

Is Jesus the Only Way?

“A Biblical Perspective” by Lanny Cook – February 2019

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. ²¹ To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Revelation 3:20-21NKJV

The title of this study is a stumbling block for a lot of people, including many folks who claim to be Christians. Within this age of political correctness there are many who believe there have to be multiple ways to get to heaven. I've worked with people who held tight to this deceptive notion and they would always defend their belief by stating - “*A Loving God could never send someone to hell!*” Of course, they always have a few exceptions to that thought. It is okay for God to send the really evil people to hell, like Hitler, Kaddahfi, Bin Laden, Jeffrey Dahmer, Jack-the-Ripper, and the most evil of criminals and terrorists. The truth regarding heaven in this modern culture has been twisted to include every individual's personal version of truth.

As a society we have digressed to the point where every individual appoints themselves capable of defining truth according to the desires of their human heart. It's up to each individual to determine what is right or wrong; good or evil; or what is moral or immoral in accordance with the convenience of their own personal desire. There is no longer an acceptable standard of reference because God has been removed from the equation. Which means there is no truth to the modern day definition of truth!

“Is Jesus the Only Way?” That's the question that will be answered in this short study. It's a question that will literally decide your eternal future. To begin with, I'd like to share a short illustration that humorously broaches the topic of heaven and hell:

A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales. The teacher said it was physically impossible for a whale to swallow a human because even though a whale is a very large mammal, its throat is very small. The little girl stated that Jonah was swallowed by a whale. The teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human, it was impossible. The little girl said, "When I get to heaven I will ask Jonah." The teacher playing the devil's advocate asked, "What if Jonah went to hell?" The little girl quickly replied, "Well, then you ask him!"

In this hypersensitive, politically correct world, it has become extremely common to hear people say there are a multitude of ways to find god and enter into heaven. It's acceptable to make god into what you want him to be, or need him to be for your own personal purpose or definition. It's pretty normal nowadays to put god into a box to fit your own perceptions of who or what he is. This of course is a contrived, secular perspective of god that originated through a limited human understanding of life.

Many people believe that it doesn't matter what your religious or spiritual beliefs are, as long as you are sincere, and you earnestly seek your own form of spirituality, you'll go to heaven. However, if we believe what the Bible says, these other paths are nothing more than an individually contrived, self-serving view of god. This feel-good message is extremely palatable but flagrantly flawed. It's a devious concoction with deadly consequences. Just because people believe something, that doesn't make it true! It's like the reality of the internet! Just because you read it on Yahoo News, doesn't mean it's factual or bears any semblance to the truth.

According to the Bible Jesus is the only way to heaven and there are no other roads that will get you there. One of the biggest, societal criticisms about this biblical claim is that it is too exclusive. It's too black and white. The reality is that **All Religions are Exclusive** and that's been the case for thousands of years. Consider the following:

- Religion is man's attempt to find God or make himself a god.
- Throughout history, mankind has worshipped multitudes of different gods.
 - Ephesians worshipped a mixture of Roman and Greek gods, Diana, Zeus, Mercury, Artemis, Jupiter, Mars, Hades, Aphrodite, Ares and Hermes.
 - The Egyptians were also polytheists worshipping hundreds of gods - the sun god Ra, the creator god Amun, the mother goddess Isis, and Osiris the ruler of the underworld.
 - The Philistines worshipped Dagon
 - Canaanites were Baal Worshipers
 - Hindus choose a personal deity to worship, known as an ishta devata,
 - Muslims worship Allah
- What is confusing in modern America regarding religious liberty is that all religions have equality under the law. This is supposed to guarantee religious tolerance across the board.
 - **Legal equality doesn't equate to validity in God's sight!**
 - **Tolerance doesn't translate to Truth.**
 - **The Truth of the Gospel doesn't give anyone a license to hate or to practice bigotry because of differing beliefs - "God so loved the world," not just a select few.**

It's not possible for all religions to be a valid way to God. Many people believe all the religions of the world worship the same god but call him by a different name. There is nothing that could be further from the truth! The Barna Poll shared this statistic regarding the topic of prayer in different religions:

"When Christians, Jews, Muslims, and others pray to their god, all of those individuals are actually praying to the same god, but simply using different names for that deity."—registered opinion of 40% of Americans (Barna poll)

Actually, this isn't completely off the mark. The Judeo/Christian faiths do pray to the same God. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. However, all other religions worship a totally different god. The Judeo perspective is based on the belief that the Promised Messiah has not yet arrived in this world. They are still waiting for the Messiah to make His first appearance. Christians, (who are followers of Jesus Christ) believe that Jesus is the Promised Messiah who made His first appearance over 2,000 years ago. He was rejected as the Messiah by the Sanhedrin before being crucified for blasphemy. On the third day He rose from the grave. Forty days later He ascended into heaven and will return at the end of this age in what is referred to as His 2nd Coming! The Jews accept the Old Testament as the divinely inspired Word of God. Christians accept both the Old and the New Testaments as the divinely inspired Word of God. However, the New Testament proclaims the good news of the Gospel that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament Laws and Prophets.

Differences between Christianity and other Religions.

