



**Engaging with Eastern
faiths in truth and love**



1.3 billion [16%]



2.3 billion
[31.2 %]



30 million
[0.4 %]



1.9 billion [24.1 %]



1.2 billion [15.1 %]



500 million [6.9 %]

A topographic map of the Middle East and surrounding regions, including the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean. The landmasses are shown in shades of brown and green, indicating elevation and vegetation. The text "Part 1. What do they believe?" is overlaid in white, bold font.

Part 1. What do they believe?

Hinduism



So, what is Hinduism?

- The truth is that it's about **300 different religions** with many shared elements of mythology, gods, rituals, and philosophies
- Some are dualistic and almost monotheistic
- Some are non-dualistic
- Some (probably most) view the Vedas with respect
- Others do not, and just use the oral traditions of their particular sect

Hindu Development

- Vedic Hinduism ~1000-300 BC (karma- ritual)
 - the idea is dharma (right action) which leads to a better rebirth
 - The late vedas (Upanishads) philosophized this ritual worldview
 - The self is identical with ultimate reality (brahman)
 - Moksha comes through knowledge that you are identical with brahman. It stops you from accruing karma since your consciousness is fusing with the universe- so there's nothing to reincarnate
 - But what this means is unclear- is it dualistic, nondualistic, or qualified nondualistic?
- Puranic Hinduism ~ 500 AD (gyaan- narrative- Visnu and siva as gods, as well as bhakti as a central tenet rather than the vedic sacrificial tradition. It offered stories and practices for normal people.
 - Incorporated elements of buddhist practice like temple-centred worship, pilgrimage, festival culture
 - Buddhism rejected the vedas as authoritative, the puranic movement affirms them but relocates the centre of faith to be practical))
- Reformed Hinduism ~1900 AD (non dual, universalist)

Hindu Philosophy

Concept	Hindu Philosophy
Dharma	Cosmic order, moral duty, righteous living, and religious obligation. Also tied historically to social roles and stages of life.
Karma	Moral causation shaping present and future rebirths. Karma binds beings to samsara.
Samsara	Endless cycle of rebirth governed by karma. Ordinary worldly existence is spiritually binding.
Moksha / Liberation	Liberation from samsara. Understood variously as union with Brahman, eternal devotion to God, realization of the self, etc.
Holy Book(s)	No single universally binding scripture. Major texts include the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Puranas, etc.
Atman / Self	Most schools affirm an enduring spiritual self (ātman). The self is ultimately real.
Brahman / Ultimate Reality	Many schools affirm Brahman as ultimate reality — infinite, eternal, foundational being. Interpreted differently across traditions.

Buddhism, Sikhism, and the inconvenient truth about Caste

- Many Hindus today will downplay the nature of caste, or blame it on the British.
- There is some nuance to the caste system (i.e. family traditions/jobs)
- However, if that was all the caste system is, it does not really make sense of the rise of worldviews that argued against that- Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism

Hindu practice

- **Puja**- daily offerings/devotions to gods
- **Yoga/meditation**- uniting the soul with the supreme consciousness
- **Dietary restrictions**
 - Nonviolence related to nondualism
 - Do Hindus worship cows?
- **The Bindi/Tilak**
 - Third eye
 - Marital status
 - Keeping God in the centre of your thoughts
 - Fashion statement



Buddhism



Buddhist general approach

- Buddhism is intensely practical
 - The story of the buddha and the poisoned arrow
- It's all about how to alleviate suffering
- **Buddhism works- but is it the best?**

History of Buddhism

- Prince Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha- enlightened one) lived a sheltered life in the 6th Century BC
- As an adult he saw the suffering in the world and wanted to end it
- He left his wife and child, and became a wandering ascetic
- Eventually, he meditated under a tree (despite being tested by a demon) and achieved enlightenment at age 35
- He spent 45 years teaching the middle way (between luxury and poverty)
- Buddhism took Asia by storm, spreading pretty much everywhere

The Four noble truths

First Noble Truth — Dissatisfaction

- Life as ordinarily lived is marked by dissatisfaction

Second Noble Truth — Cause of Suffering

- Suffering is caused by craving pleasure, clinging to identity, attachment to permanence, ignorance about reality.

