

One minute answers to 40 common questions about Christianity

“What evidence do you have that there is a God?”

There are only three options for the existence of the universe. One, that it has always been. Two, that it came into being by itself. Three, that it was created. The first option (known as the steady state theory –that the universe is eternal) has been thrown out. Scientific evidence has ruled that out. Evidence like the motion of the galaxies, and the background radiation echo all point to the fact that the universe sprung into existence at a particular point in time, something scientists call the Big Bang. I'm sure you've heard of it. Option two is impossible. It would be impossible for the universe to create itself, because before it existed there would have been nothing to do anything. And we all know that nothing cannot do anything. Nothing is literally no thing. It can't see, smell, act, think. It is nothing. So option one and two are thrown out based on scientific and philosophical grounds. Option three, that something outside of the universe actually created the universe, is the only reasonable option. Let's imagine I am holding up a painting. When you see a painting on a wall, what proof do you need to establish the fact that a painter exists? Nothing else besides the painting itself. The painting is absolute proof that there was a painter. You don't need to see the painter to believe that he exists. The painting is all the evidence you need. The painting would not be there if the painter didn't exist. And so it is with God. The existence of the universe itself proves absolutely that there is a creator.

“What about those who've never heard of Jesus? Will they be condemned to hell?”

The Bible says that God is loving, that He's just (fair), and that He's sovereign. It also says that He's not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). If they have never heard of Jesus, the Bible says that God is going to be absolutely fair with them, and that He will judge them based on what they do know through the testimony of creation, and their conscience (Romans 1:20, 2:12-15). If there's a person who would receive Jesus, if only he heard about Him, I personally believe that God, in His love, will send them a missionary, an angel, a Bible, give them a dream, direct them to a website, etc. so that they can know the truth. You have heard the truth. You have heard of Jesus' death on the cross for your sins and God will hold you accountable for what you do with that information.

“If God is so loving, why does He allow evil and suffering?”

That is most common question that people have regarding God. Here's an interesting question for you to consider: What do you propose God should do about it? To stop evil, God would have to stop those who cause the suffering: Adulterers, liars, murderers, criminals, fornicators, etc. Wouldn't that mean you too? Haven't you by your own actions caused some of the suffering that exists in the world? Haven't you hurt somebody's feelings? My friend, God has not destroyed evil because He would have to destroy us. By permitting evil and suffering to continue, God is actually showing the world mercy. The Bible says that there is coming a day when He will stop evil. In the mean time, He is using the suffering that exists for good. It's often times when a person is suffering that they will see their need for God.

“If Christianity is true, why are there so many denominations?”

When it comes to the core, foundational beliefs of Christianity there is great if not universal agreement within the Christian denominations. There are some differences on some of the minor issues, such as what kind of worship music is best, how to govern a church, how a person should be baptized, etc. But when it comes to the deity of Jesus Christ, what His death accomplished on the cross, that He rose again from the dead and is coming back a second time, there is great harmony.

“How can you say that Jesus is the only way to heaven?”

That is what the Bible teaches. Let’s imagine for a moment that you have just hurt my feelings in a terrible way. You said and did some really mean things against me. Would you be able to go to just any person and apologize to them in order to make right our relationship?” The answer is “No.” The same is true with God. He is a personal being. We have grieved Him by the mean things we have said and done. We have sinned against Him. Therefore we must go back to Him in order to have the relationship restored. We must go through Jesus, because He is God. (Here are some verses that speak of only one way to heaven: John 14:6, 1 Timothy 2:5, Acts 4:12, Matthew 7:13, Isaiah 43:11, etc.)

“Doesn’t that seem narrow, that God would only save people through Jesus?”

I don’t see it that way. The Bible portrays God’s offer of salvation as very broad. The Bible says that God loves the whole world (John 3:16, Rom. 5:8) and that He died for the sins of all mankind (1 John. 2:2). God is making His salvation available to people on every continent and the Book of Revelation tells us that in heaven there will be people of every nation, tribe, and tongue (Rev. 17:9)

“What evidence do you have that that the Bible is actually true?”

