

AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY
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Let me say at the outset, how much I appreciate the sincere desire of Turkish Moslems to be friends with Christians. A true friendship is one in which you can discuss your differences and even retain your differences while being friends.

Friends cannot always reconcile their differences. Friends can disagree over politics, aesthetics, personal choices, worldviews, and religion and still be friends. As we discuss Christianity and Islam, it becomes clear that these belief systems represent two distinct ways of thinking about God, about sin, and forgiveness. As a Christian, I believe that Christianity is the true and only way to know God and to live with him forever. So, let me give you a brief Introduction to Christianity.

DEFINITION: Christianity is the practice of believing in and following Jesus as he is revealed in the 66 books of the Bible.

- Christianity is not Roman Catholicism. Some, but not all, RC's believe in and follow Jesus as He is revealed in the 66 books of the Bible.
- Christianity is not Protestantism. Some, but not all, Protestants believe in and follow Jesus as He is revealed in the 66 books of the Bible.
- Christianity is not the Orthodox church. Some, but not all, Orthodox Christians believe in and follow Jesus as He is revealed in the 66 books of the Bible.
- Not everyone who calls himself a Christian is one who believes in and follows Jesus as He is revealed in the 66 books of the Bible.
- No individual or Christian group is the full and complete representation of Christianity.
- To know Christianity you must study the 66 books of the Bible.

1. CHRISTIANITY BEGAN IN THE COUNCIL OF THE TRINITY BEFORE THE WORLD WAS CREATED.

- The Bible tells us that the Trinity planned the giving of Jesus the Lamb of God as a sacrifice from the foundation of the world.
- The Bible assures Christians that the gift of forgiveness and eternal life they receive was actually given them in Christ Jesus before the world began.
- The Bible also assures all who come to Christ that God chose them before the foundation of the world.
- All of this places the beginning of Christianity before the world was created.
- All other religions have their origins in human history.

2. CHRISTIANITY WAS FIRST ANNOUNCED IN HISTORY AT THE FALL OF THE HUMAN RACE.

After the first two human beings obeyed the devil and chose to rebel against God, God made a promise to the human race, through His curse on the devil, that someone would come who would be bruised by the devil but Who would deliver a death blow to Satan.

Genesis 3:15 ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

At the cross, Satan bruised the heel of Jesus, but Jesus delivered a deathblow to Satan by his victory over sin and death. Listen to how the writer of Hebrews describes this victory.

Hebrews 2:14-15 ¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, Jesus himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

3. CHRISTIANITY WAS ANTICIPATED AND PREDICTED IN THE HISTORY, INSTITUTIONS, AND THE WRITINGS OF THE DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB.

3.1 Christianity is the fulfillment of God's promises through Moses.

- **Jesus is seed of the woman promised in Genesis 3 who would come and defeat Satan.**

John 12:31-33 ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³ He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

- **Jesus is the prophet who Moses promised would come.**

Deuteronomy 18:18 ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

I understand that Moslems believe that this text refers to Mohammed, but this cannot be so for Mohammed cannot be considered a brother of the sons of Jacob to whom this text is addressed.

Matthew 17:2-5 ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. ³ And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴ And Peter

said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁵ He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

Now that Jesus has come, He speaks for God. His voice has priority over the voice of Moses and voice of the prophets.

- **Jesus is the star of Jacob.**

Numbers 24:17 ¹⁷ I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth.

- **Jesus is the ruler from Judah.**

Genesis 49:10 ¹⁰ The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

- **Jesus is the prophet who would come; He is the star of Jacob; He is the ruler from Judah.**

3.2 Christianity is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – Genesis 12, 15, 17, 22

God made a promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that One of their descendants would be the one in whom all the nations of the world would find blessing for themselves. Jesus is that descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Luke 1:30-33 ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

3.3 Christianity is the fulfillment of God's promise to David, the descendant of Jacob through the tribe of Judah – 2 Samuel 7

- **David was promised a son whose reign and kingdom would have no end.**
- **The NT affirms over and over again that Jesus is the son of David, the Messiah, who is to be the rule of the world (ca. Acts 2, 3).**

Acts 2:29-32 ²⁹ "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to

this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

3.4 Christianity is the fulfillment of the prophets' message about the Messiah.

- **Born of a virgin** **Isaiah 7:14**
- **Born in Bethlehem** **Micah 5:2**
- **A Son of David** **Jeremiah**

Jeremiah 33:20-21 ²⁰ "Thus says the LORD: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, ²¹ then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne,

