

The Case for Christianity



The Christadelphians

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The Case for Christianity

This booklet presents the Case for Christianity by looking at four things:

- ❖ **The Bible as the Word of God.**
- ❖ **The Key Message of the Bible**
- ❖ **Jesus Christ – the Founder of Christianity.**
- ❖ **Why you should believe in Jesus**

The Case for Christianity

What a Choice!

In a consumer society choice is everything. Advertisers thrive on promoting one product over another and customers can be faced with a real dilemma over what to choose. But should it be like that with religion?

Every year we seem to hear about more new religions. Christianity was once the dominant religion in the UK, but no longer. The latest UK census, in 2001, gave no fewer than 51 alternative religions to Christianity from which people could choose. Faced with so many different choices, with all the different products claiming to be “the truth”, it’s no wonder that people are confused. Some are so bewildered, they give up trying altogether, preferring to ignore the whole issue. But they are doing themselves a huge disservice, for they are missing out on the most vital thing in life.

Despite the huge choice of soap powders or breakfast cereals, people don’t ignore all the products. They want to have clean clothes and they need something to eat. So they weigh up the brands on offer; read what’s on the packet, or study the packaging; and then make a choice. Whether or not they made a wise purchase will be established in time.

It’s the same with the really important things in life – like finding true peace of mind. It can be a difficult choice – knowing what is right and what is wrong – but the claims of quite different products have to be looked at if you want to find something that can change your life. Ignore religion altogether and you will never find out the truth about life after death or the future of the world.

Not everybody sees it in quite those clear-cut terms of course. Some people decide there’s something good in every religion; others make up their own by mixing ideas from different ones. Some claim – *“As long as I believe in something, that’s what counts”*. Others – *“It doesn’t really matter what I believe”*, or *“As long as I live a good life, that’s the main thing”*. The danger with all this is that we might be deluding ourselves. It might be convenient to have a “Do-it-yourself” approach to the big things in life; but is it Right? That’s the key question – ‘Is it Fiction or is it Fact?’

Why Christianity?

Faced with a multitude of religions today, how can we find God? Where do we find the truth? Which religion is right? That’s what this booklet is about. It doesn’t try to compare religions and it doesn’t criticise what other people believe.

So let’s examine the *CASE FOR CHRISTIANITY*.



The Bible – The Word of God

The Bible has some impressive statistics.

- ❖ It covers a historical period of approximately 4000 years;
- ❖ It was written by about 20 writers, in 3 different languages;
- ❖ The writers came from all walks of life – fisherman, doctor, farmer, shepherd, king and tentmaker;
- ❖ It is a library of 66 books with a total of 1190 chapters;
- ❖ It includes many literary styles, for instance: poetry, prose and letters.

The most impressive fact about the Bible is that it is the Word of God. Time and again it claims that authority for itself. Here's one example:

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

You may be wondering how the Bible could be written by some 20 writers, over such a long period of time, but could still be the inspired Word of God as well. The answer is that the Bible tells us that it is a message from God which was recorded by men, in such a way that what they wrote down wasn't the product of their own thinking – what they wrote was from God. This is how one writer explained what happened:

“You must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20,21).

That wasn't just a New Testament happening because Old Testament prophets felt just the same about the words they were inspired to record. One of them, who wrote many of the Psalms, looked back over his life and commented:

“The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue” (King David in 2 Samuel 23:2).

Those descriptions of people who were driven to record a message from God could be multiplied, but you will have got the point already. In the Bible we have the very Word of God, recorded for us so that we can learn about Him and His purpose with mankind. Since it is God's Word, the Bible is of supreme importance. This is why it is the foundation for Christian belief.

How about some Proof?

So far all we've looked at is what the Bible claims but, as any shopper knows, claims are easy. *“The proof of the pudding is in the eating!”* In fact there is a Bible proverb

that was written years before that one, which carries the same force, for one Bible writer urged his readers: *“Taste and see that the LORD is good” (Psalm 34:8)*. He was suggesting that if we try living with God we will soon find out that it is a better way to live in a satisfying and fulfilling way.

But nobody is going to make that decision until they have seen the evidence to suggest it might be a safe move. So many people have tried to rubbish the Bible that you may now be unaware of the really solid reasons that exist for believing it as the Word of God. We'll look at some of them now, starting with one of the most remarkable – the Bible's remarkable ability to accurately foretell the future.

