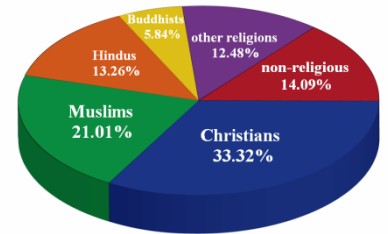


Why is Jesus Different? (Is Jesus different?)

World Religions by percentage



Many religions

- 1.9 billion people (33%) identify with Christian faith.
 - Atheist amount 4.5%
 - Its interesting to note that Britain's first Atheist church which started last Sunday, mimics faith religions in style of meeting and brings structure and community into their "non-faith"
1. Something intrinsic in human beings about pursuit of "spirituality" - Gen 9:6, Ecc 3:11
 2. Creation shouts about a creator, Romans 1:20

There's similarities in religions but huge differences. They can't all be true.

- Some say – what's true to you is true to you, what's true to me is true to me, there's no absolute truth.
- The statement "*there's no absolute truth*" is logically flawed as it states and "*an absolute truth*" therefore not true by its own statement.

Jesus made some very clear statements about truth.

- John 14:6 "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*"
- Acts 4:12 "*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*"

Explore 3 key things about Jesus – centre of the Christian faith – and then see where that leaves us.

1. JESUS CHRIST CLAIMED TO BE GOD Mathew 26:57-66

- High priest - Are you Christ? Are you Son of God?
- Jesus - "Yes, it is as you say"

Christ = Messiah = "anointed one" liberator = expected deliverer

Son of God = from God AND same stuff as God i.e. he was God. Chief priest understood and cried "Blasphemy"

- He also; Performed miracles, Forgave people their sins, Allowed his disciples to worship him.

Jesus also outraged the High priests "*see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty one*"

- Similar – son of Man = man

Jesus was God and man – fully God, fully human = Jesus the God-Man

SO, God is not a distant from our struggles, pain, suffering, He knows it. He came to earth to seek us out.

2. JESUS' SACRIFICE

Jesus was killed on a cross – (Roman historian Tacitus and Jewish historian Josephus note this)

Jesus claimed to be the Christ, Messiah = "anointed one" liberator = expected deliverer. Matt 1:21 "*he will save his people from their sins.*"

- All religions in some way look into the problem of good and bad.
- Example from a Muslim conference paper "*no original inherited sin stands between the individual and his destiny, for nothing shall be attributed to man but what he has strived for.* In Islam "*there is no inward compulsion of grace within the being of God*" Sweetman, Islam and Christian theology.
 - But if God is perfect – how can he bear any wrong in his sight? No real hope.
- Hinduism talks about the Goal and step taken towards it – meditation, works, knowledge, devotion – but never directly confronts the problem of sin.

Romans 3:23,24 "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*"²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." Taken hold of by faith (John 3:16)

None of the other great religions claims a saviour

- Buddha = teacher not saviour, Muhammed = prophet not saviour, Jesus teacher, prophet, saviour, God.

3. JESUS' RESURRECTION

Most contentious issue of all history! Did Jesus beat death and rise from dead? - Cornerstone of Christianity

This marks Christianity out – you can visit the remains of Mohamed and Buddha, not Jesus

1. Did he really die? Roman Crucifixion, pierced side – clot and serum separation
2. Followers steal body? So they endured floggings, torture, death – for a lie?
3. Authorities stole the body? – They could have just produced it and stopped the rumours.

Also consider

- Tomb never enshrined
- His Presence with disciples - met, talked, ate with him, 500 at one time – Inc Mum and brothers
- Immediate effects - the news spread by uneducated fishermen etc. across the known world.
- Effect down the ages
 - Millions of people around the world today claim to have met with the risen Jesus.
 - Miracles, healings by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead
 - Me – prayer guidance, alive today, daily convinced.

Resurrection means

- Marks Jesus out as special, validates his claim to be God (death couldn't hold him), shows the price for sin, was fully paid the price for all our sin (prisoner free – sentence served), alive so we can know him, hope in life (we can overcome), hope and death.

WHAT ABOUT OTHERS?

Some tough questions: Can anyone be saved apart from Jesus? What about those who never hear?

Some Jigsaw pieces...

1. **Start with what we do know** – about Jesus and the gospel – our sin and need for a saviour etc.
 - a. *“Seek to understand what's unclear based on what is clear.”*
2. We're **not saved by our religion**, but by God's love and Grace. This keeps us humble.
3. We **trust in God's ultimate Justice**.
 - a. Though some things may not make 100% sense to us now, we trust that when we meet God, things expected or unexpected will make perfect sense.
4. It is possible to be saved by God's grace through faith without knowing the name Jesus. *“Abraham [lived centuries before Jesus] believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.”* Rom 4:3, Gal 3:6, Heb 2:23. He did not fully know God's plan that would be unveiled but God counted him worthy through.
 - a. The nature of his faith is not clear. The Situation is now different – Jesus has come – Rom 3:24.25. so we must live by what is revealed.
5. **Jesus is able to reveal himself**. Many stories angels, visions, Jesus appearing to those of other faiths
 - a. **Mission.** *“I can't believe Christianity because if I had news that good I'd do nothing else but tell others about it until they all believed”*. Missional passivity fuels non-Christian doubt in the gospel.
6. There's biblical grounds for great optimism. Gen 22:17 *“descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky”*

CONCLUSION

At the centre of Christianity,

- you won't find a philosophy
- or regulations and rules
- but a person. **Jesus the God-Man.**