

Why Believe in Christianity, Class #3b: **Is there a God?**

Part 2: The Existence of God: If YES...Who and What is God?

1. **Review:** If there is **no God**, then there is:

- **Naturalism** = Closed universe of only unguided and random cause/effect
 - **Human Autonomy** = There is no higher source of truth/authority than us/me.
 - **Moral Relativity** = no unchanging right or wrong – only opinion/urge/power.
 - **Temporality** = Death is only destiny for universe/individual. No ultimate meaning
- a. **No** absolute truth or ultimate authority
 - b. **No** intrinsic human value or dignity
 - c. **No** ultimate hope
 - d. **Extinction** is the final reality for everything (thus, so often, the illogical leap into some form of the supernatural [ghosts, aliens, ‘next dimension of existence’])

“Brief and powerless is man’s life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless ways. For man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gates of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow fall, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day; ... to worship at the shrine his own hands have built.” **Bertrand Russell: A Free Man’s Worship and Other Essays**, page 18-19

2. **If there is a God, then three questions arise:**

- a. Who is God?
- b. Has God spoken?
- c. What is my relationship to God?

3. There are **four major views of God** (*apart from Christianity*)

- a. **A-theism:** God does not exist (Marxist Communism) or agnosticism (I don’t know and choose to live as if God does not exist = secularism).
- b. **Poly-theism:** many gods with different agendas (pagan mythology or modern Mormonism’s belief in deified humans as planetary ‘gods’)
- c. **Pan-theism:** (or Mon-ism) God is everything and ultimately everything is “god” (Hinduism, Buddhism, New Age religions, Illustration: Beatles’ song: “*I am you, you are me, he is she and all is one.*”)
- d. **Mono-theism:** One sovereign Creator and Law-giver (Judaism and Islam)

4. The **Biblical (Christian)** view of God

- **One God in essence, purpose and power, manifested in three Persons = Co-eternal, Co-infinite, Co-equal** (Jn 1:1-3, 14, 18; Col. 1:12-20; Heb 1:1-4)
- Three personas in **absolute unity** of relationship and purpose [community]:
 - “As seen and known They are Three”—
 - “As seeing and knowing They are One!” (see Genesis 1:1-3, 26; John 1:1-3, 14; Deuteronomy 6:4 (Elohim); Psalm 110:1; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Hebrews 2:3-4).

5. The **Names** in the Bible used for the three Persons of the trinity relate to Their roles or functions in the Divine plan of salvation for humanity:

- **Father:** *God above us* = Sovereign, Infinite; **Transcendent** (1 Tim 6:15-16)
- **Son:** “Immanuel – *God with us*” = Savior, Incarnate, **Immanent** (Colossians 2:9)
- **Holy Spirit:** *God in us!* = Sustainer, Indwelling, **Intimate** (Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; Romans 8:11, 26-27)

6. **The Core Question about God:**

If God is all-powerful and all-good, then why did He create or allow evil [sin]?

The Biblical response to the presence and problem with evil is two-fold:

- **Human Freedom:** God’s gift of authentic freedom to humanity (and angels)
- **Divine Redemption:** In Christ, God does not accept either the responsibility for the existence or presence of evil; but takes to Himself the consequences of guilt of human evil to redeem and restore humanity (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18)

7. **The Secondary Question about God for Modern Man:**

Does empirical science and Neo-Darwinian naturalism remove the necessity of God?

- The current challenges to philosophical “naturalism” in science and philosophy; and the directions of science in the arenas of cosmology [macro-universe], biochemistry [micro-universe], paleontology [fossil record]. There are huge advances in technology [cumulative (rapidly evolving) advances, but not simultaneous cumulative advances in justice [use of technology for benefit of all] or in human wisdom).
- The undying longing for God (the God-shaped hole in us all)!

Five Compelling Arguments (*Evidences*) for the Existence of God

1. **Cosmological Argument** (cosmos = universe/logos = reason).
A universe exists – where did it come from? – origin (first cause).
2. **Teleological Argument** – why is everything so complex, balanced, ordered?
There cannot be a functioning, highly complex, intricate design without a designer.
3. **Anthropomorphic Argument** – The Eco-system and Solar system of our planet were designed precisely and intricately for the needs of humanity.
4. **Universal morality argument** – all people in every culture share basic moral values concerning good and bad, which is strange.
5. **Religious experience argument** – millions of trustworthy, intelligent and gifted people have encountered the presence of God in their lives.

“If God is Good, Why Do Evil and Suffering Exist?”

This is the number 1 unresolved issue for spiritual seekers. Questions about suffering and evil are intensely personal. When we waded into the dark swamp of human suffering, questions scream to be answered:

- Where is God in this?
- Why didn’t God prevent this?
- Why didn’t God help – did He even care?
- If God is all-powerful and all-good, why is evil so all-pervasive?