Bible Prophecy

For years people have tried to predict the future, but to no avail. We are incapable of knowing what will happen from one day to the next. Occasionally, the media shines a spotlight on someone who seems to be able to see into the future, only to discover that it was a hoax! No, the future is beyond the grasp of mankind.

So how do we explain the hundreds of prophecies made in the Bible which have been precisely fulfilled many years after they were made? How is it that the Bible has been able successfully to predict the future over and over again? It is because the God of the Bible knows what the future holds, and His Word carries that inbuilt seal of approval. God once said just that through the prophet Isaiah:

“I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please” (Isaiah 46:9,10).

The fulfilled prophecies of the Bible not only prove to us that God is the only true God, but also that the Bible is his inspired Word. Let's look at some examples:

Prophecies about Jesus

It is taken for granted nowadays that the Old Testament was written before the New Testament and the birth of Christ. People who said that it was “wise after the event” and who claimed that the predictions about the coming of Jesus were written after he had been born had to eat their words”. For when the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered in a cave near Qumran, in 1947, it was clear that all their prophecies were written well before they were fulfilled.

So what were they? Among other things, the Old Testament predicted that Jesus would be:

- ❖ The Son of God
- ❖ A Jew (of the tribe of Judah)
- ❖ A descendant of Abraham and King David



- ❖ Born in Bethlehem
- ❖ Born of a virgin
- ❖ A miracle-worker (the Old Testament even describes some of his miracles).



As if that was not remarkable enough, there are Old Testament prophecies about his suffering, death and resurrection. Here, for example, is an extract from Isaiah chapter 53 which tells how Jesus was to be rejected and persecuted by men before he died, and how he would react to those pressures:

“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken” (Isaiah 53:4-8).

The death of the Lord Jesus was such an important element in God’s plan of salvation that it is often anticipated and described in advance, sometimes in graphic detail. The intention was that people should recognise their Messiah when Jesus came to fulfil all that the Scriptures had foretold. So a prophetic portrait was given which described crucifixion even before it was invented:

“Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing” (Psalm 22:16-18).

“They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst” (Psalm 69:21).

Nor is it just the death of Jesus; his resurrection from the dead is also predicted. We read of the way in which the prophet Jonah was swallowed by a great fish and was in its belly for three days and three nights before the fish spat him out. Jesus remarked about this prophecy:

“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40).

It was precisely like that – for after three days and three nights Jesus rose from the dead. It was the same with all of these prophecies about Jesus, made in the Old Testament. They were fulfilled exactly as the events had been foretold and we can see

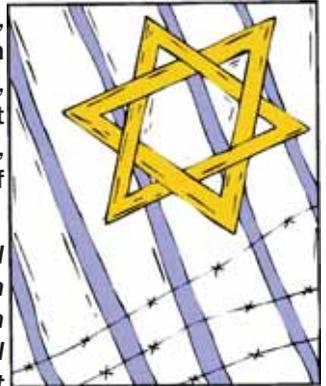
this for ourselves, simply by reading the New Testament record.

Other Prophecies

Of course, all those events happened a long time ago. But what about things that have only been fulfilled more recently, within the last fifty years or so? There are some extravagant claims that have been made – about the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin, or the names of many Jewish Rabbis being hidden in code within the Bible. Those sensationalist claims, which require sophisticated computer programs to decipher, and very debatable skip sequences, can easily obscure far more obvious fulfillments of Bible prophecy.

After nearly 2000 years without a land and dispersed all over the world the nation of Israel has returned, against all odds, as a nation reborn. Their return from world exile was often predicted by the prophets of God, and here is just one example, to give you a flavour of what was to happen. Having seen a valley full of dry bones, which was said to represent Israel's dire situation, cut off from God, the prophet Ezekiel made this prediction:

“This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD” (Ezekiel 37:12-14).



The last century saw the start of the fulfilment of this prophecy. When the independent State of Israel was established in 1948, Jews began to flood back to their new-found land. Since then Israel and its people have often featured in the headlines, but not always happily. Their experiences in other lands were often difficult. And when the Jews returned to their land they faced much opposition from their neighbours and that hostility continues today – just as the Bible said it would. In that respect everything is on track to bring the whole of world affairs back under Divine control.

For a King is coming to rule the world from Jerusalem – the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God's appointed King who was not accepted by the Jewish nation when he lived on earth – only by some individual Jews. He has promised to return to rescue Israel from trouble and to reign on earth for God. But the Lord Jesus could not return, as the Bible predicted he would, until there were Jews back in Jerusalem. For 2000 years that looked unlikely; now it is an everyday reality.

