

WHY CHRISTIAN?: EVIDENCE FOR CHRIST

Opening Prayer: Soul of Christ, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me. Blood of Christ, inebriate me. Water from the side of Christ, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me. O, good Jesus, hear me. Within your wounds, hide me. Never let me be separated from your side. From the evil one protect me. And at the hour of my death call me and bid me come to you, that with your angels and saints I may praise you forever.

Part I: Is the New Testament a reliable historical source for Jesus?

1. Early date of writing: NT written within 20-70 years of the events.
 - a. Biographies of others from history: Buddha (c.563-483 BC) – 500 years later, Alexander the great (356-323 BC) – 400 years later, Muhammad (570-632 AD) – 135 years later
2. Age of surviving copies
 - a. Zero originals survived, a few fragments within decades, Codex Vaticanus dates to 300s AD, Codex Alexandrinus dates to 400s AD
 - b. Comparison to other writings: Roman historian Suetonius (75-130 AD): over 800 years later; Homer's *Illiad*: 400 years later; Plato & Caesar: 900 years later
3. Number of surviving copies: 5,700 fragments and manuscripts in Greek; 25,000 additional copies in: Latin, Ethiopic, Slavic, Armenian, Arabic, Anglo Saxon, Gothic, Persian, and Frankish
4. Number of other texts | Homer's *Illiad*: 650 – almost 40x more copies of NT in Gk alone; Caesar's *Gaelic Wars*: 10; Plato's writings: 7; Avg. number of copies from a classical author like Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, Livy, and Thucydides: approximately 20
5. Are the New Testament authors trustworthy? Motives? Little to gain & a lot to lose--unless it is true.
6. Extra-Biblical evidence
 - a. Josephus (37-100 AD) Jewish Historian; Tacitus (54-120 AD) Roman Senator and Historian; Pliny the Younger (61-113 AD) Roman Magistrate and Lawyer
 - b. Basic information about Jesus from non-Christian authors: Jesus was from Nazareth; he lived a wise and virtuous life; he was crucified in Palestine under Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius Caesar at Passover time, being considered the Jewish King; he was believed by his disciples to have resurrected; his enemies acknowledged that he performed unusual feats they called "sorcery"; his small band of disciples multiplied rapidly, spreading even as far as Rome; disciples denied polytheism, lived moral lives, and worshiped Christ as Divine; archaeology continues to corroborate the N.T.
 - c. Scholar John Warwick Montgomery: "To be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament."

Part II: Is Christianity true?

1. Uniqueness of Jesus: No one else claimed to be God & Cannot have Christianity without Christ
2. Claims of Jesus: "The Father and I are one." (Jn 10:30) & "Before Abraham was, I AM." (Jn 8:58)
3. Significance of Resurrection
 - a. World: "All religions are basically equal." Christianity: "Not if the Resurrection is true."
 - b. 1 Cor 15: 14-19: "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God... If Christ has not been raised,

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your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.”

4. Historical Facts
 - a. Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate.
 - b. This shook the disciples' faith in Jesus.
 - c. Disciples begin to proclaim his resurrection within days.
 - d. Based on eyewitnesses & 500 disciples saw him at once (1 Cor. 15:6)
 - e. The tomb of Jesus was found empty. Women are witnesses, even enemies admit it is empty (Mt 28:11-15), and it was preached in Jerusalem
 - f. Resurrection radically transformed the outlook and lives of the disciples.
 - g. Many of the eyewitnesses to the risen Christ suffer martyrdom for their faith.
 - h. Millions accept the Christian faith, including faith in the resurrection.
 - i. Christianity becomes the most powerful religion in the Roman Empire within 4 centuries.
 - j. The Jewish followers of Jesus made radical changes to their Jewish heritage and practices only explainable by the resurrection: Transferred Sabbath obligations to Sunday. Stopped making animal sacrifices in atonement for their sins. Changed their idea of monotheism.
5. Conspiracy Theory (The disciples lied about the resurrection)
 - a. Advantages: Explains the empty tomb & explains appearance stories (all lies)
 - b. Disadvantages: There's no good motive. Disciples' sincerity is proven by their deeds: Lives were changed, Left comforts behind to evangelize, Hated, scorned, imprisoned, etc., Died for it, No one ever confessed it was a lie despite torture and execution
6. Hallucination Theory (The disciples hallucinated the resurrection)
 - a. Advantages: Explains appearances & explains why eyewitnesses would be willing to suffer and die as martyrs
 - b. Disadvantages:
 - i. Too many witnesses to have shared a separated hallucination
 - ii. Too many witnesses to have shared a simultaneous hallucination (500 at once)
 - iii. Hallucinations do not last hours and hang out for 40 days
 - iv. He ate food on two occasions (Lk 24:42-43; Jn 21:1-14)
 - v. He could be touched (Mt 28:9; Lk 24:39; Jn 20:27)
 - vi. They spoke to him and Jesus spoke back
 - vii. If it was a hallucination, the body would have been in the tomb
 - viii. What about PAUL? Enemy of the Church. Not likely to hallucinate.
7. Experiential Test: Christianity maintains that Jesus is alive. If true, you can test it yourself. Open the door to your heart. Invite Christ to rule your life with his love. Watch your life change!

Closing Prayer: Lord, Jesus, I praise you for your glory as Eternal God. I thank you for loving me better than I can love myself, for dying and rising for love of me. I ask you to fill my heart, take over my life, mold me into an image of you and your love. Let me be a sign of you to the world. Amen.