Third Noble Truth — End of Suffering

- Liberation (*nirvana/nibbana*) is possible. One can become free from attachment and therefore free from suffering.

Fourth Noble Truth — The Path

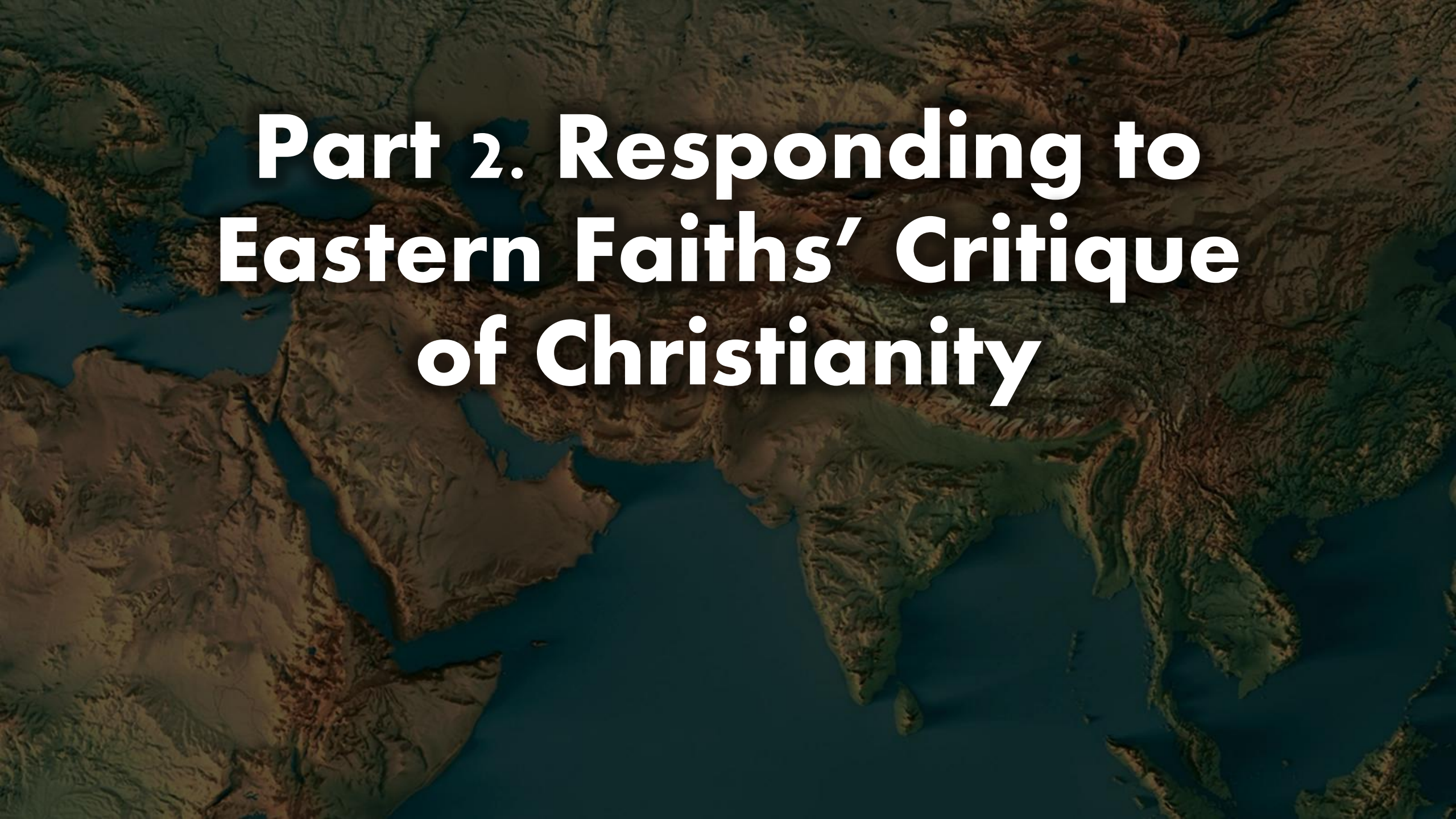
- The way to liberation is the **Noble Eightfold Path**.