A Challenge

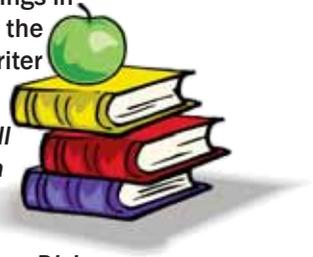
In the Book of Isaiah, the Bible throws down the gauntlet to other religions. It says this:

“Present your case,” says the LORD. “Set forth your arguments,” says Jacob’s King. Bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods” (Isaiah 41:21-23).

Only the Bible has this God-given ability to forecast the future with unerring accuracy. Not only do the “gods” of other religions prove unable to meet this challenge. The books of other religions fail as well. None of them foretell the future. By making these accurate and detailed predictions years ahead of their fulfilment, the Bible has justified its claim to be the Word of God.

Ancient Book – Modern Message

Notice that we are relating to a library of books that are at least 1900 years, and some of them very much older, and that we are finding things in them which have something to say to us today. In fact the very age of the Bible confirms it as God’s Word. One writer said:

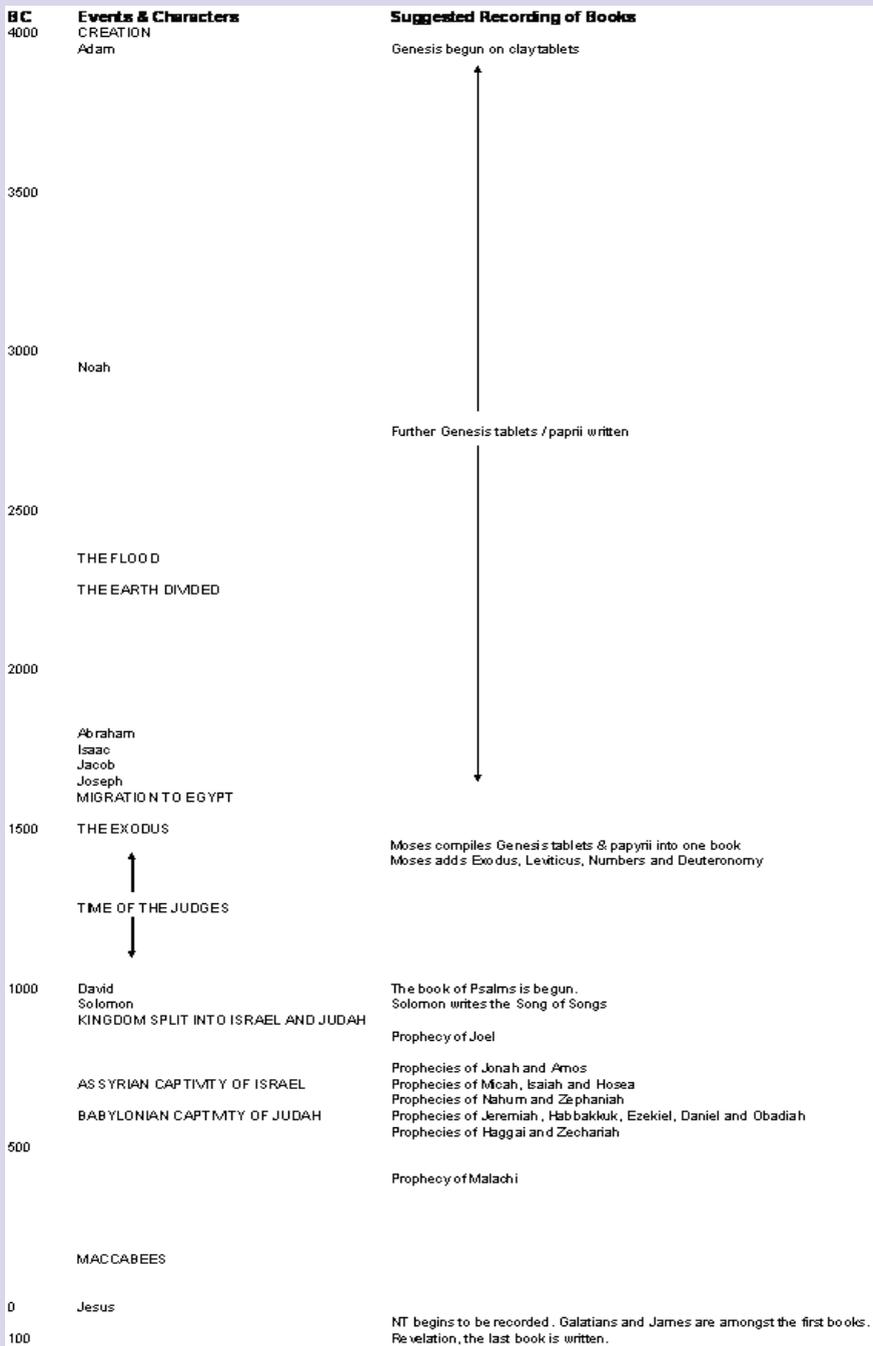


“Books are like men – dying creatures. A very small percentage of books survive more than twenty years, a yet smaller percentage last a hundred years and only a very insignificant fraction represent those that have lived a thousand years” (AW Pink: “The Divine Inspiration of the Bible”).

So the very fact that the Bible, the most ancient of books, has survived and can be found on bookshelves throughout the world is itself a remarkable testimony to its truth. Just think of the spread of time during which it was written – the different political and social circumstances, the many writers and suchlike, and you realise what a remarkable revelation from God the Bible really is. The Old Testament is the very foundation of the Christian message: the New Testament is the structure built upon that foundation. You need both Testaments to see the whole plan and purpose of God. As someone once said:

“The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.”

The following plan shows the history of how the Bible was compiled.



God's Time Line

During all these years God was communicating with mankind – getting His message across, calling out people who would believe in Him to be His people, schooling a nation to be His witnesses to all nations, eventually sending His Son to rescue the situation for all of us – Jews and non-Jews alike.

People once sneered at these ancient records, saying they were all myth and folklore – tales told around the campfire which became vastly exaggerated in the telling. But as more ancient records came to light and as it was realised that written records were common in ancient times, it has become more widely accepted that everything in the Bible is grounded in fact.

