

Does Truth Exist?

Before asking whether God exists, whether the Bible is reliable, or whether Jesus rose from the dead, we need a foundation: truth is real, contradictions matter, and human beings can know at least some things about reality.

We depend on truth in nearly every important area of life. We want accurate diagnoses from doctors, honest evidence in court, reliable information about money, and truthfulness in relationships. False beliefs can affect health, safety, freedom, and trust. Yet when morality or religion enters the conversation, people sometimes change the rules: "That may be true for you, but it is not true for me."

If religious claims concern God, human purpose, morality, death, and eternity, then truth matters here at least as much as it does anywhere else. The central question is not whether a belief is comforting, traditional, or sincerely held. It is whether that belief corresponds to reality.

THE FOUNDATION

If truth does not exist, asking whether Christianity is true is meaningless. If truth exists but cannot be known, apologetics is impossible. If objective truth exists and can be discovered, religious claims can be investigated.

What Is Truth?

A simple definition is: truth is agreement with fact or reality. A statement is true when it accurately describes what is real. If someone says, "There is a tree outside the window," the statement is true if a tree is actually there. Belief does not create the tree, and disbelief cannot make it disappear.

This is often called the correspondence view of truth. It recognizes a distinction between our minds and the world our minds are trying to understand. Our beliefs may be accurate or mistaken; reality is the standard by which they are tested.

Truth does not become true because we believe it, and it does not become false because we reject it.

Human beings discover truths that existed before we recognized them. Gravity did not begin working when it was scientifically described. The shape of the Earth did not change when people developed a more accurate understanding of it. Our knowledge changed; reality did not. Discovering truth is not the same as creating truth.

Belief and Sincerity Do Not Determine Reality

A person can sincerely believe something false. Confidence may reveal how strongly a belief is held, but it does not guarantee that the belief is accurate. A million people can believe a falsehood, while one person believes the truth. Popularity and sincerity concern the people holding a claim; truth concerns whether the claim matches reality.

The same standard applies to every worldview. Christianity is not true merely because Christians believe it. Islam is not true merely because Muslims believe it. Atheism is not true merely because an atheist believes no God exists. Each worldview makes claims that must be evaluated.

Truth Is Exclusive, but People Need Not Be Hostile

Every truth claim excludes its direct contradiction. “God exists” and “God does not exist” cannot both be true in the same sense at the same time. “Jesus rose bodily from the dead” and “Jesus did not rise bodily from the dead” cannot both describe the same event accurately.

This does not mean one person knows everything, that all questions are simple, or that disagreement justifies disrespect. It means contradictions cannot be solved by declaring both sides equally true. Different religions may share moral insights or historical connections, but where their central claims conflict, at least one claim is mistaken.

A USEFUL DISTINCTION

Respect for people does not require treating contradictory ideas as equally true. We can defend a claim firmly while treating the person who disagrees with dignity.

The Roadrunner Test: When a Claim Defeats Itself

Some skeptical statements collapse when applied to themselves. Like a cartoon character who runs off a cliff and then realizes there is nothing beneath him, the claim removes the ground on which it is standing.

- “There is no truth.” Is that statement supposed to be true? If so, at least one truth exists, and the statement is false.
- “No one can know anything with certainty.” Does the speaker know that with certainty? The claim presents itself as the kind of knowledge it denies.
- “All truth is relative.” Is that only relatively true, or is it meant as a universal truth about all truth?

These responses do not prove that we know everything. They show that total skepticism cannot be maintained consistently. If someone is skeptical about every claim, that skepticism must also be applied to skepticism itself.

Limited Knowledge Is Still Real Knowledge

Human knowledge is limited and fallible, but limited knowledge is not the same as no knowledge. A person does not need to know everything about gravity to know that stepping from a roof is dangerous. We may not know every detail of a historical event while still knowing that it occurred.

Different conclusions carry different levels of confidence. Some are certain by definition or direct demonstration. Others are accepted because evidence makes them highly probable or establishes them beyond a reasonable doubt. Responsible thinking does not demand impossible certainty before acting; it matches confidence to the quality of the evidence.



The Foundations of Reason

Reasoning relies on basic principles that we necessarily use whenever we argue. The law of noncontradiction says that opposite claims cannot both be true in the same sense at the same time. If one spouse says, “We are expecting a child,” and the other says, “We are not,” we do not treat both statements as equally accurate. We look for a misunderstanding because we already recognize that both cannot be true together.

