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Is Jesus the Only Way to God?

One of the big stumbling blocks for unbelievers is the doctrine that faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to God. "How can you Christians be so arrogant and narrow minded? Aren't all the different religious groups - Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Mormons, Buddhists - experiencing the same God but explaining Him in different ways and with different names? After all, all religions are basically the same?"

Josh McDowell says that the problem with this statement is the assumption that all these people are experiencing the same God, and this is not and cannot be true. Christianity and Islam cannot both be true at the same time, nor Christianity and Hinduism, Mormonism, Buddhism, or Christian Science. All religions cannot be true at the same time, because they teach many things completely opposite from one another. They all may be wrong (as atheists and secularists insist), but certainly they all cannot be true..

The first question is whether Jesus actually claimed to be the only way to God. Only a few days before He was to be crucified, Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me."* He said that one day He would return on the clouds of glory and that the Father had turned over the judgment of all men to Him. He claimed 17 times in the Book of John that He pre-existed with the Father before time began, and that He came for the express purpose of dying for our sins to provide a way to conquer our sins and go to Heaven. Etc.

Do all religions teach the same thing about God? Buddhism is agnostic about the existence of God. Basically, it prescribes a way to die to all desire in order to escape the pain of life in order to arrive at a state of bliss. The reason Buddhism is so attractive to those in the New Age is because one can be a Buddhist and not believe in God, or sin, or salvation, or an eternal judgment. Does that sound compatible with Christianity?

Hinduism believes that there are 330 million gods. Their temples are filled with idols representing different gods. I recently saw a documentary on PBS about little 12 and 13-year-old girls who had been sold by their impoverished families and dedicated to a life as temple-prostitutes in order to serve one of the Hindu gods. The

caste system in Hinduism relegates over 300 million Dalits, "untouchables," to a life of degradation and slavery. But the doctrine of reincarnation insists that this miserable life is what they deserve because of their sins in their former lives. Reincarnation is a doctrine of salvation by works. Does this sound like the same God (one God) that Christians worship?

Mormons also believe in thousands or millions of gods. Every Mormon man will eventually be the god of his own planet. The God of this planet used to be a man, Jesus Christ, who was married to Mary and Martha and Mary Magdalene. Lucifer was Jesus' brother. The Holy Spirit is an influence, not a person. Mormons reject all orthodox Christians and consider them apostate from the true religion revealed by Joseph Smith.

Allah, the god of the Muslims, is not a god of love for all people, but only for Muslims, and the Koran states, regarding anyone who leaves the religion of Islam, "Kill him!" The way to salvation is through works: praying five times a day, making pilgrimage to Mecca, giving alms to the poor, observing a fast during Ramadan, etc. No follower of Islam can ever be sure he has done enough to earn Paradise. Many Muslims are taught that the only sure way to Paradise is by becoming a martyr, and that jihad must be waged against all infidels.

You can see that the world religions are all the same, except for their teaching about God, man, sin, salvation, judgment, the afterlife, etc.

Lee Strobel says that man is innately religious. Atheists and secularists are never going to be able to quench man's hunger for God because there is an inner knowing about God in the hearts of all men (see Romans 1:20-21). Man is sinful and self-destructive, as we all know by observation as well as by personal experience. We can't live up to our own standards. We know we should be better, but our good intentions and resolutions fall to the ground. We need help. We need a Savior. And He has come, once for all! "There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."

No other great religious leader claimed to be the way to God. If you take Buddha or Mohammed out of their religions, their religion could go on. But if you take Jesus Christ out of Christianity, there would be no Christianity. Jesus did not just tell us the way to God,

He said He was the way to God: faith in Jesus, obedience to Jesus, love for Jesus. An aged man, Simeon, was in the temple on the day Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus in to be dedicated. He took Jesus in his arms and said, "Now I can depart in peace, for I have seen your salvation." Salvation is not a doctrine, it is a person, Jesus Christ. And there is no room for arrogance on our part since we receive His salvation as a gift.

We do not, or at least we should not, judge people in other religions or no religion. We are not to judge. But we are to bear witness that God has opened the way for all men to come to Him through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, who died for the sins of the world.

ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

This past weekend I prayed for a lady whose husband had just been given notice that his job was being terminated. She was literally trembling with fear. I prayed with her, encouraged her to trust God, and told her to resist fear with all her strength. This is a very scary time, and we must encourage one another. The Bible teaches that words have the power of death and life. Please take this seriously! To encourage is literally to give someone the gift of courage: to give hope or confidence, to help, to hearten - which means to give courage to their hearts. To discourage is to rob someone of courage: to make weak and helpless.

When the 12 spies came back from the land of Canaan, 10 of them had discouraging words about the giants in the land. The whole troop - two or three million people - listened to those discouraging words and gave up. God was not pleased! In fact, the Bible says that God was angry at the people for not trusting Him, and that He sentenced them to wander around in the wilderness for 40 years until everyone in that generation died. (Deut. 1:34) **Fear in the Bible is equated with unbelief, and it displeases God mightily! In other words, fear is sin, and we must repent of it, resist it, and choose to believe God!**

It is important for us as leaders, bosses, pastors, fathers or mothers, to encourage one another. We must remind one another of who God is, that He is in control, that He loves us, and that He can be trusted.