It seems very likely that the earliest parts of the first book of the Bible, **Genesis**, were originally written on clay tablets in approximately 4000 B.C. Then, over the next 2000 years, more was written chronicling the lives of the Patriarchs (or fathers). It seems that these ancient records were passed down through the generations until approximately 1400 B.C., when Moses compiled them into the book of Genesis at the same time that he wrote the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.



Together they comprised the “**Pentateuch**” – the five books of the law – which Moses passed to Joshua. This was subsequently transmitted to later generations. Over the years more books were added until, in about 430 B.C., Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament was written.

The **New Testament** began to be written in about 50 A.D. and took much less time to finish. It is thought that the last book, Revelation, was written no later than 100 A.D.

A quick calculation tells us that in total it took approximately 4000 years for the Bible to be written, and its oldest part, the Book of Genesis, is some 6000 years old!

Remarkably Preserved

How many opportunities there would have been for this compilation of messages from God to be lost along the way! A fire here, a flood there, and much of the basis upon which Christianity now rests could have been lost forever. But God marvellously preserved it, so that the New Testament writer could cover the whole sweep of God's revealed message in these words:

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son”
(Hebrews 1:1).

What makes this even more remarkable is that, over the centuries, the Bible has been hated and castigated more than any other book. Numerous attempts have been made to destroy it.

In Bible times, when King Josiah came to the throne, God's Word had been so

badly neglected that they could not find a copy of the law. It was only when Hilkiah the priest found a rare copy in the temple that they were able to read it once again.

Some years later, King Jehoiakim showed disdain for God's Word by burning the words that had been written by the prophet Jeremiah.

When Christianity began in the first century AD, the Romans tried to extinguish the Bible. In 303 A.D. one Roman leader named Diocletian thought that he had succeeded. To celebrate, he ordered a medal to be made inscribed with the words, *"The Christian religion is destroyed and the worship of the gods restored"*. That's what he thought; but he was quite wrong, of course!

Centuries after this Pope Gregory IX continued the persecution. The Bible had begun to be translated into other languages from the Latin Vulgate. This meant that people would be able to read it for themselves rather than being taught by the church priests. Fearing that the church would lose its power he ordered translations of the Bible to be burned and any people involved in the work of translation to be imprisoned, tortured or even put to death.

Despite all these efforts to exterminate it, the Bible has not only emerged unscathed. Today it can be read in its entirety in nearly 400 languages; it is the best-selling book of all time and tens of millions of Bibles are still sold every year.

