



ANSWERING THE **TOUGH QUESTIONS** ABOUT CHRISTIANITY

WHICH "HOLY BOOK"
IS THE TRUTH?

LESSON #
6

THE LESSON AT A GLANCE

Some may wonder if it matters which god others follow since all religions lead to the same god. They may ask, "Don't they just view god from different perspectives?" As we saw last week, however, the gods worshiped by different religions have significantly different characteristics. If the "holy books" revered by these religions are our sole source of information about the god they worship, which "holy book" contains the truth?

THINK ABOUT THIS

Why should the Bible be considered the Word of God to the exclusion of other "holy books"?

TODAY'S SCRIPTURES

Psalm 22 (All Scripture CSB unless otherwise noted)

THE MAIN IDEA

Why do you believe the Bible is the only Word of God?

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

All world religions have a holy book. How can we tell which one is true?

SCRIPTURE IN CONTEXT

Psalm 22. In this psalm, David cries out to God in despair. He describes his condition with imagery that is foreign to any other Old Testament person in David's era because crucifixion was either not practiced or was not widely known. However, David's "song" accurately prophesies about the crucifixion of Christ, including details that Jesus could not have prearranged.



START HERE

CONVERSATION EXAMPLE

A new neighbor moves in down the street. When you invite her to church, she informs you that she is Hindu. This lesson will help you understand the differences between Christianity and her basic beliefs and how you can start spiritual discussions by asking about her holy book, what it says about how she interacts with her god now, and what it says eternity holds for her.

ADDING CLARITY

We can have confidence the Bible is the inspired Word of God for several reasons, as illustrated in the acronym MAP, developed by Hank Hanegraaff:¹

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- **M**anuscript evidence
- **A**rcheological evidence
- **P**rophetic evidence

Based on this evidence, "holy books" other than the Bible can be rejected as untrue, where they contradict the Bible in their characterization of God. Although some of these books contain valid general observations about mankind, they are not useful for understanding who God is.

GOSPEL FOCUS

Understanding why we believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God and how other "holy books" differ from the Bible can guide our discussions with followers of these religions and equip us to highlight the hope of our beliefs, such as:

- Our assurance of an eternal relationship and fellowship with God through His grace and mercy in Jesus Christ.
- Our belief in God, who loves humanity and is intimately involved in our lives.

¹ Hank Hanegraaff, H. (2023, August 4). "MAPS" to Guide You through Bible Reliability [Review of "MAPS" to Guide You through Bible Reliability]. Equip.org; Christian Research Institute. <https://www.equip.org/articles/bible-reliability-m-a-p-s-to-guide-you-through-bible-reliability/>.



REVIEW AND DISCUSS

1. MANUSCRIPT AND ARCHEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE CONFIRM THE BIBLE IS TEXTUALLY AND HISTORICALLY ACCURATE.

The manuscript evidence for the Bible is enormous (some have estimated there are over 25,000 copies and fragments). Although we don't have the original documents, there are sufficient copies of those "autographs" for us to know what was written in the original documents, either by the number of copies or because of the precise methodologies used by ancient scribes to make copies of the originals.

Recent discoveries, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, have confirmed that the documents used for the present-day translations of the Old Testament are textually accurate. In addition, mounting archeological evidence confirms the Bible's historical accuracy, including recent discoveries of the "mythical" cities of Nineveh and Sodom and the site of the New Testament city of Bethsaida.

DISCUSS

What recent manuscript or archeological discoveries have increased your belief that the Bible is the Word of God? (Possible answers: Various personal responses)

2. THE PROPHETIC ACCURACY OF THE BIBLE CONFIRMS ITS DIVINE AUTHORSHIP.

Although the manuscript and archeological evidence for the Bible are substantial, these facts only prove that:

- We are reading accurate copies of what was originally recorded.
- The Bible records history accurately.

The Bible's prophetic evidence, particularly about Jesus, proves that it has a divine author.

For example, over 350 prophecies in the Old Testament were fulfilled during the life of Jesus. Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, critics and skeptics could conjecture that these prophecies were inserted into the Old Testament after the actual events occurred. Now, we have copies of Old Testament messianic prophecies that predate the birth of Christ. For example, consider these excerpts from Psalm 22:

¹ My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why are you so far from my deliverance and from my words of groaning?



⁷ Everyone who sees me mocks me; they sneer and shake their heads: ⁸ "He relies on the Lord; let him save him; let the Lord rescue him, since he takes pleasure in him."

¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are disjoined; my heart is like wax, melting within me. ¹⁵ My strength is dried up like baked clay; my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You put me into the dust of death. ¹⁶ For dogs have surrounded me; a gang of evildoers has closed in on me; they pierced my hands and my feet. ¹⁷ I can count all my bones; people look and stare at me. ¹⁸ They divided my garments among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing.

Such specific depictions of Jesus' crucifixion can only come from an author who knew the events of the future.

DISCUSS

What OT prophecies can you recall that were fulfilled in the life of Christ? (Possible answers: He would be born in Bethlehem, His sacrifice would heal humankind of sin, etc.)

3. OTHER "HOLY BOOKS" CONTRADICT THE BIBLE.

The table below compares the Bible to the "holy books" of other major religions. As you can see, the Bible is unique in many ways. As Hank Hanegraaft observes,

"The Bible was written over a span of 1500 years by forty different human authors in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek), on hundreds of subjects. And yet there is one consistent, non-contradictory theme that runs through it all: God's redemption of humankind."²

	Bible	Quran/Hadith	Vedas/Upanishads
Facts about the Text(s)			

² Ibid.



