

Jesus is the ONLY way

Who is Jesus Christ? This is the question that I have been trying to answer through the devotional series I've been going through with our team. I picked this theme because I found that the majority of people don't know the answer to this question or don't care because they assume Jesus was a mythological character who either never really existed or has simply been the beneficiary of legend. This however does not match the evidence. As a result, I have tried to use this devotional series to explain what the Biblical view of who Jesus Christ is, and also present just a small portion of the evidence and logic that supports these claims. I obviously can't go through the entire series again today, but the transcripts to all of the devotionals can be found on our website (www.cgygfellowship.com).

In my first three devotionals I provided three answers to the question of who Jesus is. In the first devotional I talked about the fact that Jesus is God. One misconception I hear when I talk to people about Jesus is that he never really claimed to be God. Nothing can be further from the truth because he made direct claims to being nothing less than God in human form and people understood that this was his claim. His disciples made claims that Jesus was God, and his enemies executed him because of these claims. The reality is the vast majority of scholars, Christian and non-Christian alike do not debate whether or not Jesus lived 2000 years ago, they mainly debate whether or not his claim to deity is true.

In the second devotional I indicated that Jesus is Holy; that he cannot commit or approve of evil. Because God is perfectly moral, He will not tolerate anything immoral in His presence. This essentially means the presence of anyone who has had any magnitude of sin in their lives ranging from a stray thought of anger to premeditated murder. For God to accept sin would mean He would no longer be Holy. It's like oil and water, Holiness and sin cannot mix and if we wish to have a relationship with God, we must be nothing less than perfectly moral right down to our very thoughts (something we are incapable of accomplishing). I also indicated that God is Just and demands that sin be punished. That a God who allowed injustice and sin to go unpunished would cease to be a moral and just God. For that reason, the Bible indicates that we are all to face judgment and pay the penalty of our immoral nature. No amount of perceived good in our lives can ever outweigh the sin in our lives and save us from this punishment of death.

Finally in the last devotional I talked about the fact that Jesus is our risen Saviour. That although God requires us to be perfectly Holy and requires that all crimes be paid for through the punishment of sin, He loves us so much that He gave us a method to be saved: The death and resurrection of His son Jesus Christ. That anybody who asked God for forgiveness and mercy and believed in the redeeming actions of His Son would be saved. Since Jesus is fully God and fully human and absolutely Holy and morally perfect, he was the only one worthy to take on the sins of the world and satisfy God's need for Justice. His death and resurrection provided us with a way back to God and a pardon for our sins.

Today, I would like to cover one more aspect of who Jesus is; that Jesus isn't simply one Saviour or one method to be saved, but the ONLY way to God and the ONLY way to avoid the punishment of an eternal death for our sin.

Many people will call Christians arrogant and too exclusive for believing they are the only caretakers of the truth. Our society prides itself on its religious pluralism. It's the belief that all faith leads to the same place and that everybody is heading towards heaven. As long as you have some sort of faith, or live a good life, you're set for an eternity in paradise. Now everybody has the right to believe what he or she wishes; it's a personal decision, but that doesn't mean everybody is right. The problem is that this view that all faith leads to heaven is inherently flawed. It requires that truth be relative, a topic that I tackled in my second devotional. Truth is absolute, whether I believe it or you believe it. If there is no absolute truth, then there is no truth at all. In this case, the claim that all beliefs are true is automatically contradicted when somebody denies that statement. While many will object to Christianity by claiming it is too exclusive, the reality is all beliefs, even the belief that all faiths are true, are ultimately exclusive at their core. That is simply because truth by definition is exclusive.

Another point to keep in mind is that Christianity is not the only faith that claims to have an exclusive hold on the truth about God, and yet it is the faith that is most frequently attacked for this reason. Here's what Ravi Zacharias said on this topic:

The truth is that every major religion in the world claims exclusivity, and every major religion in the world has a point of exclusion. Hinduism, for example, is often represented as being the most tolerant and accepting of other faiths. That is just not true. All Hindus believe in two fundamental, uncompromising doctrines—The Law of Karma, and the belief in reincarnation. These will not be surrendered. In fact, Buddhism was born out of the rejection of two other very dogmatic claims of Hinduism. Buddha rejected the authority of the vedas and the caste system of Hinduism. The issue here is not who was right or wrong. The truth is that they were systemically different—both claiming rightness. Islam, as you know, is very clearly an exclusive claim to God. A Muslim will never tell you that it doesn't matter what you believe or that all religions are true.