How is it that the oldest book in existence has survived intact through such opposition and is so widely available today? It is because God has preserved it – it is His Word and He will not let it be destroyed. As one New Testament writer said:

"All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you" (1Peter 1:24-25).

Trial Run

Our final piece of evidence that the Bible is the Word of God is something you can try for yourself. Just read some of it for yourself! What you will find is that it is a Book written from God's perspective, not from man's.

Fictional works very often place a hero at the centre of the story, the author painting his hero in a favourable light. The bias is intentional to make the readers love the hero. So we can read war stories where the heroes are victorious, or rescue missions where, through bravery, people are saved; or love stories where the characters are perfect for each other. Much of literature has this so-called "feel good factor" centred on its characters.

Non-fiction writing gives a more balanced viewpoint – a good historian will not succumb to "artistic licence" but just state the facts. However, even the best historians cannot resist being slightly biased. For instance, the Jewish historian, Josephus, chronicled the life of that nation during Bible times and beyond. In his works he tended to concentrate on the positive aspects of the nation's history and "swept under the



carpet” whatever was unfavourable. It’s understandable why he should have done that, although we often try to cancel out such bias once we know it to exist.

The Bible, however, is not like this. It makes no attempt to paint an unrealistic picture of mankind; rather, God tells it as He sees it. For instance, rather than promoting mankind, God talks of its depravity:

“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9);

its folly:

“For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight” (1Corinthians 3:19);

and its limitations:

“You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man’s life is but a breath” (Psalm 39:5).

The Bible does not glorify man; quite the opposite. It does not seek to build mankind up, as do other books; rather it tells us what God really thinks of mankind:

“All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one” (Romans 3:12).

God says these things because He wants us to realise that by ourselves we are nothing: we have to rely on Him. He teaches us that if we humbly come to Him, recognising our failings, then He will help us.

Salvation from Destruction

This is why we all need to consider the case for Christianity. Once we have realised how critical our position is before God, we will find that we need the help that only God can give. We need to be rescued from sin; from ourselves; from the death trap that threatens to close around us forever.

The way in which God helps us is through His son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:16,17).

Jesus is the hero of the Bible, the central character. All its message centres on him. The Old Testament anticipated his coming; the New Testament describes what happened then, and explains why he had to live on earth, die to redeem us, and rise again to save us from ourselves. How different Jesus is to the heroes men write about! He saved people, not by physical strength, but by humbly being led away to die on the cross. He did not resist his aggressors, but willingly accepted his death. It is when we read the Bible and compare it to other writings, that we see that a man could not have written it. It is beyond man’s imagination. The author can only be God Himself.

The Key Message of the Bible

We've spent a lot of time considering how the Bible can be shown to be the Word of God and there's a very good reason for that. The Bible is the 'Case for Christianity'. Once you are persuaded that it is true, and find time to read it for yourself – which is absolutely crucial – you will be presented with the best possible reasons for believing that you should be a Christian yourself. We are quite sure of that because it is what has happened to all of us who were once unbelievers and who now follow Jesus in our lives.

Looking at what the Bible says about man – including its truthfulness and honesty of approach about the human condition – we have already seen that things are tricky. Without God we are all in trouble and what you find when you work your way through the Bible is that it has been like this from very early times, ever since something went radically wrong on earth.

You will only have to read a few chapters into early Genesis to discover the first murder (when Cain killed Abel); the first armed thug (his name was Tubal-Cain); the first worldwide outbreak of violence (that resulted in the Flood); the first famine (in Abraham's day, which required him to journey to Egypt for food) and the first war (in which several kings launched an offensive against Sodom and took a lot of captives, who were subsequently rescued).

As you can see from that potted review, the Bible is action-packed, but it is much more than a compelling read. It gives us a diagnosis of why things are so bad, and a prescription for what can be done to get a cure – both individually and internationally.

Death Threat

Within the first three chapters of Genesis we find out what went wrong and why. God had created Adam and Eve who lived in the Garden of Eden and they were told that they could eat of the fruit of all the trees of the garden except for one:

“You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die” (Genesis 2:17)

Adam and Eve broke this commandment, and that was how the first sin – an act of disobedience to God – was committed. Then God told Adam what his punishment would be:

“By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return” (Genesis 3:19).

It was as a result of this act of sin that death came



into the world and it has tracked the path of every man and woman ever since. All have sinned and therefore all have died. Read Genesis chapter 4 and you will pick up the refrain, for after every person named comes the statement “*and then he died*”; or “*he was no more*”.