- **A Priest-King** **Psalms 110**
- **A suffering servant** **Isaiah 53**

Isaiah 53:4-6 ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

- **A sovereign Lord** **Isaiah 9:6-7**

Isaiah 9:6-7 ⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Summary of OT Revelation

- **Moses looked for Jesus as the prophet, priest, and king who would come.**
- **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob looked for Jesus ('he rejoiced to see my day', Jesus said of Abraham).**

- **David looked for Jesus as one who would be his own son, yet at the same time the Son of God (Psalm 2).**
- **All of the prophets looked for Jesus even though they did not fully comprehend how he could be both God and man, King and servant, one who suffers and one who is glorious, the hope of Israel and the hope of the nations.**
- **Christians believe that only Jesus Christ fulfills the expectations and promises of the Old Testament Scriptures.**

4. CHRISTIANITY IS BROUGHT TO ITS FULLEST REVELATION IN THE BIRTH, LIFE, MINISTRY, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST AS RECORDED IN THE NT.

4.1 He was born of a virgin in Bethlehem as the prophets foretold. Matthew 1; Luke 2

4.2 He was recognized by many as the seed of Abraham, the Son of David, who delivers people from their sins. Both angels and humans rejoiced at the birth of Jesus, the Son of God. Luke 2-3

4.3 Jesus is greater than Moses.

- Jesus fulfilled the Law of Moses as the only one who perfectly embodied the obedience that the Law required.
- Jesus introduced the new law of His kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7).
- Jesus brings offers grace and forgiveness to those who are condemned through the failure to obey the law of God.

4.4 Jesus fulfills the institutions of the OT.

- He is the final and only sacrifice that takes away the sins of the world.
- He is the temple in which the holy presence of God is manifested.
- He is the new Israel in whom a new people of God is created. All believers in Jesus Christ regardless of ethnicity become the true people of God.
- Jesus, when asked if he was the one who was promised to come said, "I am He."

4.5 Jesus is God's final message to the world and He is the standard by which all other religious claims are judged.

- God has spoken through His Son (Heb 3:1-3)
- God has provided salvation for the world only through His Son Jesus (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).
- The Gospel is defined clearly (1 Cor 15:1-3)
- To preach any other message apart from the message of God's grace in Jesus deserves judgment (Gal 1:8-9).

IN CLOSING LET ME MAKE 4 OBSERVATIONS ABOUT CHRISTIANITY:

1. Christianity is about Recognizing the glory and grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Christianity is all about what God has done for man in Christ, not about what a man can do for God. Christians are filled with awe and wonder at the grace that God has shown them in Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 1:9-10 ⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

Ephesians 2:4-9 ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved- ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

2. Christianity is about Redemption from sin and its penalty.

At the center of Christianity stands the cross on which Jesus died. One-fourth of the Gospels are dedicated to His Passion and Resurrection. The cross tells us a lot about God. It tells us on one hand that God is holy and just and must punish sin. On the other hand it tells us that God is a God of love and mercy who wants to rescue those who deserve to die. The death of Christ was His willing offering of His life for those who deserve to die. It demonstrates the severe wrath of God against sinners and the intense love of God at the same time. Jesus Christ was the only man in human flesh that did not sin and deserve to die. Because He was also God, the sacrifice of His life has infinite value. The cross of Jesus reveals God's wonderful grace to sinners in that he is willing to withhold from them the judgment they deserve and give freely to them the forgiveness and new life that they do not deserve.

3. Christianity is about Relationship with God and others.

Technically, Christianity is not a religion. Religion is spelled with a two-letter word – DO. It answers the question – how can I earn God's favor? Religion says, “work hard and maybe at the end God will reward you with eternal life.”

Christianity is spelled with a four-letter word – DONE. Christianity says, “trust in Jesus in died and rose again and God will freely give you the gift of eternal life.”

On the basis of His work of saving sinners that Jesus finished on the cross, God invites us into a personal relationship. John 17:3, 1 John 1:1-4

Christians believe they can know God as Father and friend everyday of their lives and for all eternity. We become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

4. Christianity is about Reclaiming all that was lost in the fall.

It is in Jesus Christ that God will bring about the final restoration of all things. He will return and establish His eternal kingdom over all the cosmos and at that time “every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”

The NT invites people of all nations to believe in and follow Jesus as He is revealed in the 66 books of the Bible.

John 3:17-18 ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Thank you for your willingness to hear what Christians believe.