

Christianity, Cults & Religions

Essential Christian Doctrine

1. The Christian Holy 'Books': God's Unveiling of Truth and His Self-Disclosure

† Special Revelation ⇒ The Bible

- Psalm 19:7-8 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.
- 2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

† General Revelation ⇒ Nature (the Creation)

- Psalm 19:1-2 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.
- Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

2. Essential Doctrines

† Oneness of God

- Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

† Trinity

- Matthew 28:19 *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

† God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ) and God the Spirit

- 1 Peter 1:1-2 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

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† Deity and Humanity of Jesus Christ

- John 1:1,14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

† Personhood of the Holy Spirit

- Hebrews 2:3b-4 This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

† Human Depravity

- Ecclesiastes 7:20 There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

† Virgin Birth

- Matthew 1:18 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

† Sinlessness of Jesus Christ

- 2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

† Atoning Death of Jesus Christ

- Romans 3:25a God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.

† Jesus' Bodily Resurrection

- 1 Corinthians 15:1-6 Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.

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After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

† Second Coming of Jesus Christ

- Acts 1:11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”
- Revelation 22:12-13 **Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.**

† Faith

- 2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God & Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:

† God's Grace

- Romans 5:10 When we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

† Gift of Salvation Romans 3:28, 4:4-8, Titus 3:4-8

- Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.

† Works are a Natural Result of Salvation James 2:14

- Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

The following chart was adapted from *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts* :

Salvation: God's Greatest Gift – Man's Greatest Possession		
Justification (Past Tense)	Sanctification (Present Tense)	Glorification (Future Tense)
Saved <i>immediately</i> from sin's penalty	Saved <i>progressively</i> from sin's power	Saved <i>ultimately</i> from sin's presence
For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8)		

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Hope in Christ Church – Statement of Faith

We Believe:

SCRIPTURE: *The Bible is the inspired and inerrant Word of God.*

The Bible is the ultimate, complete and eternal source of knowledge about God and the definitive guide for our daily lives.

GOD: *There is only one God, existing in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God is self-existent, eternal, unchanging, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, holy, righteous and loving. God created the universe from nothing and He is the sovereign ruler over His creation.*

MAN: *Man is a physical and spiritual being (composed of spirit, soul and body), who was created in God's image. However, because of sin, man has lost his fellowship with God and is destined to die.*

GRACE: *Grace is the unmerited, undeserved love of God manifested in Jesus Christ. Jesus, who is fully God and fully man, was sent by God the Father to save mankind from slavery to sin. Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, suffered and died as an atoning sacrifice for all sins, physically rose from the dead and will one day return to deliver His followers and judge the world. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only means by which mankind can escape judgement, separation from God and eternal damnation.*

CHURCH: *The Church is ordained by God, headed by Jesus Christ and composed of all true believers from Pentecost to the Rapture. The Church is also referred to as the "Bride" or the "Body" of Christ. Members of the Church organize local churches for worship, for fellowship, for the administration of the sacraments (primarily baptism & the Lord's supper), for spiritual growth and support and for evangelizing the world.*

Remember these things when interpreting Scripture:

Always examine the context of the verse quoted by cultists. Ask: Who is speaking in this passage? What is the setting? Who is being addressed? What is the main point of the passage? Look to the context for answers to these questions.

Interpreting Scripture is about drawing the meaning out of the Bible verses, not putting a meaning onto the verses. Ask the cultist: Where does this passage clearly teach what you are claiming?

If a verse is unclear, examine it in light of clear passages. Bible verses are not disconnected fragments, but are embedded in the whole of Scripture. Ask: What does the Bible clearly teach in other places? How does the overall teaching in the Bible on this subject help us understand what this particular verse means?

What Other Groups May Teach About Jesus and Biblical Responses:

• Jesus was not God.	(See verses D, I, U, Y)
• Jesus was created by God	(See verses J, M, U)
• There are three separate gods: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not one God in three persons.	(A, B, J, Z)
• Jesus is not necessary because there is no sin.	(F, O, P, R)
• Jesus was not raised bodily from the dead.	(C, R, S)
• Jesus was a great prophet, but not God.	(H, J, V)
• There are many ways to God, not just one.	(F, K, X)
• Jesus is not necessary because people must pay for their own sins.	(L, P, Q, T)
• Jesus died for sins, but people can't be saved unless they obey all of the teachings of the church.	(K, Q, T)
• Jesus is God, but less than God the Father.	(H, K, V)
• Jesus was just a man.	(J, E)
• Jesus is not the only son of God.	(F, G, Z)
• Jesus will never come again.	(N, W)

A. Deuteronomy 6:4
Isaiah 43:10
Isaiah 44:6-8
B. Matthew 28:18-19
1 Peter 1:2
C. Luke 24:36-53
D. John 1:1-5
John 1:6-18
E. John 2:18-22

F. John 3:14-17
G. John 3:36
H. John 5:17-18
John 5:23
I. John 8:56-58
J. John 10:30-38
Isaiah 7:14
Matthew 1:18
K. John 14:6-7

L. John 17:2-3
M. John 17:5
N. Acts 1:11
O. Romans 3:23-30
1 John 1:8-10
P. Romans 6:23
Q. Romans 10:3-10
R. 1 Corinthians 15:1-8
S. 1 Corinthians 15:12-23

T. Ephesians 2:8-9
U. Colossians 1:15-20
V. Colossians 2:9-10
W. 1 Thess. 4:13-18
X. 1 Timothy 2:5-6
Y. 1 Timothy 3:16
Z. Hebrews 1:1-14

JESUS' DEITY

DEMONSTRATE JESUS' DEITY

Cultists always get the identity of Jesus wrong.

