

Is Christ the Only Way to God?

A group of college students in the USA were asked their views on “religion” and this is some of the answers that were given:

- “Your belief is your belief. If it keeps you going, you know, if it’s a support to you, then it’s...good. I mean, you need something.”
- “I think Buddhists can go to heaven, just as well as Christians.”
- “I haven’t come across any real religions that were contradictory, except for maybe Satanism or something like that.”
- “Just because I was socialized into Christianity, it doesn’t necessarily mean that that’s the only belief that’s valid.”
- “I would like to take the good parts from all the religions and make the best religion from out of it.”¹

What these students have articulated is religious pluralism—the belief that all religions are equally valid, and equally salvific.² But is that what the Bible teaches? Standing before the Sanhedrin, Peter and John declared:

¹¹ ... Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says, ‘The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.’ ¹² There is salvation **in no one else!** There is **no other name** in all of heaven for people to call on to save them.” Acts 4:11-12 (NLT)

Jesus Himself was unequivocal about the role His Father had given Him:

“I am the way and the truth and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through me.**” (Jn 14:6).

A Problem

It sounds tolerant to say things like “Well, after all, we *all* believe in the same God, don’t we?” But the differences between world religions are too fundamental to believe that they all lead to the same God. Yet even if God did indeed reveal himself and the path to heaven in all religions, we’ve got an even bigger problem waiting for us at the end of that conclusion.

Because world religions are so vastly different, the divergent and contradictory teachings of each would then call into question God’s character. Because if the same God reveals himself through such vastly different religions, then we must conclude that either He’s a liar, or he’s unbalanced and unreliable.

If that is indeed the case, then where does that leave us? If God is a liar, or if he’s simply unpredictable, then I submit to you that *that* is not a god that can be trusted or loved.

A Solution

Happily, Christianity helps us out, because no religion *except* Christianity teaches that Jesus is the Son of God, who in fact is co-equal with God. Of all the prophets of all the religions that have ever been, Christ alone has made exclusive, *credible* claims to be God.

Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and we will be satisfied.” Jesus replied, “Philip, don’t you even yet know who I am, even after all the time I have been with you? **Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father!**” John 14:8-9 (NLT)

1 The above quotations came from interviews with students on college campuses around the United States. The interviews were conducted by Ligonier Ministries. See R. C. Sproul, *Choosing My Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 2–3.
2 Mark R. Stevenson quoted in *The Emmaus Journal* (Vol. 8 #1 Sum 99, p. 66 —electronic ed.). Garland, TX: Galaxie Software.

This is Jesus claiming that he was God. To say: "If you've seen me you've seen the Father." Would be absolute blasphemy unless he was really God in human flesh. Another time, He made a statement that nearly got him killed:

⁵⁴ ... The One who gives me honor is my Father, and you say he is your God. ⁵⁵ You don't really know him, but I know him. If I said I did not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him, and I obey what he says. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham was very happy that he would see my day. He saw that day and was glad." ⁵⁷ The Jews said to him, "You have never seen Abraham! You are not even fifty years old." ⁵⁸ Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I am!" ⁵⁹ When Jesus said this, the people picked up stones to throw at him... John 8:54-59 (NCV)

"*I Am*" was the name by which God revealed himself in the Old Testament. By using this same appellation, Jesus was claiming to be one-and-the-same with YHWH. That is why the Jews picked up stones to kill him. This verse shoots down the claims of all those who say that Jesus never claimed to be God. He most certainly did!! But why should we believe Him?

A. His character

What did Jesus' inner circle, who spent so much time with him, have to say about their Friend and Mentor and Teacher? John wrote "...*Christ came to take away sins and... there is no sin in Christ*" (1 John 3:5). How could he take away sin, unless he were God? How could there be no sin in him unless he was perfect, and therefore God? Peter wrote:

He never sinned, and he never deceived anyone. 1 Peter 2:22 (NLT)

Jesus' closest friends *without exception* testify that he had a flawless character.