When we approach this question, we do not have all the answers. People’s questions are understandable and valid. We must approach the pain in people’s hearts with humility and

love – and weep with those who weep. **We do NOT have all the answers – but we DO have some!**

1. God is not the author of evil (James 1:13)
2. God allowed for the potential of evil – because God created humanity with free will: genuine freedom of choice (Genesis 2:17; 3:11, 17; 4:6-7; Joshua 24:15). Without genuine freedom there can be no such thing as genuine love (John 3:16; 15:9-13; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15). God still created us – knowing the dangers ahead – for the same reason we still choose to have children in spite of the suffering in the world.
3. God does not destroy all evil instantly or we would all die. The line between good and evil runs right through the middle of every human heart. (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:9-19, 23; 6:23)!
4. God does not remove evil – but He does restrain its full impact. Only in the last hours of human history will that restraint will be removed – and all hell will break loose! (Matthew 24:21-22; 2 Thessalonians. 2:6-12; Revelation 9:14-21).
5. God is sovereign over history and human destiny (Daniel 4:28-37), but the powers of this world are under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19; John 8:44; 12:30-31; Revelation 12:9-17; Matthew 4:8-9)
6. Suffering often turns us to God; and hardship can form moral character (2 Corinthians 7:10; Romans 5:3-7). God even brings great good out of evil (Romans 8:28; Genesis 45:5-7; 50:19-21). Consider the Cross of Christ where Satan's ultimate victory was his ultimate defeat!). *If there was selfishness without any suffering*, endless potential for self-gratifying pleasure without any pain and decadence without death, God would be unjust and complicit in our injustice; and all humanity would be totally rebellious, spoiled brats – moral reprobates with no conscience.
7. Final justice is delayed – but it is not denied. Delayed justice is God's opportunity for mercy, **but there will come a day when God sets all things right** (1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9-15; Revelation 20:11-15; 21:3-8).
8. God does not give us answers to **all** our questions. Instead He gave us **the Answer**. Instead of a detached and detailed explanation, God entered our story as our **Savior/LORD who forever gives us His Presence!** (Matthew 1:23; 28:20; Hebrews 2:9, 14-15; 4:15-16; 5:7-9).

Why Believe in Christianity? Class #4
What's the Main Point?
The Person and Work of Christ

What makes **Christianity**, not just different, but *essentially unique* from all other religions? It is the **Person of Christ** and His claims.

Because of Jesus, *Christianity offers*:

- **A rescue religion** (not a system of self-salvation): Mark 10:45; Luke 19:10; Ephesians 2:1-9
- **Salvation as a historical fact** - based solely on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus: 1Corinthians 15:3-4, 10-17; Romans 6:23; John 3:16-18, 36; Acts 4: 12
- **Salvation through a substitutionary act**: Romans 5:8-10; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1Peter 2:24, 3:18; Revelation 1:5-6; 5:8-10
- **Realistic view of humanity**, both our great individual value or worth to God (John 3:16; 1John 2:1-2; 4:10); and our great sinfulness and unworthiness in terms of salvation (Isaiah 64:6; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:10-12, 23; Ephesians 2:1-4)
- **Christianity is Christ!** C. S. Lewis' challenge that there are only 3 options for dealing with Jesus: He is either a liar, a lunatic or He is the Lord [Divine Son of God])

1. The **Commands** of Jesus:

- Come to Me (Matthew 11:28)
- Learn of Me (Matthew 11:29)
- Believe in Me (John 7:37)
- Follow Me (Matthew 4:19)
- Abide in Me (John 15:4)

2. The **Claims** of Jesus: (John 5:24-25)

- "I am the Bread of life" (John 6:35, 40)
- "I am the Water of life" (John 4:10-14; 7:37-39)
- "I am the Light of the world!" (John 8:12, 24, 58)
- "I am One with God" (John 1:1-4; 10:30; 14:9; 20:27-28)
- "I am the Resurrection and the Life" (John 11:25-26)
- "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6)
- "I am the true Vine" (John 15:1-8)

3. The Conduct of Jesus: John 8:46
4. The Cross of Jesus: John 1:29; 12:31-33; 19:30
5. The Church of Jesus: John 20:21-23; Matthew 16:18; 28:18-20
6. The Coming of Jesus: John 14:1-3; Matthew 24:30-31; 25:31-32
7. Encountering Jesus Christ is like riding a bicycle!
You are either on or you are off - but you can't stand still.
We must respond somehow to God's offer:
 - Jeremiah 29:11-13
 - John 7:17
 - Romans 1:16-25
 - Isaiah 55:6-12; John 1:12

The Heart of Christianity

1. If the essence of Christianity is Jesus Christ (John 14:6), the heart of Christianity is His Cross (the death and resurrection of Jesus):
 - His Cross is our salvation (1 Corinthians 1:17-18, 23-24; Romans 5:6-10)
 - His Cross is our glory (Galatians 6:14; Colossians 1:19-20)
 - His Cross is our message (1 Corinthians 2: 1-5)
2. The Cross of Christ defines and integrates all Christian truth:
 - His Cross tells who God really is: John 3:14-16; Colossians 1:19-22
 - His Cross tells who man really is: Isaiah 53:5-6; 1John 2:1-2
 - His Cross tells how God and man are reconciled: Ephesians 2: 13-16; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Hebrews 10:14
 - His Cross defines how we should live (discipleship): Hebrews 10:10; 1 John 3:16; Ephesians 4:32-5:2; 1Peter 2:24
 - His Cross defines what real love is: 1John 4:10; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15
 - His Cross tells us how we can face God's final judgment: Hebrews 9:26-28; Romans 3:19-26; 5: 17-21; Revelation 7:12-15
 - His Cross is the reason why the Second Coming is the glorious hope of His people: Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 9:27-28; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:10