If I had to narrow down it down to two evidences, I’d probably say fulfilled prophecy, and archaeology. The Bible, unlike any other religious book has demonstrated itself to be the Word of God through it’s ability to rightly predict the future. There are literally hundreds of very specific prophecies that were given hundreds of years before their fulfillment that have already been fulfilled. No other religious book can verify itself in this way. The Bible has also been proven to be a reliable historical document through archaeological discoveries. In fact there have been more than 25,000 archaeological discoveries that have verified the names of persons, places, events, and customs mentioned the Bible.

“How can a loving God send somebody to hell?”

The last thing that God wants is for a person to end up there. The Bible says that God is not willing that any should perish (1 Timothy 2:4). So much so, that He left the glories of heaven in the person of Jesus, and came to the earth to pay the price for our sins through an agonizing death on the cross (John 3:16). If a person ends up in hell it will only be because they have rejected God, who has not only revealed Himself to the world in and through His written Word and His Son, but also through man’s conscience (Romans 2:15), and through testimony of creation (Psalm 19:1-6).

“Doesn’t the Bible have a bunch of contradictions in it?”

Not at all. There are some verses in the Bible that seem to contradict one another, but with a little investigation into the original languages, the context of the various passages, and the cultural and geographical settings in which the Bible was originally written in, they are cleared up.

If a person shares an actual example with you it will be good y to give them a good answer (1 Peter 3:15). If you can't, don't worry. Tell them that you will research it and get back with him. And make sure you do. Some helpful reference books on Bible difficulties are When Critics Ask by Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, and The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties by Gleason Archer.

“How could I ever be happy in heaven, knowing that my loved ones are in hell?”

I understand why you would think that. It is hard to imagine. But maybe one of the reasons God has caused us to cross paths is so that you might turn your heart over to Him and become the instrument He uses to reach your loved ones. He doesn't desire that any go to hell (2 Peter 3:9). He's looking for somebody that He can use to help reach them (Ezek. 22:30). My friend, even if they reject everything you tell them, and end up in Hell, God promises us that in His presence there is “fullness of joy” (Psalm 16:11). He also says that He is going to wipe away every tear from our eyes; and there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain. (Revelation 21:4). If you are concerned about your loved one's that won't be in heaven, the most irrational thing you could do is to remain outside yourself. Give your life to the Lord and allow Him to use you to reach out to them with the Gospel.

“Doesn't the Bible have a bunch of scientific errors in it?”

Not at all. Not only is the Bible free from scientific errors, it miraculously made known numerous, accurate scientific facts about the universe thousands of years before modern scientists caught up. Did you know that Isaiah, in chapter 40:22 declared about 2,600 years ago that the world was round? Did you know that the Hindus used to believe that the earth rested on the back of an elephant, who stood on the back of a turtle that was swimming in a great endless sea? The Greeks, believed that the mythical god Atlas carried the earth on his shoulders. But Job, the author of one of the oldest books in the Bible proclaimed more than 4,000 years ago that which has only been known in the last few centuries, and that is this: the earth hangs on nothing in Job 26:7.

“How do you know that Christianity is true? Maybe Buddhism is true, or Islam, what makes you so sure?”

Well, simply put, Jesus said it was. And He proved that what He taught about God, life, death, sin, heaven and hell was true through (1) His miracles (2) His fulfillment of hundreds of Old Testament prophecies, (3) His sinless life, and (4) His resurrection from the dead. Buddha and Muhammad both admitted their sinfulness, performed no miracles, and both of their bodies are in their tombs to this day. Jesus' grave is empty. He is the only reliable authority on life after death. He conquered death.

“What about homosexuals, do you believe that they go to hell?”

I believe that people of all types will end up in hell, including heterosexuals and homosexuals. The Bible says that anybody who refuses to turn from their sin and receive God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ will end up in hell. Does the Bible teach that homosexuality is a sin? Yes, very clearly (Lev. 18:22, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Romans 1:26-28) but it also says that fornication, lying, stealing, and drunkenness are sins. So, lay aside the whole issue of homosexuality for a moment. Let's imagine that our homosexual friends are heterosexuals. They still have a problem. They have broken a number of God's other commandments. Every person must confess their sins, turn to the Lord, and trust in Christ in order to be saved.