That’s our predicament. As the New Testament sums the situation up: “*the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23). Even with all the advances in medicine made over the last century, it has been impossible to reverse the ageing and dying process. It is the greatest of all our problems and we cannot make it go away. Death comes because of our sins and we can’t do anything about it by ourselves.

It is one of the fundamental principles of Christianity that it is only God who can help us with these problems. The Bible teaches that, when we recognise our own inability to help ourselves and come to him and ask for help, He is only too willing to help us. In fact, God wants to help us so much that He sent His only begotten Son and allowed him to die for us (John 3:16).

The death of Jesus was God’s way of providing for our sins to be forgiven. Jesus died so that all those who believe in him as their Saviour, and who are baptised into his saving name, may have a hope of eternal life.

True Christianity

Most of this is common ground for people who follow the Lord Jesus. But you need to be aware that the Bible, like any other book, can be misinterpreted so that truth and half-truth get mixed up together. That’s why you must read the Bible for yourself to be sure that you are basing your Christianity on God’s revealed truth, not on human speculation or misinformation.

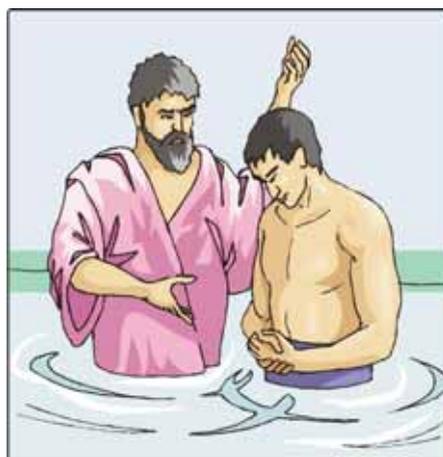
As Christadelphians – ‘brothers and sisters in Christ’ – we understand the Bible to promise that:

- ❖ God will put things right for us as individuals when we believe the things that have to do with the name and person of the Lord Jesus, and
- ❖ understand about the coming kingdom of God, and
- ❖ are baptised by immersion into the Lord Jesus.

The clear prototype for this first century faith is in the Book of Acts:

“When they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).

The “good news of the kingdom of God” is that such people will be given everlasting life when Jesus returns to establish the



Kingdom of God on earth. In this coming kingdom, all of the world's present problems will be solved.

❑ **No more death...**

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

❑ **No more war or violence...**

He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. (Isaiah 2:4).

❑ **No more famine...**

"Let grain abound throughout the land; on the tops of the hills may it sway. Let its fruit flourish like Lebanon; let it thrive like the grass of the field" (Psalm 72:16);

"In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water" (Joel 3:18).

When Jesus reigns from Jerusalem as God's anointed King, he will solve all of the problems which have troubled mankind since the beginning. This belief is a unique feature of true Christianity. Other religions teach that we can save the world by the good things we do, but the Bible says that God can only help us if we will let him. It is not what we do to change the world but what He can do for us for us that crucially matters:

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

Throughout the centuries there have been good men and women on the earth who have worked hard to try to make the earth a better place in which to live. Yet for all their altruism, we have still failed to solve our fundamental problems. The only logical option is to let God help us. Christianity is the only religion that makes sense because Christ is the person who overcame in himself, and he can overcome all our problems too. We have to follow his lead, for there is no-one like him.

Jesus Christ – The Founder of Christianity

In his book *“Christianity is Christ”*, the writer W H Griffiths-Thomas, sums up his message in these words: *“Christ is essential, Christ is fundamental, Christ is all”*. Without doubt the most important character in the Bible is Jesus Christ, and it is from him that “Christianity” takes its name. He is its founder. But what is it that makes Jesus any different to other religious leaders? How is he special?

Son of God

Although Jesus was born to a woman called Mary, he was not conceived in the usual way. Instead, it was by God’s power that Mary became pregnant and so it was that Jesus was born “the Son of God”. He was unique in that he was the only one ever to have been born in that way.

As children today inherit some characteristics from their parents, so did Jesus from his Father. In fact the Bible tells us that Jesus had a character that became just like God’s. John’s gospel records that as Jesus grew and matured as a man people saw in him a reflection of God’s character. It says that:

“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” (John 1:14)

The Letter to the Hebrews says that Jesus is *“the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Hebrews 1:3)*. He lived such a totally obedient and faithful life that he could say to his disciples: *“Anyone who has seen me has seen the father”*. (John 14:9).

