

Talk 1: What makes Christianity Special?

- 3 goals of the session
 - I. Understand conflicting and different worldviews
 - II. See how Christianity compares
 - III. See why Christianity is special
- What is a worldview?
 - A framework to approach the world
 - Mathematical axioms
 - It provides answers to certain questions about the world
 - They are good big picture judgements of different positions
 - But it is important to recognise individual presentations and viewpoints
- How do we judge a worldview?
 - Truth: What best represents reality?
 - Salvation: How are humans saved?
- Judaism:
 - salvation is collective and national
 - based on God's covenant and sacrifices
 - One is saved through the ability for one to follow the law
- Problems
 - Constant sacrifices make little sense as one could always miss out on certain sins/ making certain sins untouched
 - It is difficult to fully fulfil the ritualistic sacrifices demanded in the Old Testament (Leviticus 4, Leviticus 5)
 - "Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes." Romans 10:1-4
 - Romans 8:2 "because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death."
 - "If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ" Philipians 3:4-7.
 - Even Paul the perfect Jew did not consider the law as sufficient
 - The law can only condemn, it cannot save
 - When you go through life, you abide by the law, but abiding by the law doesn't feed you, you need to work, do other things. But breaking the law would lead to automatic punishment. It cannot save
- Islam:
 - Salvation (Five Pillars of Islam)

- Profession of faith: “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammed is the messenger of God”
 - Prayers
 - Alms
 - Fasting
 - Pilgrimage to Mecca
 - Salvation comes through good works outweighing the bad
- Problems
 - Reciprocal Economy : Good actions don’t cancel out bad actions
 - The economy of working to get into heaven is problematic
- Hinduism
 - Karma is internally inconsistent, it is based on reciprocity
 - It suggests that good deeds can be measured against evil deeds
- Problems:
 - No amount of finite works can make up for the infinite
 - Re-incarnation breaks down moral responsibility
 - Enlightenment is a ceasing of self, a returning to the universe.
- Atheism
 - There is no God
 - There can be no salvation
 - There is no morality
- Salvation can only come through Jesus Christ
- Christianity is the worship of the God-man
 - The idea of God becoming man is unique in history
 - The incarnation of a perfect being in human flesh
 - Shows that it is possible to be saved and gives us hope in the incarnation and the afterlife
 - The focus in Christianity is Christ, not man
 - “You are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
 - We cannot be selfish and do things for ourselves, we need to work for Christ and make Him the priority in our lives
 - “he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.” (Titus 3:5)
 - We need to understand that we do not “deserve” salvation
 - If we don’t start with Jesus, we are doomed to failure
 - Philippians 2:12 “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling”
 - 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.”
 - God loves us and is willing to sacrifice Himself for us, it is through Christ that we are able to be at one with God

- We are worshipping a God who loves us, this is not out of great terror (righteous fear of God is not bad Proverbs 9:10)
- Christianity closes the gap between imperfection and perfection
 - A perfect sacrifice can bridge the gap
 - “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29)
 - All actions have consequences, God would not be a just and righteous God if He just allowed people to get away with everything. Only God has the power to be the sacrifice, and only a human can pay it for it to be on behalf of man (Anselm)
 - Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord”
 - Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.
 - Since Jesus is the only perfect sacrifice, salvation is in Christ alone
 - “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)
 - Jesus died on the cross to save our sins, we must accept that sacrifice and love
- Christianity alone has access to the Holy Spirit
 - By entering into communion with the body of Christ, the Holy Spirit enters us
 - “Do you not know you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16)
 - The Holy Spirit gives us gifts to fulfil the purpose God has set out for us
 - “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31)
 - When we serve and align ourselves with the purpose of God, God is with us and leads us to victory
 - “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23)
 - By aligning ourselves with God, the Holy Spirit is able to act through us, we are able to represent the virtues that God wants us to present in our lives
- Christianity is the best representation of human existence
 - The Bible provides a complete picture of the Christian/ human narrative from beginning to the end
 - It starts with the fall of man, talks about how man is redeemed and how we should live in our daily lives
 - It allows us to go through both the good and the bad and understand how we are meant to face difficulties
 - Answers big questions like why are we here? Why is there evil?

Discussion questions:

- What are some people who you can share the Gospel with?

- How are some ways in which you have felt God's love in your life?
- What is your testimony? How did you come to know Jesus in your life?
- What makes Jesus special to you? What is your relationship like with Him?