When I talk to a person that is a homosexual, I don't even bring up their sexual orientation. The Bible tells us that the Law was made for homosexuals. In 1 Timothy 1:8-11 we read, “But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for [who's it made for?] the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites [or “homosexuals”-NAS], for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed

God which was committed to my trust.” (NKJV) I use God’s law, the ten commandments when witnessing to a homosexual. If you use the Law when you witness to them you won’t even have to touch on their “sexual orientation,” and therefore be accused of hating homosexuals. The Law will show the homosexual that he is guilty of numerous other sins, despite his sexual preference. When he turns to God, puts his faith in Jesus, and is born again, God will give him a new heart with new desires (Ezekiel 36:25-27, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:22-24).

“How do you know that Jesus rose from the dead?”

Here are a few quick reasons. First, there was the amazing rise of Christianity into being 2,000 years ago, right in the very city where the people demanded Jesus’ crucifixion, and where Jesus was publicly crucified and buried. The best explanation for the sudden birth of Christianity and it’s phenomenal growth is that Jesus really did rise from the dead. Secondly, there were the agonizing deaths that the early Christians were willing to die for testifying that Jesus was alive. Nobody willingly and knowingly dies for a lie. Thirdly, the New Testament says that Jesus rose from the dead, and archaeology and other external sources (Flavius Josephus) have proven it over and over again to be a historically reliable writing. Fourthly, I believe that Jesus is alive because I cried out to him years ago, to forgive me of my sins and be the Lord of my life, and He has radically changed my life.

“What about evolution, hasn’t it disproved God’s existence?”

Not at all. In fact, more and more scientists are acknowledging that life is far too complex to have come about by mere time plus chance. In fact, many are beginning to acknowledge that not even a single cell could have come into being apart from an intelligent maker. It is that complex. Nobel Prize winner Linus Pauling, acknowledged that “one living cell in the human body is, more complex than New York City.” There is a new book out called Icons of Evolution—Science or Myth? by Dr. Jonathan Wells, a scientist who earned his Ph.D in Molecular and Cell Biology from U.C. Berkeley and a second Ph.D from Yale University. In this book he examines the evidence that scientists have held up as evidence for evolution, and exposes how their claims have been exaggerated and even lied about. I’d recommend you give it a read. It is fascinating. But let’s suppose the theory of evolution were true, does that mean there is no God? Not at all. It only explains what happened to life once it arose. It doesn’t explain how the universe came into existence. Certainly a creator was necessary, unless you are willing to believe that the universe came into being by nothing and from nothing...which seems, I must confess, absurd.

“Hasn’t the Bible been changed as it was translated hundreds of times down through the centuries?”

Not at all. The Bible has been translated into hundreds of different languages down through the centuries, you’re right about that. But the text of the Bible has been carefully and accurately preserved. In fact, there exists today more than 24,000 ancient hand written manuscript copies of the Bible, dating back to more than 2,000 years ago, that prove that the Bible we have today is the same Bible the early church had. There are also the writings of the Church fathers, leaders of the early church, who quoted the New Testament in their writings over 86,000 times. Their writings have allowed scholars to reconstruct 99.86% of the New Testament, verifying very conclusively that the original text of the Bible has remained in tact. A good book on this topic of how we got the Bible is Norman Geisler’s book From God to Us—How We Got the Bible. It documents this kind of evidence.

What if rather than asking honest questions, the person had made a bold assertion? There is a difference between the question, “Hasn’t the Bible been changed?” and the assertion, “The Bible has been changed.” When a person makes an assertion, I like to

use a totally different approach. I ask them to substantiate their claims, with one or more of the following questions:

1. *What do you believe?*
2. *Why do you believe that? Or How did you come to that conclusion?*
3. *What kind of evidence do you have that that is true?*
4. *Can you clarify for me what you mean by that?*
5. *Why should I believe that?*

“I don’t think God really exists. I asked Him to do _____ if He really existed and He never did.”

What if I said that I can’t believe in the President of the United States because I invited him to dinner and he didn’t come? Would I be justified in rejecting his existence just because he did not do what I ask him to do? Not at all. The same is true with God. There may have been a hundred good reasons why God did not do what you asked him to.

“If God made everything, as you Christians seem to suggest, then who made God?”

Nobody. The Bible says that He is eternal, and without beginning [Psalm 90:2]. So He didn’t need a maker, or a cause.