By this Jesus did not mean that he was God, but that his personality and character were a true reflection of his Father’s. He had lived in perfect conformity to His Father’s will. As the Son of God, Jesus Christ is totally unique. There was nobody like him before, and there will never be anybody like again. And this likeness to his Father is hugely helpful to us. God’s mind is infinitely superior to ours and it is impossible for us fully to comprehend him. No wonder the apostle Paul once said, with a trace of wonderment in his words:

“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?” (Romans 11:33,34)

But because Jesus lived on earth, in circumstances with which we can identify, we can begin to know God by learning about his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the image of his Father. The Apostle Paul may have wondered at the impossibility of fathoming the mind of God; yet he could gratefully acknowledge that: *“we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16)*.

This makes Jesus a very important person for us if we wish to know God and want

to develop a relationship with him. For as Jesus himself said:

"This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

Son of Man

We can identify with Jesus because although he was born the Son of God, he was also the son of Mary and therefore quite like us. It was from his mother's side that he inherited human nature, and all its attendant problems. Give a little thought to what is meant by this, for it is vitally important, and this is something that people often overlook, perhaps because of their preconceptions.

We know ourselves and our inbuilt instincts and desires and we have already noted that mankind has been the same throughout history – selfish and strong minded through and through. When God introduced law into the world, even though it was only a small limitation, Adam rebelled against it and did his own thing. We can't blame him of course because ever since then we have done much the same thing ourselves. We think of something, we want to do it, we do it. Sad to say, it's as easy as that!

The Letter of James describes it simply, in these terms:

"Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:14-15).



You may think it surprising, but the Bible is crystal clear that Jesus shared this very nature. He too was tempted to follow his own desires instead of those of God. In fact, Jesus was tempted in every conceivable way. The Letter to the Hebrews tells us that he: *"...has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin" (4:15).*

The difference between Jesus and us is to be found in those last few words. Although Jesus was tempted, just as we are he never succumbed to his temptations and so *"was without sin"*. That Jesus was human like us is very comforting. It means that he understands our experiences and especially what it feels like when we are tempted to disobey God. It makes him approachable when things go wrong in our lives: *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses" (4:15).*

A Role Model

It is because Jesus is both the Son of God and the Son of man that he is so unique. He has a divine character and yet is able to understand human emotion. He now sits in heaven, and yet he once walked on earth. Through him, God has revealed Himself in a way we can understand. Because Jesus never once sinned during his life, as the leader of Christianity, he is the perfect role model for his followers.

Let's look at some examples of the way he conducted himself.

❑ **Obedience**

In every thing that he did, Jesus was obedient to God. Even when God required him to die on the cross, Jesus said: "...yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42);

❑ **Forgiveness**

As Jesus was being crucified, he prayed to God that he might forgive the people who were killing him: "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*" (Luke 23:34). That really was love in action, and what an insight it gives us into the compassion and love of God Himself.

❑ **Compassion**

During his ministry Jesus was compassionate to those who were sick or lame, blind or deaf. On many occasions he used the power God had given him to heal them: "*When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick*" (Matthew 14:14).

❑ **Patience**

Jesus always had time for people. He never turned away anyone in need. For instance: "Little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, "*Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these*" (Matthew 19:13,14).

❑ **Peacefulness**

Jesus never used violence against people during his ministry. He once said: "*The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them*" (Luke 9:56 KJV).

❑ **Principles**

Although he was peaceful, Jesus always stuck to his principles. He would not turn a blind eye to wrong doing. For example, on one occasion:

"Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. 'It is written,' he said to them, 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers'" (Matthew 21:12,13).

These examples give only a brief insight into the character and conduct of Jesus – a sort of snapshot portrait. There are many other instances in the gospels which portray the dignity and grace with which he behaved. No other religious leader, past or present, has so sincerely and consistently demonstrated such godly principles.

Imagine what a place the world would be if everybody lived like this! Jesus' great example is another special aspect of Christianity.

Why You Should Believe in Jesus

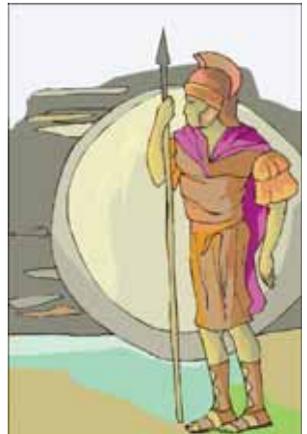
So far we have reviewed the evidence for the Bible as the inspired Word of God; looked at a key message that it teaches – about the Lord Jesus Christ and the coming Kingdom of God – and thought a little about the sort of person that Jesus is, as both Son of God and Son of Man. All these are compelling reasons why you should believe in Jesus for he is the lifeline God has provided to get us out of the mess we are all in, left to ourselves.

