

## The Uniqueness of Jesus

In our world that is shaped by postmodernist philosophers, there has been a shift away from the idea of truth. The popular thought is that truth is whatever you want it to be. Your truth works for you and my truth works for me. People simply define truth by what is convenient for them. If they were archers they would fire off their arrow, and then go paint a bull's eye around where it landed, and then shout "I hit my target dead center". Robin Hood would lose to these guys. It seems to me that in the same way they shoot arrows they define truth by saying, "I am going to live however I see fit and then call my experience truth."

I believe the world today has confused truth with taste. One person prefers the color blue while another likes green—that is taste. One person likes Pepsi better than Coke, and that is taste. You can choose to drive home on the Tollroad or Central Expressway, those are all a matter of preference or taste. Nevertheless, there are certain truths that are not a matter of choice or taste, like  $2+2$  always equals 4. You may want it to be 5, but it cannot be 5. In the same way, there is either a God or there is not, there cannot be different realities. If there is a God, the way to God, or the way to heaven must be defined by Him. The idea that men can just make up various and sundry ways to heaven, and they could all be true is nonsense. Everyone seems to agree that we need to do something to get to heaven, but the difference is how to get there. If these various ways are mutually exclusive (and they are), it is impossible that they could all be true.

People have set themselves up to judge like umpires in baseball. The first umpire defines balls and strikes by saying, "They ain't nothing till I call em". These people think they can just create truth on their own. The second umpire defines balls and strikes by saying, "I just call them the way I see them." These people think their personal experience dictates reality. The third umpire says, "The league gives me a strike zone, and everything in it is a strike." These people think whatever their parents, friends, or teachers tell them is how they define truth.

In the conversations I have had with people about absolute truth, I always try to point out the uniqueness of Jesus. Typically the people agree that Jesus is unique, and so I think I'm making some progress, but then they say, "But so are the leaders of other world religions. One person even told me that Jesus was unique, but so was every human being. My attempts at explaining that I was referring to Jesus as unique in the sense that He alone is

the Son of God in whom all the fullness of deity dwells in human form drew a blank stare. Later I realized how big this problem really is when I saw a survey conducted amongst professing Christians that about half believe that non-Christian faiths also lead to eternal life in heaven.

### The Way, the Truth, and the Life

Many believe John 14:6 to be a controversial passage because it so clearly says that the only way to heaven is through Jesus Christ since Jesus said, “no one comes to the Father but through Me.” When I quoted this, one guy said, “He must have meant something else.” Another guy who called himself a Christian just said that the Bible contradicts itself, and it was just written by men so it has errors. That is very convenient to be able to just rule out anything you don’t like by saying that. Of course the reality is that everything we know, and they claim to believe about Christianity, comes from the Bible, and the internal evidence (the Bible’s claim about itself) is that the Bible is the Word of God inspired by God. Therefore let us investigate what Jesus Himself said about His uniqueness.

In John 14, Jesus had just told the disciples that He was leaving them, and they were very troubled about this. In order to calm their fears, Jesus gave them comforting promises and hope for the future. He told them that he was going to prepare a place for them in His Father’s house, and that eventually He would come back for them so that where He was they could be also. Jesus then made the statement, “you know the way where I’m going”. We owe a debt to Thomas because he was not afraid to ask for clarification by asking, “how do we know the way?” I can understand this because Peter had already asked in 13:36, but Jesus left some mystery about it by answering, “Where I go you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow later.” Jesus’ answer in v.6 not only explained how they know the way, but it explains a lot about the nature of Christ. Jesus said, “I AM the way”. Jesus did not say I teach the way, or I show the way—He is the way. No other religious leader ever made such a claim. Buddha called himself a guide to the way, and Mohammed called himself a prophet and a teacher of truth, but neither was the WAY in and of Himself.

Notice also that Jesus used in the original Greek what is called the emphatic “I AM” statement which is the language of deity. When Moses asked God in Exodus 3:14 what His name was, God answered “I AM”. This name of God revealed His self existence and eternity. When

Jesus described Himself as “the way”, it was a totally unique description, because who but God alone could say, using the name reserved exclusively for God, “I AM the way”? Jesus then took the opportunity to expand their understanding of Him by also answering that He is the truth and the life. Others can try to teach the truth or search for the truth, but Jesus Himself is the truth. Jesus is the source of truth and life and ultimate reality. Both John 1:1-4 and Hebrews 1:1-3 confirm that all revelation in the New Testament came from Jesus as the source, and He is the Creator of all things. We were given life by Him, and our life is being sustained by Him. Jesus is the way to God, Jesus is the source of truth from God, and Jesus alone provides life. Who else can speak to Lazarus who was dead for four days, and command his spirit to return to his body simply by saying “Lazarus come forth”? Jesus alone is the self disclosure of God with the power of life and death. Jesus alone, by His atoning work on the cross, is able to provide our way of salvation.

In Acts 4:12, Peter’s defense before the Sanhedrin confirms why there is only one way, only one truth, and only one source of life, “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.” Paul also expressed this to Timothy in 1 Tim. 2:5, “there is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ who gave Himself as a ransom for all” Both Peter and Paul were saying that mankind cannot save itself by its own works. Salvation only comes if God intervenes and provides it, and God has done just that by sending His “only begotten” Son to die for our sins. Jesus alone was the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins.

Thomas a Kempis

The great Christian spiritual writer, Thomas a Kempis who died in 1471, wrote a beautiful book titled THE IMITATION OF CHRIST. Besides the Bible, it has been the most widely translated book in Christian literature. The following is a quote from him regarding John 14:6 which expresses the passage:

“Follow me. I am the way and the truth and the life. Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living. I am the way which you must follow; the truth which you must believe; the life for which you must hope. I am the inviolable way, the infallible truth, the never-ending life. I am the straightest way; the sovereign truth; life true, life blessed, life uncreated.”

## Narrow Minded You Say?

The absolute truth must be narrow. If you call someone by phone, you must dial the exact number, not just any number. If you are very sick, and go to a doctor, you want him to prescribe the exact medicine that will cure you. What would you say if he took you to a medicine cabinet with various drugs and said, “Pick one that looks good to you”? No, you want only the medicine for that illness. When you fly in an airplane do you want just any pilot, or the pilot with thousands of hours who is thoroughly checked out and licensed? Do you want the airplane to land just anywhere, or on that narrow piece of runway at the airport? Aren't all Religions the Same?

Does Christianity's exclusiveness eliminate many sincere people who are seeking God through other means? This question assumes that sincere people are good and right, but sincerity has nothing to do with truth or goodness—just ask the relatives of all those people who followed Jim Jones to Guyana and drank the cool aid. Their faith in Jim was misplaced and wrong. Someone else may say that Christ is right for us, but is not right for others. This assumes that truth is determined by one's experiences and desires—wrong, truth is determined by the ultimate authority, God. I have also had many tell me that “all religions were the same”. Immediately I know they have no detailed knowledge of the various world religions. The major religions all have major differences in who God is, and their means of attaining salvation—so they are mutually exclusive. The Law of Non-contradiction, a basic law of logic, dictates that if two statements about the same issue contradict each other, they cannot both be true. I'm sorry, but as much as we want everybody to be saved, we all need a Savior, and God has only provided one Savior capable of washing away our sins by His blood—Jesus Christ.

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