“Well, if God doesn’t need a maker, then the universe doesn’t either.”

God doesn’t need a maker, because He has always been. The universe has not always been. An overwhelming amount of evidence [i.e. the motion of the galaxies, the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the background radiation echo] proves that it began to exist a finite time ago. Anything that begins to exist must have a cause or a maker. Can you explain who or what created the universe?

“Can God make a rock so big that He cannot move? Yes or No?”

If I answer “Yes,” you may say then that God must not be omnipotent if He can’t lift a rock that He makes. If I answer “No,” you may say then that God must not be omnipotent because He can’t create something. There is a problem with your question. Your question is like asking someone, “Have you stopped beating your wife yet--Yes or No?” For the person that has not been beating his wife, a simple “Yes” or “No” answer will not do. If he says “Yes,” it implies that he used to beat his wife. If he says “No,” he lies and implies that he is still beating his wife. The same is true with this question. A “Yes” or “No” answer will not work. I will answer your question this way: God, because He is omnipotent, can create any kind of rock that He wants to and because He is omnipotent, can lift any rock that He makes.

“How (or where) did Cain get his wife?”

(This question may be one of the most popular questions that people ask. Here’s the dilemma. The Book of Genesis, in chapter 4, says that Adam and Eve, had three boys, Cain, Abel and Seth. And then it says in Genesis 4:17 that Cain knew his wife and she conceived a child named Enoch. Well, if Adam and Eve were the first people God made,

where in the world did Cain get his wife? This verse has stumped an untold number of Christians. That is likely why it has become so popular.)

The answer is simple. He probably married a sister, or a niece. The three boys mentioned in Genesis 4 were not the only children Adam and Eve had. The very next chapter, Genesis 5:4, says, that Adam and Eve had sons and daughters. You might say, "But didn't God forbid incest?" Not at that time. It was only later, thousands of years later, during the days of Moses after the gene pool had been contaminated by sin, that the Lord forbid incest (see Leviticus 18-20).

"I can't believe in a religion that would do something as awful as the Crusades."

The Crusades, of nearly a thousand years ago, were certainly carried out in the name of Christianity, but the violence that occurred there, was carried out in direct disobedience to teachings of the Bible. Jesus told His disciples to love their enemies (Matt. 5:44). Even as Jesus was being arrested on the eve of His crucifixion, Peter pulled out his sword and struck the ear of one of those involved. Jesus healed this man's ear, and told Peter to put away His sword (John 18:11). God's kingdom was not, nor is it not now to be advanced with violence. Don't let the behavior of so called Christians keep you from receiving God's free gift of eternal life!

"What about the Old Testament, when Joshua and the nation of Israel were commanded by God to go through the land of Canaan and destroy everybody?"

There are at least three things that we need to remember when we consider the story of Joshua [acronym: S.E.A.]. First, God is sovereign over life. He created it and He has the right to do with it as he deems best. If you plant a garden in your backyard, you have the right to do with it as you see fit. You can pluck those plants up whenever you want. Your neighbor doesn't have that right. Why? Those plants do not belong to him. The same is true with God. People belong to God and He can end a life, or lives, whenever and however He thinks best. Secondly, the people of Canaan were guilty of terrible evil. They were burning their children as sacrifices to the god Molech (Lev. 18:21, 24). They were having sexual relations with animals (v.23-24). They hated the Hebrew people and would have destroyed them. This would have prohibited the Messiah, the future Savior for all mankind, from being born into the world, for it was promised that He would be a descendant of Abraham. Thirdly, keep in mind that God patiently allowed the people of Canaan over 400 years to repent (Gen. 15:16-21). Had they repented, like people of Nineveh did, God would have spared them (see Jonah 3, also Jer. 18:7-8).

"Do you think that it's right to try and force your beliefs upon other people?"

Not at all. I do think that it is right to share the good news with people about what Jesus has done for them. It's up to them to decide whether or not to believe. God is a gentleman. He stands at the door and knocks (Rev. 3:20) and waits to be received into a person's life (Jn. 1:12). He doesn't kick doors down, and force Himself into a person's life. He allows them to freely (John 7:17, 5:40, Matt. 22:3) choose this day (Joshua 24:15) whom they will follow.

