

HOW CAN I BE SURE ABOUT JESUS?

“How can you be sure that Jesus really was who he claimed?” is a very important question. Following Jesus can be hard and require great sacrifice. The twentieth century saw more martyrs than the previous nineteen put together. How can we come to a depth of conviction about the trustworthiness of Jesus that would cause us to give our life to him, or even for him?

Clearly it's important to be intellectually convinced that Christianity is a true description of reality. Faith can never be, as one child put it, “believing what you know isn't true”. We must be confident that Jesus is authentic, that he rose from the dead and that the Bible is the revealed word of God, pointing to eternal life. Intellectual confidence will never equate to 100% proof, as finite beings we'll never know everything let alone understand it all. However we need to be satisfied that the evidence we have points to the truth of Jesus and the Bible. This means we'll have to think hard and honestly face and address questions and doubts. By openly addressing our doubts we'll either uncover false beliefs or find answers that build our confidence. Deep conviction can never rest on the foundation of buried and suppressed doubts.

However, our intellect alone will never give us deep assurance of the truth of the Christian faith. Real conviction requires an act of the will. It's not enough to simply believe that Jesus really was God-made-man who made possible reconciliation with God. We need to choose to embrace that truth with all its implications for our life. If we're unwilling to embrace the implications of following Jesus, then we're very unlikely to concede that Christianity is true. Here's how Aldous Huxley put it:

I had reasons for not wanting the world to have a meaning; consequently I assumed it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. Most ignorance is vincible ignorance [in other words we can overcome it]. We don't know because we don't want to know. It is our will that decides how and upon what subjects we shall use our intelligence. Those who detect no meaning in the world generally do so because... it suits their books that the world should be meaningless.

Christianity is about entering into an intimate relationship with God, a relationship which requires deep commitment. It's one thing to know about God, altogether another to know him, and still another to bring your life into line with his. Deep spiritual conviction of the reality of a loving God comes as we open our heart to him and allow him to reveal himself to us on his terms.

God will knock at the door of our heart but he won't batter it down. It's our willingness to love God and submit ourselves to him that governs our experience of the reality of God. We need to honestly ask whether we want to live with God and his blueprint for life. Deep conviction flows from an encounter with the living God. Are we willing to seek him and ask him to make himself real to us?