Content	Old and New Testament with 66 books	Quran -114 Surahs (chapters) Hadith - depends on sect due to disagreements about reliability of authors; Sunnis - 6 books Shia - 4 books	Four main texts of Vedas + Upanishads
Language	Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek	Arabic	Sanskrit
Age	Genesis orally transmitted several centuries until recorded ~1400 BC; remaining books written between ~1400 BC to 100 AD; compiled into the cannon in the 4th century AD	Quran - Words of God orally transmitted to Mohammed by the angel Gabriel between 610 - 632 AD; recorded by companions of Mohammad (either written or memorized) until compiled after Mohammed's death. Hadith - recordings of words, actions, and the silent approval of Mohammed	Orally transmitted for centuries; recorded between 1500 - 500 BC
Authorship	40 different human authors; some used scribes to record their words	Most Muslims believe that Mohammed's scribes wrote down his words, which became the Quran (Mohammed himself never learned to read or write). Hadith was recorded by various faith leaders; the authority of some is questioned by various Islamic sects	Unknown; compilation attributed to Vyasa
Inspiration	Authors were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write in their own words and style what God wanted them to communicate	Quran communicated to Mohammed from Allah through the angel Gabriel in Mecca and Medina over 23 years until he died. Hadith is not universally adopted as divine revelation	Vedic sages heard the primordial sounds during/after intense meditation



Theme	God's redemption of man	Code of conduct that offers guidance in every walk of life	Hymns, rituals, prayers, and philosophical teachings
Teachings about:			
Person of God	One God; Trinitarian	One God; rejects Christian Trinity as idolatry and polytheistic	Polytheistic
Nature of God	Theistic	Theistic	Pantheistic and Panentheistic
Relationship between God and Creation	God and Creation are separate	God and Creation are separate	God and Creation are one
What About Jesus?	Member of the Trinity; Became human, died, buried, and arose; Means of salvation for mankind	Prophet (not as great as Mohammed); Not God; Didn't die on the cross	Not mentioned
Nature of Man	Born with sin nature; "all have sinned"	Born with natural submission to Allah (fitra); this knowledge is obscured and deeply buried because of neglect and forgetfulness; must "resubmit" after recalling this knowledge	Man (Atman) is God (Brahman); ignorance of this reality is the source of all suffering
Mode of Salvation	Gift of God through Jesus' sacrifice	Works-based; Human beings should struggle to defeat their weaknesses, control their urges, and gain mastery over themselves ("greater jihad"). Only by gaining mastery over the self can one be in meaningful submission to God.	Works-based; elimination of consequences resulting from bad behavior (bad karma) through the cycle of birth called samsara (i.e., reincarnation)



Goal of Salvation	Assured of fellowship with God now and in eternity in glorified bodies	Place in Paradise where all human desires are met. Several levels in heaven - which level is not assured; depends on the degree of submission to Allah	Moksha, the release or liberation from the cycle of birth/death; occurs when detachment from the feelings and perceptions tied to the world leads to the realization of the ultimate unity of things—the soul (Atman) being absorbed into the universal (Brahman).
Religious Practices	Accept Jesus as Savior and Lord; Obedience to the Holy Spirit	5 Pillars of Islam: <u>Shahada</u> : to declare one's faith in God and belief in Mohammed <u>Salat</u> : to pray five times a day toward Mecca <u>Zakat</u> : to give to those in need <u>Sawm</u> : to fast during Ramadan <u>Haji</u> : pilgrimage to Mecca at least once if the person is able	Religious ceremonies and rituals Practicing Dharma: Duty Ethics Righteousness
Prophecy	Numerous examples of prophetic proclamations that accurately predicted future events	Statements in the Quran claimed by Muslims to be prophetic include: The Quran is easy to memorize: "And in truth We have made the Quran easy to remember; who, then, is willing to take it to heart?" (Quran 54:17) The defeat of the Romans within 10 years (Quran 30:2-5) The deaths of critics of the Quran Pollution - "Corruption has spread on land and sea because of what men's hands have wrought" (30:42) Modern Communication Systems - "And when various people are brought together." (81:8) Air Traffic Systems - "And by the heaven full of tracks" (51:8)	No prediction of specific events provided; general observations about the natural outcomes of human behaviors



DISCUSS

Based on the contents of the holy books, what would you say to someone who claims all religions lead to the same God? (Possible answers: Various personal responses)

REFLECT ON THE LESSON

How much we truly believe the Bible is the Word of God is demonstrated by how much we use it to discover and follow God's will for our lives.

DISCUSS

How If we read/listen to news every day that we know contains falsehoods, how much more should we become informed daily about the Bible that we know is completely true? (Possible answers: Various personal responses)

RESPOND

What is your plan to meditate on God's Word more?

APPLY

List names of people you know who believe a holy book other than the Bible provides truth.

Think about how you might respond to questions they might ask and study those topics, so you are prepared to share God's truth with them.

Seek God's guidance in prayer and seek opportunities to start spiritual conversations with them.

LOOKING TO NEXT WEEK...

HOW CAN YOU CLAIM THE BIBLE IS INERRANT, INFALLIBLE, AND GOD-BREATHED WITH ALL THE ERRORS AND CONTRADICTIONS IT CONTAINS?