"Where did the dinosaurs come from?"

The Bible teaches that God made everything that has ever existed in the universe. That would include the stars, planets, animals, fish, people, and all that there is [Exodus 20:11, Genesis 1, John 1:3] including dinosaurs. In fact the Bible even speaks of some creatures that were huge, having tails like Cedar trees! Probably referring to one of the larger dinosaurs that used to roam the earth.

“Didn’t dinosaurs live millions of years before man?”

The Bible actually teaches in Genesis chapter 1 [v.24-31] that God made all the land dwelling creatures, which would have included dinosaurs and the first humans (Adam & Eve), on the sixth day of creation. So, based on the Bible, we believe that man and dinosaurs coexisted at the same time. And there is some good evidence outside of the Bible that this was actually the case. Did you know that archaeologists have actually discovered ancient drawings in caves and on rocks of men and dinosaurs interacting together in Africa and North America? You can see photographs of some of these discoveries on the internet.

“Well, why aren’t dinosaurs mentioned in the Bible?”

First, we wouldn’t expect to see the word dinosaurs mentioned in the Bible because the term wasn’t coined until a famous paleontologist named Sir Richard Owen, gave them that name in 1841—nearly 2,000 years after the New Testament was finished. Second, just because a creature is not mentioned in the Bible does not mean that it did not exist. There are thousands of creatures that are not specifically mentioned in the Bible—giraffes, alligators, penguins—just to name a couple. Thirdly, I would say, the Bible does actually mention two different creatures that very well may have referred to dinosaurs: Behemoth, and Leviathan. Job chapter 40 speaks of a creature named Behemoth who had a tail like a cedar tree!

“How did dinosaurs fit on Noah’s ark?”

That’s a great question. First, keep in mind that the ark described in the Bible was not the 45’ – 50’ model made popular in children’s books. It was extremely large. According to the measurements given in the Bible [Genesis 6:15] it was about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 4-1/2 stories tall (45’)! Secondly, remember that not all dinosaurs were large like Brachiosaurus. Many of them, like Compsognathus, were quite small, even just a few pounds. And, even the biggest dinosaurs come from eggs no larger than footballs. Thirdly, it is likely that Noah took young dinosaurs with him, rather than the older and larger ones. The smaller ones would have been easier to fit in the ark, to feed, and take care of. Fitting the dinosaurs on the ark would have been no problem.

“If dinosaurs were on Noah’s ark, why aren’t they around today?”

The dinosaurs that we discover today encased in sedimentary rock, which interestingly, is rock that has been laid down by water, were killed in the flood talked about in Genesis, chapter 7. As for those dinosaurs that survived the flood, we’re not sure why their offspring did not continue indefinitely. Perhaps they died off for some of the same reasons other creatures have gone extinct. Perhaps they were over hunted. Perhaps an ice age or severe change in the environment, that came after the flood affected the lush vegetation that many of them depended upon for food. We don’t know for sure.

“How did all the races with their different skin colors arise from Noah’s family?”

Very easily. Keep in mind first that there is only one race. The Chinese, the Africans, the Eskimos, the Indians, the Australian aborigine are all homo sapiens. All of these different people groups can successfully interbreed with one another. When it comes to the basic structure of the human body, all of these groups have the same amount of bones, the same organs, etc. The main difference between these different groups is their skin color. But, and this is the second thing to keep in mind; there is really only one skin color: Melanin. Melanin is that brownish pigment that we all have in our skin that protects the skin from the damaging ultraviolet light from the sun. If a person’s body only produces a little melanin, he will have fairer skin. If their body produces a lot of melanin, they will be dark brown. In between are all the lighter shades of brown. God created our bodies with an amazing ability to adapt to their environment. People groups who have long

lived in colder climates (i.e. northern Europe), where there is not much sun, have developed fairer skin. People groups who have lived nearer to the equator (i.e. Africa), where the sun is more intense, have developed darker skin. Why would God design humans with this built in capability? It's important for our survival. If you have too little melanin in your skin (you are fair skinned) and live in a very sunny environment, you will easily burn and develop skin cancer. If you have a great deal of melanin (darker skin), and you live in a country where there is little sunshine (Finland for example), it will be harder for you to get enough vitamin D, which needs sunshine for its production in your body. Having a vitamin D deficiency, can cause bone disorders such as rickets.