B. His power

Jesus had the God-given power to do miracles. Unlike the televangelists of today, there was no hidden receivers, no gimmicks, no hysterical dramatics. Both skeptics and believers alike saw him turn water into wine, walk on water, heal the sick with but a touch, feed thousands with a handful of food and even raise the dead back to life. His enemies could not dispute his miracle-working power. Instead, they slandered him by saying:

... "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons." Matthew 12:22-24 (NIV)

But Jesus had a different explanation for His power. He said:

¹⁰ ... it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least **believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves**. John 14:10b-11

C. His resurrection

Here we are nearly 2,000 years after the event and no one has ever produced Jesus' body. One thing that is a historical fact is that Jesus' body was missing that first Easter morning. The Jewish religious leaders and Roman soldiers who guarded the tomb didn't take it – they wanted him to stay dead! If they could have paraded his corpse through the streets of Jerusalem to prove he was a fake *they would have*. Jesus' disciples didn't take the body, because they were

too busy hiding in fear for their lives. To believe that they managed to get past the elite Roman guards, steal the body, then fabricate the whole affair while maintaining to believe He in fact rose from the dead defies logic.

Paul holds the Jesus' resurrection from the dead to be the key piece of evidence that plainly reveals his true identity:

The sacred writings contain preliminary reports by the prophets on God's Son. His descent from David roots him in history; his unique identity as Son of God was shown by the Spirit when Jesus was raised from the dead, setting him apart as the Messiah, our Master. *Rom. 1:2b-4 MSG*

D. His *bona fides* – The Prophecies

The last key bit of evidence showing the Christ of Christianity to be truly God are the myriad of prophecies concerning his birth, death and resurrection. There are some 60 of these prophecies in the Old Testament, and only Jesus is a perfect fit *to every one of them*. The odds of any one person fulfilling exactly more than 60 prophecies are *astronomical*. University mathematician Peter Stoner, in his book *Science Speaks*, conservatively calculated that the likelihood of any one person in history fulfilling 48 of the prophecies, was: one-chance 1 / 10¹⁵⁷.

... it would be the same as trying to find one specific, predetermined atom among a trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, billion universes the size of our universe! That's about as close to impossible as you can get! (Lee Strobel, *God's Outrageous Claims*, pp. 190-191)

All world religions are not the same. Only Christ reveals the way to the true God, and the evidence overwhelmingly supports His claim.

Jesus Alone Reveals A God of Grace

Years ago, C.S. Lewis was at a conference where some of the participants were debating what they key distinctive of Christianity was. Somewhat late, Lewis walked into a heated discussion and asked "What's all the rumpus about?" When he learned that it was a debate about the uniqueness of Christianity, he immediately commented, "Oh, that's easy. It's grace."

What does that mean? Every single world religion gives you something to do. You go on a pilgrimage, you recite a mantra, you kill an infidel, you do good deeds -- all this to *earn* your way to God. Every world religion demands that you must do something to do to be acceptable to God. Every religion but Christianity, because God in love sent His son to be the payment for all of our sins. What is grace?

⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: **While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** ⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! *Romans 5:7-9*

Christianity teaches that we can never earn God's favor, only receive it by faith:

³¹... "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." (Acts 16:31)

⁹... if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

Conclusion

Jesus Christ is the only path to God, because only Jesus Christ *is* God. His resurrection from the dead proves that He alone is “*the way, the truth and the life*” (Jn 14:6). Are there other ways to God other than through Christ? Not if you believe what Jesus said:

¹⁷ ... God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but **whoever does not believe stands condemned already** because he has not believed **in the name of God’s one and only Son**. *John 3:17-18*

We must make converts through love, not conflict. We must respect others. But we must also preach Christ and Christ alone “*for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*” Authors Goldingay and Wright have this to say about Christianity:

There is no salvation in [other religions], not because they are somehow inferior as religions to the religion of Christianity, but because they are not witnesses to the deeds of the God who saves. One might add that to stress this role of Israel and Christians as witnesses to what God has done is part of the answer to the charge of religious arrogance. The gospel is not something we invented or can take any credit for. We merely bear witness, as messengers and stewards, to what God has done in the whole biblical story, culminating in Christ himself. We do not so much say “We have the gospel”, as “There is a gospel.”³

Yes, there is a gospel – Good News! And the good news is that only the Christ of Christianity reveals the true way to the God of love and grace.

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3 Goldingay and Wright, “Yahweh Our God Yahweh One,” p. 54–55. quoted in *The Emmaus Journal* (Vol. 8 #1Sum 99, p. 76 — electronic ed.). Garland, TX: Galaxie Software.