- *"I am sending Tychicus to you that he may know your circumstances and encourage your hearts." (Col. 4:8)*
- *"Encourage one another, and edify one another, just as you are doing." (1 Thess. 5:11)*
- *"Blessed is the man you teach, O Lord, that you may give him power to keep himself calm in*

days of adversity." (Psalm 94:12-13)

THE PATIENCE OF JOB

It is traditionally taught that Job was a righteous and perfect man whom God tested with severe calamities, and that poor old Job exhibited great faith and patience while God was beating him to pieces. Art Mathias gives us some different insights: (Art has one of the best teaching ministries on inner healing and deliverance that I have found. I highly recommend his material: Wellspring Ministries of Alaska.)

In Job 1 and 2, Job is called "*a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil.*" Job was a good man who loved God and hated evil. He was well respected by his peers. He was a leader in his community, a good father and husband, and also a very wealthy man. All this was true, but you never know what lies hidden in a man's heart until he experiences the pressure of great loss and suffering. Job was attacked by Satan, not by God! In rapid order he lost all of his riches, his seven sons and three daughters were killed by a wind storm, he was stricken with boils from head to foot, he lost his reputation as a godly man among his peers and was scorned and ridiculed, and his wife turned against him and told him he should curse God and die. (Other than that, things were going well.)

Let's be clear: God is good, kind, and faithful. He is a covenant-keeping God, so why did He remove His protection from Job? The only possibility is that in some fashion Job had sinned. Job had broken his covenant with God. Only God knew his heart, but it is obvious that Job had much sin hidden in his heart. The words that come out of a person's mouth reveal what is in his heart, and when the pressure came Job sinned in terrible ways by the words that he said. Jesus said, "*Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.*" (Mt. 12:34)

Consider some things about Job that are very different from the things we normally are taught, and you will perceive self-pity, bitterness, complaining, fear, depression, despair, wishing to die, self-righteousness, and much blaming of God.

- Chapter 1 says that Job's children did a lot of partying (feasting and drinking), and Job continually offered burnt offerings for them for fear they were sinning and cursing God. Chapter 3 says that what Job greatly feared came upon him. Was this one of his fears? Fear is a sin and indicates a lack of faith in God.
- When pressure came on Job, **he cursed himself or cursed the day he was born 17 times.** "Let the day perish in which I was born," "Let that day be darkness," etc.
- **Job falsely accused, belittled, or cursed God**

in 74 different ways. "You don't pardon my transgressions, He multiplies my wounds without cause, He destroys the righteous with the wicked, You oppress and despise me, He has given the earth to the wicked, You will not forgive me, You hunt me as a fierce lion, He hates me, He has done all this for no injustice in my hands, There is no justice from Him, He has counted me as one of His enemies, He has afflicted me, You are cruel to me, etc, etc, etc. **Seventy four times!**

God does not directly answer Job's questions. God never answers us when we ask "Why?" But starting in Chapter 38 God asked Job 35 questions about creation: *"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? When I put the earth and sea in place, When I put the sun and stars in the heavens? When I created snow and hail and rain and light and winds and seasons and lightning? Etc"* Job could not answer any of these questions; neither can you or I. Then the Lord asks Job about things on the earth, things about leviathan (Satan) and Job could not answer any of those questions either.

Art says, "Who are we to question God? I am amazed that I could ever question Him in any way, but I have. I have blamed Him and reproved Him and questioned Him in my pride and arrogance. We are just like Job - - in our pride and self-righteousness. We have blamed God for what we, or Satan, did."

While three of Job's false friends blamed him (in ways that were not true) for the calamities that came upon him, Chapters 32 through 37 contain God's answers to life through Elihu, who points out to Job how he had been falsely accusing God and defending his own righteousness. Elihu is a messenger from God. He defends God's character. Elihu teaches that God loves and cares for each person that He created. He does not respect persons, nor will He spare us the consequences of our choices (and the things hidden in our hearts), because he wants us to mature and desires fellowship with each of us.

You can order Art's complete teaching on Job from his website.

MINISTRY

Next month I am going to drive to Los Angeles to work with Clayton Gollither's ministry, Hope for Homeless Youth; fly from LAX to Mexico to work with Pepe Quiroz' ministry, Alfa & Omega; fly from Mexico City to Leticia, Colombia, then go by boat on the Amazon to a city in Brazil and work with Jaime Useche's ministry in teaching a gathering of 600 pastors. (It is a blessing that an old codger, 82 years old, can still do these things. And the remarkable thing is that I am as strong and good looking as I was 40 years ago and my shoes have not worn out! Well, I exaggerated the part about the shoes.)

The other amazing aspect of this ministry is that I could not afford these trips except that God supplies time after time through the generosity of some of you. For instance, on this trip the flights and hotels will cost about \$2,000. I am having printed 2000 copies of my book in Spanish at a cost of \$3,650 to give to the pastors in this conference and one in October. And I got an e-mail from Jaime, as follows: "Pastor Glenn I have an urgent request about the pastor conference. Many of those pastors from Brazil and Peru come far away by the Amazon River 7 to 12 hours and I still need 1000 dollars to help them with gas and food because in this area is the first pastors conference that most of them will attend. Etc" I am going to do this, and it thrills me to pieces to be able to help these humble servants of God in this way. If you want to help me do this, it will be appreciated. And your shoes will last a really long time.

God Bless,

Glenn

Web-site: www.glennbrownministries.com

<p>I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry. If any of you want to receive tax credit for your financial contributions, you may send them to: CANYON VIEW VINEYARD CHURCH 736 24 ½ Road Grand Junction, Co. 81505</p>
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