The law of excluded middle says a proposition is either true or false: either God exists or God does not; either Jesus rose or He did not. These laws do not tell us which option is true. They provide the stable framework within which evidence can be examined.

Logic also distinguishes an argument's structure from the truth of its premises. A conclusion may follow validly from two premises even if one premise is false. Sound reasoning therefore requires both a valid connection between premises and conclusion, and premises that accurately reflect reality.

REASON AND EVIDENCE

Logic asks whether the conclusion follows → evidence asks whether the premises are true. Strong arguments need both.

How We Discover Truth

Deductive reasoning begins with premises and draws a conclusion that follows from them. If all humans are mortal and Socrates is human, then Socrates is mortal. If the premises are true and the form is valid, the conclusion must be true.

Inductive reasoning moves from observations toward a general conclusion. We observe that objects consistently fall, that human beings die, or that certain causes regularly produce certain effects. Most induction does not provide absolute certainty because we have not observed every possible case. It can still justify conclusions beyond a reasonable doubt.

Much of ordinary life, science, and history depends on this kind of inference. The important question is not whether a conclusion leaves any imaginable doubt, but whether it best explains the evidence available.

Can Truth About God Be Known?

Some thinkers have tried to limit meaningful knowledge to what can be verified through the senses or what is true by definition. But the rule "only empirically verifiable claims are meaningful" is not itself empirically verifiable. It is a philosophical statement, not an observation made through sight, hearing, touch, taste, or smell. Used as an absolute rule, it excludes itself.

A related form of skepticism says we can never know reality itself because our minds interpret all experience. Our perspective certainly can be incomplete or mistaken. Yet the sweeping claim "no one can know reality" claims to know something about reality and about the limits of every human mind. Again, the claim reaches farther than its own standard allows.

We also believe in many realities we do not see directly. We do not see gravity itself, but infer it from consistent effects. We do not see another person's mind, but infer it from meaningful speech and purposeful action. In the same way, the question about God is whether observable features of reality - its existence, order, intelligibility, moral experience, and history - provide grounds for inferring a transcendent cause.

The Blind Men and the Elephant

A familiar parable describes blind men touching different parts of an elephant. One feels the leg and calls it a tree; another feels the trunk and calls it a snake; another feels the side and calls it a wall. The story is often used to suggest that religions possess different pieces of a reality too large for anyone to understand.

The parable teaches humility, but it does not show that every description is equally true. The narrator can identify each man's mistake only because the narrator knows the whole elephant from a broader perspective. The story assumes an objective reality and an observer who recognizes it more accurately. Each man encountered some evidence but mistook a partial interpretation for the whole truth.

WHAT THE PARABLE REALLY SHOWS

Incomplete perspective can produce error. The answer is not to surrender the search for truth, but to gather more evidence, compare explanations, and remain humble about what we know.

How Should Religious Claims Be Evaluated?

Every religion and worldview should be represented accurately and examined by fair standards. The goal is not mockery, and sincerity should not be questioned without reason. Instead, ask what the worldview's central claims are, where those claims come from, what evidence supports them, whether the claims are internally consistent, and whether they can be independently investigated.

- Clarify the claim. What exactly is being asserted?
- Test for coherence. Does the claim contradict itself or another central belief?
- Examine the evidence. What would we expect to observe if the claim were true?
- Compare explanations. Which account explains the most evidence with the fewest serious difficulties?
- Apply the standard consistently. Do not demand proof from one worldview while excusing unsupported claims in another.

Christianity places a historical event at the center of its message: Jesus of Nazareth died and afterward appeared alive. The apostles did not describe the Resurrection as a private spiritual insight. They proclaimed encounters with the same Jesus who had been crucified, and Paul listed appearances to individuals and groups. Those claims require careful historical study; their public form does not automatically prove them.

What is unusual is Christianity's openness about the consequences. Paul does not treat the Resurrection as an inspiring symbol that remains useful whether or not it happened. He says that if Christ was not raised, Christian faith is futile. Christianity therefore identifies the event on which it stands or falls.

Truth Demands More Than Casual Consideration

We have good reason to affirm that truth describes reality, that contradictions cannot all be true, and that human beings can possess real knowledge even when it is limited. Religious claims should not be accepted simply because they are comforting, inherited, or sincerely believed. They should be examined carefully and fairly.

THE QUESTION MOVING FORWARD

Christianity ultimately directs us to Jesus Christ and the claim that He rose from the dead. If that claim is false, Christianity loses its foundation. If it is true, it changes everything. What best explains the evidence?