doubt the Truth of the Christian religion. If any man accepts that Jesus died and rose again he must turn to God and believe that Jesus is our Saviour.

The resurrection is central to the Christian religion, and as you would expect there are good reasons to believe that it really took place. Firstly, in all the books of the Bible which give an account of Jesus' life and death, they all agree that the resurrection occurred. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all give details on Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

Secondly, Paul, another of Jesus' followers, in a letter to the early Corinthian Church, explains why he believes that Jesus is risen. He points out that Jesus had first been seen by Peter (a disciple), then by all the other disciples, and finally by over five hundred people. This means that a huge crowd of witnesses (500) could confirm that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Finally, unlike the earliest followers of some other religions, the disciples of Jesus had to suffer martyrdom for their cause. Most of them were persecuted and eventually killed because of their faith. A lie could never have motivated these men to give up their lives, they must have really seen Jesus raised from the dead.

If we accept that Christ rose from the dead then we cannot doubt either the power of God or that Jesus is the Messiah who was sent to save people from their sin.

## Summary

Blaise Pascal, a brilliant French mathematician, physicist and philosopher explained why he believed in Christianity:

"We know God only by Jesus Christ. Without this mediator, all communion with God is taken away; through Jesus Christ we know God. All those who have claimed to know God, and to prove Him without Jesus Christ, have had only weak proofs. But in proof of Jesus Christ we have the prophecies, which are solid and palpable proofs. And these prophecies, being accomplished and proved true by the event, mark the certainty of these truths and, therefore, the divinity of Christ.

"In Him, then, and through Him, we know God. Apart from Him, and without the Scripture, without original sin, without a necessary mediator promised and come, we cannot absolutely prove God, nor teach right doctrine and right morality. But through Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ, we prove God, and teach morality and doctrine. Jesus Christ is, then, the true God of men."

Christianity is the true religion which leads to God, and we must all follow it if we are to be saved. Only through Jesus Christ can we be reconciled to the Almighty God who reigns in Heaven.

# Salvation

The way to Heaven

# Everyone has sinned

There are men in this world who, by their depravity and unveiled evilness, have horrified the senses of other men and women. Many will cry that these men deserve the condemnation of God, but that the good, law-abiding citizens that we see all around us surely deserve a place in Heaven.

This is the claim of men who conceal the selfishness of their own hearts, and pretend that their motives are pure when actually they are tarnished by the stains of ambition and corruption.

"Let any man select from the whole course of his life the action which he deems most excellent, and let him ponder it in all its parts; he will doubtless find in it something that savors of the rottenness of the flesh, since our readiness in well-doing is never what it ought to be, but our course is always retarded by much weakness." (John Calvin)

By human standards we may be the embodiment of honour and respectability, but rather than comparing ourselves to others, we should compare ourselves to the measure of perfection which is demanded of us. You may restrain yourself and control your senses but inwardly you desire to break free from these restrictions.

"Outwardly you keep the law with works out of fear of punishment or love of gain. Likewise you do everything without free desire and love of the law; you act out of aversion and force. You' d rather act otherwise if the law didn' t exist. It follows, then, that you, in the depths of your heart, are an enemy of the law." (Martin Luther)

## Forgiveness

We are not perfect, and we are not capable of pleasing God through our own works; but God still loves us and will forgive us if we ask Him to. The reason that Christians try to tell people of their sin is not to make them fear, it is to

show them that they need the mercy which God so freely offers.