The Eightfold Path

- Right View
- Right Intention
- Right Speech
- Right Action
- Right Livelihood
- Right Effort
- Right Mindfulness
- Right Concentration

Buddhist Philosophy

Concept	Buddhist Philosophy
Dharma	Usually means the Buddha's teaching (Dhamma) and the truth about reality. Ethical living and right practice align one with liberation.
Karma	Intentional actions create karmic consequences that perpetuate suffering and rebirth. Ignorance and craving drive karma.
Samsara	Cycle of rebirth and suffering caused by ignorance and craving. One of the central problems Buddhism seeks to solve. Dependent Origination
Moksha / Liberation	Nirvana: liberation from craving, ignorance, and rebirth. Often described as awakening rather than union with a divine being.
Holy Book(s)	Different canons across traditions. Early Buddhism preserves teachings in the Pali Canon; Mahayana traditions also use many sutras.
Atman / Self	Buddhism generally rejects a permanent self (anatta/anatman). The person is a changing process, not an eternal soul.
Brahman / Ultimate Reality	Buddhism generally rejects an eternal creator-God or permanent metaphysical absolute in the Hindu sense. Some Mahayana traditions speak of emptiness (śūnyatā) or Buddha-nature, but not usually Brahman.



Part 2. Responding to Eastern Faiths' Critique of Christianity

The main Critique of Christianity- Universalism

- All religions can lead to the truth
- Christianity is discriminatory by claiming to be the only way
- It's impossible to discover objective truth about religion

Challenging Universalism- epistemology

- Some people claim that the idea that we can only know things through either logic or experience is a Western mindset and that eastern faiths don't believe in objective truth
- This is mostly bunk
 - Each Hindu dharmic tradition is internally consistent
 - Buddhism argues for its core truths through logic and experience
- This is usually just an excuse not to deal with religion because they don't really care

Challenging Universalism

- No one is a universalist about science, history, mathematics, or morality.
- There's at least one religion can only be true or false
- Jesus said "I am the way the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father God except through me."



Challenging Universalism

- **The defense attorney fallacy**
 - "There are millions of gods, but you think you have the right one?"
 - "there are 40 million people in Canada, but you think you have the right murder suspect?"
- **This is a relationship with God- not just propositional knowledge or behaviours. Jesus said the question is if we know him.**
- **It is impossible to know God if we do not have the truth about him.**





Part 3. Why Christianity?

How to assess a worldview

	Personal Experience	Philosophical coherence	External evidence
Power to convince	Very powerful	Somewhat powerful	Minimally powerful
Accessibility to those who don't agree	Not at all accessible (no one can see inside your mind)	Somewhat accessible (It's impossible to figure out which axioms are true, like the nature of morality, consciousness, and humans)	Completely accessible (anyone can witness a miracle or a scientific experiment).



Hinduism



No External Evidence

- No historical data on the authors of the Vedas (~1200 BC)
- Hinduism isn't based on any historical claims

Why no external evidence?

- Hinduism makes philosophical claims that make sense if you assume them, but are hard to defend against outside worldviews



Hinduism



Other worldviews

No External Evidence



- Some Buddhists claim the Buddha performed miracles
- There's no evidence for it
- Buddhism is fundamentally practical- a path to avoid suffering.

Why no external evidence?

- Buddhism is like a medicine- doing what works is the most important thing.