So with that in mind and everybody claiming to know the truth, how can we possibly distinguish truth from fiction? The answer is to evaluate the logic of the beliefs and the supporting evidence towards their claims to the truth. As I indicated in my first devotional, Jesus claimed to be God. In comparison, neither Buddha, Confucius, nor Mohammed ever made such a claim. Still, a claim to being God is not sufficient proof in itself. Jesus spoke with the authority of God: He forgave sins, controlled nature, healed the sick, and even raised the dead in plain sight of many witnesses. His critics could only call him a demon to explain what they saw. Jesus also lived a perfectly sinless life, something no other person could ever truthfully claim. Finally, Jesus himself died on the cross and rose from the dead three days later and was seen by over 500 different witnesses over a period of 40 days. If you believe this is fiction or the result of legend, look at the evidence yourself from both Biblical and non-Biblical sources.

I remember reading about a debate held in front of a crowd of 8000 people a number of years ago. It was also being broadcasted over 100 radio stations at the time. The debate was between a Christian Apologist and the national spokesman for American Atheists Inc. The crowd not only came to realize that Christianity was not simply a blind faith that could stand up to rational analysis and scrutiny, but that the arguments for atheism could be systematically dismantled. After that debate, 47 people who entered as unbelievers claimed to have exited as Christians and 82% of the atheists, agnostics, and skeptics admitted the case for Christianity had been stronger than the case for Atheism. In comparison, nobody claimed to have become an atheist because of that debate.

My point is not to say that there is overwhelming evidence to prove without a shadow of doubt that Jesus was who he claimed to be. That simply isn't the case. As much evidence as there is, faith is still required to believe. My point is that it is wrong to assume that there is no evidence, or that the evidence is the product of wishful thinking. With an open mind, study the evidence behind Christianity, study the evidence behind any other religion or belief system and you will see what a difference there is.

Finally, one last point I'd like to make about this belief that Christians are arrogant and exclusive for believing Jesus is the only way to God is the fact that these beliefs are not of our own invention. They came from Jesus himself. In **John 14:6**:

⁶*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

In John 8:23-24, Jesus says:

²³*But he continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins."*

Jesus didn't claim to be one of many legitimate paths to God, but the only way. He quite clearly indicates that all other paths lead to eternal death. This point is further stressed in other passages.

Acts 4:12:

¹²*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*

1 Timothy 2:5:

⁵*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*

Christians are simply relaying what Jesus taught. To ignore this aspect of Jesus' teaching in order to satisfy others would be hypocritical. Christians don't have the right to simply pick and choose what we want to believe from the Bible. To do that would make our faith useless. It would be a form of idolatry where we simply create the God we want to see by placing only the aspects of God's character we like mixed with a few of our own thoughts in a little box that we have full control over. How is that any different than carving out a wooden idol and then bowing before it in worship as so many people have done? Instead, Christians worship a God who we know is infinitely greater than we are, and gives us wisdom to live our lives to the fullest in a way most satisfying as He intended.

John MacArthur, a well known American pastor, author, and radio host once said that there are only two religions in the world: Human attainment and divine accomplishment. All non-Christian religions in the world trust to some degree in human merit for salvation. It is a belief that we are capable of earning Heaven through good works and a life well lived. Christianity on the other hand understands that we have fallen short of God's demands and can never do enough to earn that right. Christianity understands that the only way to find eternal life is to accept the path God has graciously provided for us, faith that Jesus has once and for all paid the price for our sins through his death and resurrection. That is divine accomplishment. It's by God's grace and mercy through Christ alone that we are saved. Instead of thinking it is unfair that there is only one way to God, we should be thankful that God through His love has provided a way at all. We need to remember that all of us without exception have lived lives of rebellion against God because of our own selfish desires. That is the essence of sin. God's perfect sense of justice requires that sin be punished, but God's incredible love provided us with a method to be forgiven and redeemed.

John 3:36:

³⁶Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

1 Peter 3:18:

¹⁸For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit

Take the time to consider what it is you believe. If you're a skeptic, look at the evidence with an open mind. There are many resources to show you that the Christian faith isn't blind. If you still don't understand aspects of the Christian faith and wish to understand, seek answers. There are many people here who will do their best to help you find those answers. Finally, if you claim to know Christ as your Saviour, you have a responsibility to know what it is you believe by reading God's Word and taking it to heart. Strive to grow closer to Him by reading what He has to say to us and by living the life He calls us to live.