“We are commanded to beseech and entreat you to accept the offer and turn; to tell you what preparation is made by Christ; what mercy stays for you; what patience waits on you . . .how certainly and unspeakable happy you may be if you will. We have indeed a message of wrath and death; yea, of a twofold wrath and death; but neither of them is our principal message. We must tell you of the wrath that is on you already, and the death that you are born under for the breach of the law of works. But this is only to show you the need of mercy, and to provoke you to esteem the grace of the Redeemer. . . . Our telling you of your misery is not to make you miserable, but to drive you out to seek for mercy. It is you who have brought this death on yourselves. We tell you also of another death, [one] even remediless, and much greater torment that will fall on those who will not be converted. . . This is the last and saddest part of our message. We are first to offer you mercy, if you will turn.” (Richard Baxter)

The great beauty of Christianity is that God tells us that He does not want payment for our sins, He offers free forgiveness; all that we must do is accept.

# God is willing to forgive us

Even though we have sinned against God by breaking his commands, He still loves us. He cared for us so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us.

Jesus Christ came to this Earth to take our place, and suffer for our sins. Instead of each of us being punished as we deserve to be, Christ endured our punishment for us.

## Jesus Christ died for us

Jesus Christ died a terrible death so that we could be free.

"Pilate saith unto them (the crowd), What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

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And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to

drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there; And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads."  
(Matthew 27:22-39)

The very Son of God suffered these mockings and torments so that He could be the sacrifice which takes away the sin of man.

## Resurrection

But the death of Christ is not the end; Christ rose again after His death and forty days later ascended to Heaven.

Christ suffered a terrible death so that we could find salvation. We are not good enough to please God by our own works, so God does not ask us to. All that we have to do is to ask God to forgive us and try to follow Him. This is so simple, but so important; ask God to forgive you today. Do not suffer the punishment for your sins when Christ has already offered to take your place.

# How can you be saved

Believe that only Jesus Christ is able to save you

## Faith

If we confess our sins, and rest on God' s promises to save us, we can be sure of the complete forgiveness of God. Any who come to Him and ask for forgiveness will have their sins wiped away, and they will become like the sons of God who have been promised a place in Heaven.

"Faith is a living, unshakeable confidence in God' s grace; it is so certain, that someone would die a thousand times for it. This kind of trust in and knowledge of God' s grace makes a person joyful, confident, and happy with regard to God and all creatures. This is what the Holy Spirit does by faith." (Martin Luther)

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God' s wrath remains on him. (John 3:36)

## Turn away from your sins

### Repent

When we have turned our hearts to God we will also want to turn from our old way of life to a new beginning where we follow God' s laws and obey His commands.

"It is impossible that faith ever stop doing good. Faith doesn' t ask whether good works are to be done, but, before it is asked, it has done them. It is always active. Whoever doesn' t do such works is without faith; he gropes and searches about him for faith and good works but doesn' t know whafait or good works are." (Martin Luther)

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out. (Acts 3:19)

## God' s Assurances

If you ask God to forgive you He will never refuse.

Whoever comes to me I will never drive away. (John 6:37)

**God will forgive us, but we must want him to**

# Further Reading

Recommended Resources

# Further Reading

These resources are all available for free from  
[www.crucified4u.com/gospel/further.htm](http://www.crucified4u.com/gospel/further.htm)

## Mark

There are four books in the Bible which record the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The shortest of these books was written by Mark and provides a comprehensive story of what Jesus did and said while He was here on Earth.

## Romans

A man named Paul wrote many letters to the Early Christian churches instructing them on Christian teachings and encouraging them to live holy lives. In one letter, to the Romans, Paul sets out the sinfulness of man and the mercy of God. He shows that the way to Heaven is not by our own works, but by asking God for forgiveness as Christ died in our place. The letter to the Romans has been called the entry gate to the whole of Christianity and should be read carefully by all men everywhere.

## Heidelberg Catechism

To help teach people about Christianity and the Bible some books, usually called catechisms, have been written in a question and answer format. The Heidelberg Catechism is one of the best available and should provide a good summary of almost all Christian teachings.

## Alarm to the Unconverted

While you should think carefully before becoming a Christian it is important that you do not keep putting it off. You must make a decision before it is too late. An Alarm to the Unconverted is a classic book where the author pleads with you to turn to God and follow Him.