Christianity



External Evidence:

- **Jesus' resurrection from the dead**
- **The four minimal facts**
 - **Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate**
 - **He was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Aramathea**
 - **The tomb was found empty on the third day**
 - **His disciples believed Jesus had risen from the dead**

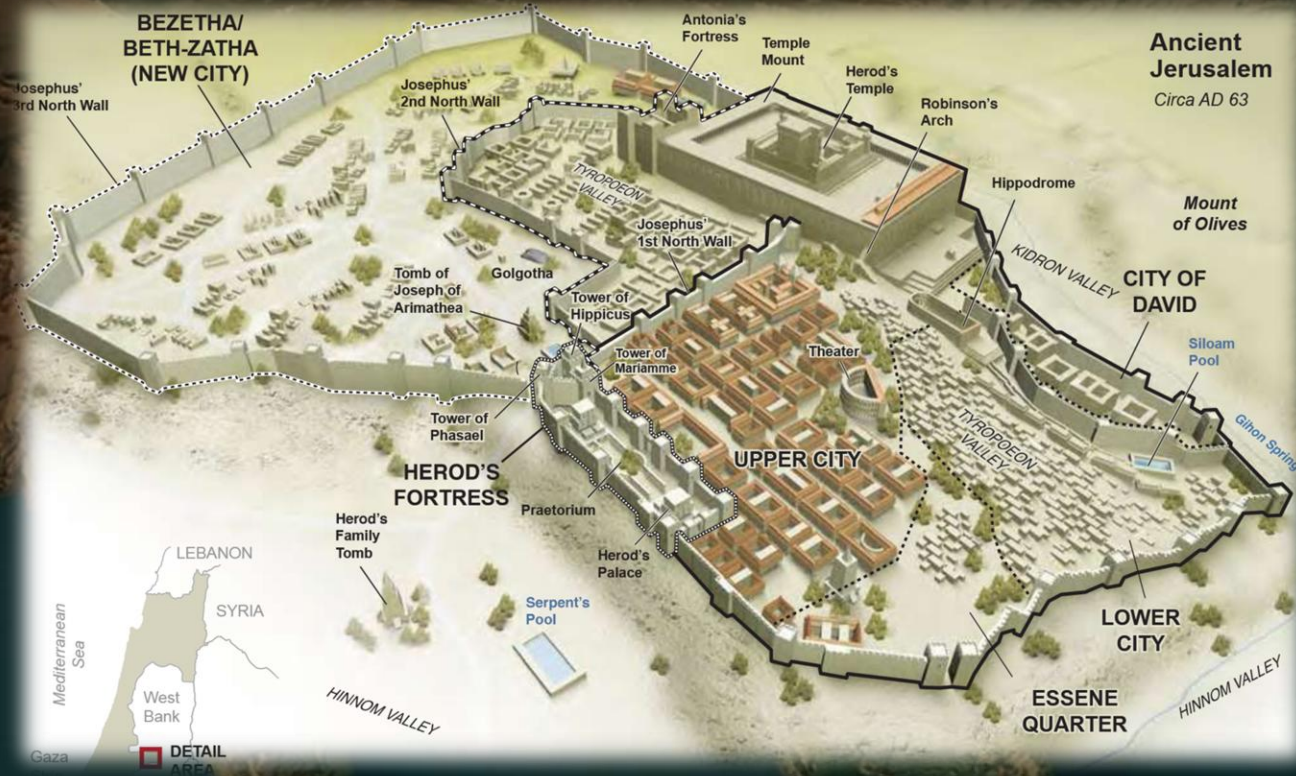
Multiple reliable witnesses

- Multiple independent sources (John, Mark, Luke, James, Paul)
- Incentive was hugely negative
- No idea of a dying and rising messiah in Judaism