To witness effectively to cultists, you will need to be prepared to show the cultist that Jesus is the eternal God. Here's one way to do this: Compare the Old Testament descriptions and attributes of God with the New Testament descriptions and attributes of Jesus Christ.

Descriptions and Attributes	God in the Old Testament	Jesus in the New Testament
Creator	Isaiah 44:24	Colossians 1:16; John 1:3
Savior	Isaiah 43:11	Titus 2:13-14; Jude 4
Shepherd	Psalms 23:1-2	John 10:11-18
Great Judge	Psalms 98:9	John 5:21-22
First and Last	Isaiah 44:6; 48:12	Revelation 1:17-18
Holy One	Isaiah 47:4	Acts 3:14; John 6:69
Glory	Isaiah 6:1-5	John 12:41
Omnipotent (all-powerful)	Jeremiah 32:17, 27	Matthew 19:26
Omniscient (all-knowing)	Psalms 147:5	1 John 3:20
Omnipresent (present everywhere)	Jeremiah 23:24	Matthew 28:20
Gives Eternal Life	Deuteronomy 30:20	Romans 6:23

With these verses, the cultist will likely go home with a different view of Jesus. If that happens, God the Holy Spirit will be working on his or her heart, convicting and bringing to mind the things of Jesus Christ.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO OBJECTIONS COMMONLY RAISED BY CULTISTS

The word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible and is therefore not a biblical idea. Just because a word is not found in the Bible, doesn't mean that it is not a biblical concept. For example, the word "theocracy" (God-ruled nation) is not in the Bible, yet Israel was a theocracy. In the same way, the Trinity concept is seen throughout Scripture.

The Trinity is confusing, so God would not exist as a Trinity. Finite humans cannot fully comprehend God, who is infinite (Isaiah 55:8).

Jesus is God's Son and is "with" God, so he cannot be God himself. Jesus is the second person of the Trinity, distinct from —and yet equal

in nature to—the Father (Jn. 1:1; Col. 2:9). As God's "Son," he possesses God's full nature (Jn. 5:18; 19:7; Lev. 24:16).

Jesus said the Father is greater than him, so he cannot be "equal" to God (John 14:28). In his human nature, the Father was "greater" than Jesus, but in his God nature, Jesus is equal to the Father (Jn. 5:18).

Since God is invisible and cannot die, Jesus cannot be God. Jesus' is the visible "image" of the invisible God (Jn. 1:18; 14:9; Heb. 1:3; 2 Cor. 4:4). He died in his humanity, but in his deity, he remained alive (Phil. 2:5-11; Jn. 2:18-22).

TESTIMONY

GIVE YOUR TESTIMONY

Cultists need to hear what God has done in your life.

You might not be an expert in theology, the Bible, cultic doctrines, or apologetics, but you are an expert in what Jesus has done in your life! You are an expert in how Jesus has set you free. When you give your testimony, focus on the mighty river of God's grace. When a cultist sees that you know you're a sinner who deserves to spend eternity apart from God, but you have absolute assurance that you are saved because of what Jesus has done for you, that will make an impact on the cultist.

KEEP THE FOLLOWING THINGS IN MIND WHEN GIVING YOUR TESTIMONY:

- ▶ **Describe what your life was like** before you were a Christian. What were your feelings, attitudes, actions, and relationships like during this time? (The apostle Paul clearly spoke of what his life was like before he was a Christian—Acts 26:4-11.)
- ▶ **What events transpired** in your life that led up to your decision to trust in Christ? What caused you to begin considering Christ as a solution to your needs? Be specific.
- ▶ **Describe your conversion experience.** Was it a book you read? Were you in a church? Were other Christians with you at the time? (Paul clearly spoke of how he became a Christian—Acts 26:12-18.)
- ▶ **What kind of change took place** in your life following your conversion? What effect did trusting in Christ have on your feelings, attitudes, actions, and relationships? (Paul spoke of how his life changed once becoming a Christian—Acts 26:19-23.)
- ▶ **Never forget that God works through people.** He uses people as instruments to reach out and bless other people; that's his chosen means. In the Old Testament God worked through Israel to bring blessing to others. The Jewish nation would be a light to the Gentiles, an instrument by which blessing would be communicated to all people everywhere. In the New Testament, the church is to be used as an instrument of God by which God reaches through his church to bring blessing to people around the world. Each one of us can be used as an instrument!