Jesus is now in heaven, at the right hand of God. For although Jesus died – publicly and cruelly, on the cross – he was raised from the dead by God and was exalted to glory. That is something that Bible writers gladly proclaim, because it is the very foundation of their hope in life after death and of their entrance into God's Kingdom:

"This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:24);

"Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel ..." (2 Timothy 2:8)

Having been raised from the dead Jesus was granted immortality by God and ascended to be with his Father in heaven. These facts are the cornerstone of Christianity. Christ's resurrection is important because it is the guarantee of a future resurrection for all believers. When Jesus returns to the earth he will raise the dead and grant faithful believers eternal life in God's kingdom on earth. The Apostle Paul shows how the resurrection of Jesus and his disciples are linked. He likens the whole process to a harvest, in which Jesus was the first of the crop to be harvested, and his believers will follow at Christ's coming.



"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him" (1Corinthians 15:20-23).

This is the Bible's great message of hope concerning life after death. But how can the resurrection of Jesus be proved? How can we be sure it happened? We will answer this as we consider the final section in the case for Christianity.

Proof of the Resurrection

The evidence that Jesus rose from the dead is absolutely compelling. Let's consider it step by step –

- ❑ **3 days after Jesus was buried his tomb was discovered empty and his body was nowhere to be found. His enemies were unable to satisfactorily explain the disappearance.**

- ❑ **Following this, hundreds of people saw him alive. The Apostle Paul wrote:**

"... 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. 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. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born" (1Corinthians 15:4-8).

- ❑ **Seeing Jesus alive radically changed the lives of his disciples. They went from being sad, afraid and doubtful following Jesus' death to being overjoyed, bold and faithful on seeing him alive. Brimming with confidence, they went out and preached Jesus' resurrection to others.**

"When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

- ❑ **The disciples' conviction made it clearly obvious that their claims to have seen Jesus alive were true. They were so determined to tell other people about Jesus' resurrection that they endured persecution and even death for the cause. The effect of the disciples' preaching was dramatic. Thousands of people believed them about Jesus' resurrection and it changed their lives too.**

"Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day" (Acts 2:41);

"Many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand" (Acts 4:4).

- ❑ **Amongst the people who believed were many Jews. Previously the Jews had hated Jesus and had insisted to the Romans that he be put to death. However, on hearing the disciples thousands of Jews changed their minds about Jesus and became Christians. Such a change of heart can only have happened if his resurrection was a proven fact. They were eyewitnesses of the events that had taken place and they were able to check the facts out for themselves.**

- ❑ **Two thousand years later there are still many faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. They believe exactly the same Bible truths as the disciples of the first century.**

Their faith is based firmly on a belief that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and is alive today.

"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" (1Corinthians 15:3-4).

- **Jesus' resurrection makes Christianity unique. No other world religion claims that its founder came back from the dead and is alive today in heaven. It is proof of God's power and shows the uniqueness of his son, Jesus Christ.**

"... the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 1:4).

The Logical Choice

Although there are so many religions in the world today, choosing the right one need not be difficult. The most important thing is to base your faith on facts.

We cannot find God by making him up from our own imagination. We must form our beliefs in a logical and reasoned way.

This booklet has shown that Christianity is a religion that makes sense because:

- ➔ It is based on the Bible - the undisputable Word of God.
- ➔ The Bible is the only way to find out about God.
- ➔ The Message of the Bible is the solution to all of our problems.
- ➔ Jesus Christ is the perfect leader. He is someone worth following.

It is a fundamental teaching of Christianity that God wants us to learn about Him and come into a loving relationship with Him. So finding God need not be difficult because He wants us to find Him!

To help us God has given us His Word - the Bible, and sent His Son so that we might learn more about Him. He has also given us minds to think and make decisions with.

God has given us all of the things we need to find Him. Life is rather like walking into a workshop and finding all the tools and materials there to make anything you can think of. The question is "What will you make of you life?" Everybody has to start by looking at what the Bible has to say; there is no other way and we can help you with that. Send for the Bible Reading Planner and start to check these things out in more detail. If you do this you will soon realise that you are making the right choice.

Remember, the Bible *is* the Case for Christianity.

"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).



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