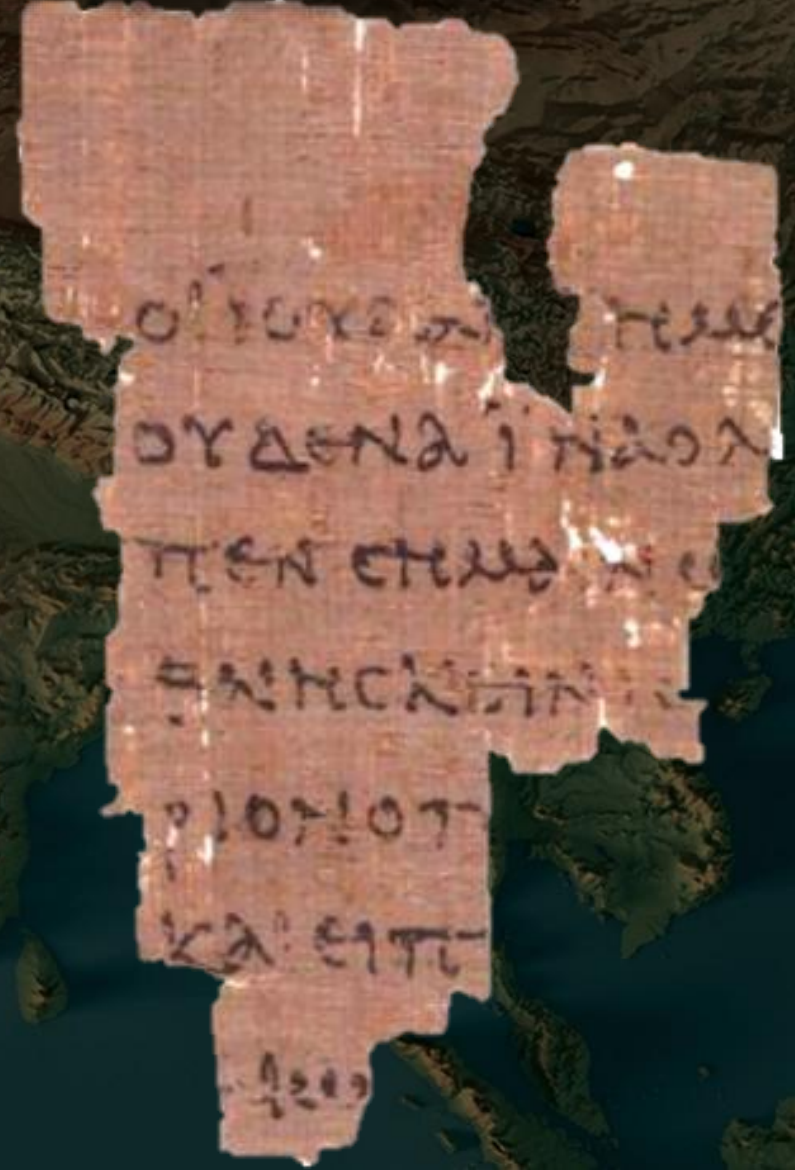
Historical congruity

- **Accurate names and places**
- **Accurate Jewish law account**
- **Accurate crucifixion account**
- **Accurate Jewish burial process**
- **Falsifiable claim with hostile witnesses**



Reliable textual chain

- Dozens of early manuscripts
- Numerous independent quotations
- Jewish and Roman corroboration of the event
- **Incorruptible due to free transmission**



Assessing the Eastern Worldviews

	Supernatural event	Multiple Reliable witnesses	Historical Congruity	Reliable Textual chain
Hinduism	No	No	No	No
Buddhism	No	No	No	No
Sikhism	Unlikely true	No	No	No
Christianity	Likely true	Yes	Yes	Yes



Talking to people of Eastern Faiths

Talking with Hindus/Buddhists/Sikhs

- Ask lots of questions
- Emphasize the multiculturalism of the Bible and Christianity
 - Christianity came to India 2000 years ago
 - The Bible has been translated into more languages than any holy book
 - Christianity (through Bible translation) has been the greatest anticolonial force in world history
- Challenge them on universalism
 - Tell them that our faith is based on objective historical truth claims of the Bible- Jesus' uniqueness claims and his resurrection.
 - Give evidence if they want it and if you do, ask for it in return
- Present the Gospel- as a better option. Use pascal's wager if needed

Pascal's wager for Eastern Religions

	Christianity is True	Eastern Religions are true
You accept Christianity	Eternal bliss in the presence of God	This lifetime is wasted (still millions to go)
You accept an Eastern religion	Eternal separation from God	One fewer lifetime to achieve enlightenment (but still millions to go)

Questions? Comments?