“How can God and Jesus be one?”

Jesus did definitely did say that He and His Father were one in John 10:30. What did He mean? Well, in the passage immediately following Jesus' words, it says that the Jews took up stones to stone Him (v.31). And verse 33 tells us why, “The Jews answered Him, saying, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself out to be God.” The Jews were seeking to kill Him for blasphemy, for making Himself out to be God. The Jews understood what Jesus was saying. The Bible teaches that there is one God that eternally exists in three separate, coequal persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When Jesus was saying that He was one with His Father, He wasn't saying that He was the Father. He was saying that He was one with His Father in the sense that He was equal with His Father in nature [something John 5:18 and Hebrews 1:3 affirm], and in power [particularly in His ability to protect His sheep, if you examine the context]. Jesus said elsewhere, “He who as seen Me has seen the Father” [John 14:9]. Jesus was saying that the person who had seen His works, heard His teachings and understood His character had seen a perfectly clear representation of God the Father.

“Why isn't there any historical data from the time Christ was twelve to the time He was thirty when He was teaching as the Messiah? What was He doing?”

We're definitely not told much about Jesus' life during that time. We do know that God sovereignly superintended the writing of the Scriptures to make sure that what He wanted written was actually written. Apparently He decided that it was not necessary for us to know much about Jesus' life as a child or teenager. We do know a little bit about this time. The Gospel writer Luke tells us that after His parents discovered the 12 year old Jesus (Luke 2:42) listening to the teachers in the temple and asking them questions (Luke 2:46) that He went home with them to Nazareth. We know that Jesus grew up in Nazareth because He was known as “Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 2:22); and His followers were called “Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5; Matthew 2:23). We read also in Luke's account that Jesus continued in subjection to Joseph and Mary (2:51) and that he “kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” (Jn. 14:9). So, whatever Jesus was doing, we know that it was pleasing to His Father.

“Why isn't Mary honored more or focused on more in Protestant churches?”

Mary was certainly a great example to believers of faith and obedience but the focus of our faith, trust, adoration and even our prayers are to be on the Lord. Nowhere are we told to honor Mary in the Scriptures, nor any other person who has died and gone to be with the Lord. Jesus is the focus of the Scriptures and was the focus of the first century church. In fact, the words “Jesus” and “Lord” are mentioned over 1,500 times in the New Testament. Contrast this with the fact that there is only one mention of Mary outside of the four Gospel accounts. Paul never mentions her. Peter never mentions her. John doesn't mention her in his epistles or the book of Revelation. James doesn't mention her. Jude doesn't mention her. None of New Testament epistles mention her even once. She is talked about a little bit in the gospels, and then just once in the book of Acts, chapter 1 (v.14). Then she is not mentioned a single time after that. If honoring Mary was something that God desired that we do, He would have told us. But what about when Mary said, “from this time on all generations will count me blessed”? (Luke 1:48). Some use this text to

support the view that we should highly esteem and even pray to Mary. But that's not what she said. She said that people would look back at her and count her, or consider her, blessed. And she was a blessed woman. But the blessings of God are never intended to elevate a person in the minds of others (Lk. 11:27-28). Mary, as blessed by God as she was, was still a human being, even a sinner like all of us (Rom. 3:10, Luke 1:47). Never does Jesus or anyone else in the Bible instruct people to pray to Mary. The Bible tells us over and over to "let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6).

“If Christianity is the way, why don't more people see it?”

First I would remind you that millions upon millions of people down through the ages have come to the conclusion that Christianity is true. But regarding the many who have not, there are at least two reasons. First the love of sin. Secondly the deceiving influence of Satan. First, many people who are told the truth about Christianity and God's offer of salvation purposely close their eyes and ears to what they hear. Jesus said in John 3:20 that "...everyone who does evil [we all do evil, He is speaking of those who live an evil life] hates the light [or the truth] and does not come to the light, [Why?] lest his deeds should be exposed." For many, the thought of giving up their sinful deeds to follow the Lord is too big of a sacrifice. Secondly, 2 Corinthians 4:4 says that Satan "has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel." Satan, through a variety of means (1 Jn. 5:19) has effectively blinded unbelievers even more so to the truth.

“Why does God choose certain people for salvation?”

The answer is found in 1 Peter 1:2 where it says that we "are chosen ["elect" -NKJV] according to the foreknowledge of God." What is foreknowledge? Foreknowledge is God's ability to know everything beforehand. We see that in the fact that over and over, hundreds of times in the Old Testament, God spoke prophetically of future events with absolute certainty. The same was true when it came to men and their salvation. God foresaw before He ever made us how each person would respond when presented with the claims of Christ. According to Peter, He chose those whom He foresaw would respond favorably. I chose Anastasia, to be my wife, because I knew in advance how she was going to respond when I proposed to her. If I had known in advance that she was going to say "No" to my proposal I would have passed over her and chosen someone else. The same is true with God. The chosen, or elect, are chosen "according to the foreknowledge of God." People are not lost in eternity because God did not choose them to be saved. They are lost because they rejected the light of creation, their conscience, and even in many cases the Gospel message itself. God foresaw that they would do this, so in eternity past, He did not choose them.

“If Jesus died for the sins of all mankind, then why aren't all saved?”

This is an excellent question. If Jesus paid for the sins all mankind on the cross, if God's demands of justice have been fully satisfied by Jesus' death; if God's wrath against sin has been appeased or satisfied as 1 John 2:2 makes clear—then why aren't all saved? The answer is because the forgiveness of sins does not occur until a person turns from their sins to the Lord and places their trust in Jesus (Acts 17:30, John 3:16, 1 John 5:12). If a person insists on opposing God and rejecting Him, then what Christ did on the cross for that person will not be applied to them. They will stand before God guilty and their sins will be judged (Revelation 20:12). God is not going to force His salvation upon somebody who does not want it.

“Isn’t there a conflict between the God in the Old Testament, who is often portrayed as cruel, and the God of the New Testament who seems very loving?”

Not at all. The God of the Old Testament is the very same God of the New Testament, “gracious and merciful; slow to anger and great in lovingkindness” (Ps. 145:8). God says in Malachi 3:6, “I am the LORD, I do not change.” Perhaps, the Old Testament contains more stories of God’s judgment against sinners (the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah) than the New Testament, but keep in mind that the Old Testament covers about 4,000 years of history and the New Testament covers less than a hundred years. So we might expect that to be the case. But the God of the New Testament is just as serious about sin as He was in the Old Testament era. The New Testament tells of a terrible time of God’s judgment that is going to come upon the whole earth in the last days (2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 6 -18). And beyond that the New Testament clearly talks about a time when sinners will stand before God to be judged for their sins. Are you ready? You can be.

“Why do some Christians reject the books known as the Apocrypha that are in the Catholic Bible?”

There are numerous reasons why the church today, as well as the early church, reject the apocryphal books as authoritative or divinely inspired. Let me share with you four reasons and if you want to do more research on it, I can give you some additional information. First, the Apocrypha contain numerous teachings that contradict authentic Scripture (praying for the dead, the doctrine of purgatory, the teaching that salvation is available through good works and the giving of alms) Secondly, the Apocrypha contain numerous historical, geographical and chronological errors. Thirdly, Jesus and the Apostles cite the Old Testament nearly 300 times in the pages of the New Testament (referring to it as Scripture), they never quote the Apocrypha as Scripture. Fourthly, the Apocrypha was not formally declared to be authoritative and inspired by the Catholic Church until 1546, and that was largely to counter the teachings of Martin Luther.

“Aren’t there a lot of hypocrites in the church?”

Maybe, but praise the Lord they’re in church. That’s where they’ll be exposed to the Word of God and learn that hypocrisy is wrong. Don’t allow the actions of others to keep you from coming to the Lord. God will deal with them. The Bible says, “each of us [including you] shall give account of himself to God.” (Romans 14:12).

“Will God forgive me? I have done some terribly bad things!”

First Timothy 1:15 says, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Do you think murder and adultery are serious sins? God forgave a man in the Old Testament named David who was guilty of both of those sins. When David repented and threw himself on the mercy of the Lord, God forgave him. You do the same and I can assure you, based on the clear testimony of Scripture, that God will forgive you! Jesus said in John 6:37 “...the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” First John 1:7 says “the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.”