- Only in the Bible is God revealed as the one eternal, personal Creator, who brought the entire universe into existence by His own Word. Most other religions worship “gods” representing the personifications of the natural forces of the universe.
- Christianity alone is centered on historical events associated with a Person—the promise, birth, death, resurrection, and promised return of Jesus Christ. Most other religions are based on teachings of their founders.
- Jesus Christ alone conquered death.
- Only in Christianity is the nature of God based on a personal relationship with the Creator offered through Jesus Christ.
- Christianity is the only religion where a person is saved by grace rather than an individual's efforts or works.

And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

1 Corinthians 15:14-19 NIV

What does history outside of the Bible say about Jesus?

The following historians all mentioned Jesus in their writing.

- Suetonius – Roman Historian described the treatment of Christians under Claudius' rule:
 - *They were committed to their belief Jesus was God and withstood the torment and punishment of the Roman Empire. Jesus had a curious and immediate impact on His followers, empowering them to die courageously for what they knew to be true.*
- Lucian of Samosata– Greek Satirist Wrote:

- *“The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day—the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account.”*
- Publius Cornelius Tacitus – a Roman Historian
- Pliny the Younger – another Roman Historian
- Josephus – Jewish Historian
- Mara Bar-Serapion – a Syrian philosopher
- Judaism – the Rabbinical Texts called the Talmud
- What can we summarize from the writings of these ancient non-Christian sources?
 - Josephus and Lucian indicate that Jesus was regarded as wise.
 - Pliny, the Talmud (a central text of mainstream Judaism), and Lucian imply He was a powerful and **revered teacher**.
 - Josephus and the Talmud indicate He **performed miraculous feats**.
 - Tacitus, Josephus, the Talmud, and Lucian all mention that He was crucified. Tacitus and Josephus say this occurred under Pontius Pilate. And the Talmud declares it happened on the eve of Passover.
 - There are references to **Jesus' resurrection** by both Tacitus and Josephus.
 - Josephus records that Jesus' followers believed **He was the Christ**, or Messiah.
 - Pliny and Lucian indicate that Christians worshipped Jesus as God!

History provides evidence that Jesus existed and even most critics agree. Both Judaism and Islam profess that Jesus was a teacher and a prophet. People don't dislike His teaching. Why would they? It's some good stuff - **Love people. Be generous. Be kind. Serve others.** Critics don't debate His teaching. They don't debate His existence. What people have a problem with is His **exclusive claim** to be the **Son of God**, along with His declaration that He is the **only way to God**. In fact, the reason Jesus was crucified had everything to do with His proclamation: **“when you saw Me, you saw the Father!”**

Non-biblical historical records referring to Jesus come from **bona-fide, factual historians** who lived during the early onset of Christianity. They weren't some crazy, hair-brained Roman comedian named Maximus Erroneous, using this material as a standup comedy routine for an evening of religious frivolity at Club Coliseum. *“Yo, Claudius, what do you say to a Christian before you feed them to the lions?” “I don't know Maximus, What?” “Bon a petit!”*

Even still, if you use non-biblical sources as evidence of “Who Jesus Is?” most critics are going to argue. So, this leads us back to the only viable source of reference, the Bible.

What does the Bible say about Jesus?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to

that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:1-5, 9-14 NIV

2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Acts 2:32 NIV God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.

Acts 4:12 NIV Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

1 John 5:10-12 NIV Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

1 Timothy 2:5-6 NIV For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

Philippians 2:9-11 NIV

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

What Did Jesus Have to Say?

John 10:9 NIV I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.

Luke 19:10 NIV For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

When Jesus used the phrase "I AM," He was claiming to be much more than a rabbi or prophet; Jesus claimed to be the Messiah—God in human form. In John's Gospel, Jesus makes seven references using the title "I Am!"

- "I Am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger" (John 6:35).
- "I Am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).
- "I Am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9).
- "I Am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).
- "I Am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).
- "I Am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).
- "I Am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser" (John 15:1).

- We find Jesus as One who satisfies (bread of life), One who gives life (light), One who offers salvation (gate), One who dies for us (good shepherd), the resurrection and the life, the way, truth, and life, and the true (real, legitimate) vine. In all of this Jesus presents Himself as the only way of salvation.
- In John 8:58, Jesus answered the religious leaders, saying, "*Truly, Truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I Am.*" This was a reference to Exodus 3:14, where God revealed His name to Moses as "*I Am.*" **The reason Jesus was crucified was because He claimed to be God.**

So, how do we answer the question "Is Jesus the Only Way?" To do that, there are four things that need to be brought to the forefront of our consideration.

1. God is Good

- Praise the Lord, Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.*
Psalm 106 NIV
- Remember the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after they sinned? What did they do? They went into hiding and God went looking for them. Because of God's pursuit of His creation, of those created in His own image, salvation is freely offered to anyone who will accept it.

2. God is Just

- God created you with a free will, to choose as you please. He gives you a choice as to where you will spend eternity. He gives you a choice as to the path you will follow. God gives you the dignity and the freedom to practice your free will. **He is perfectly Just!** He's not a dictator that mandates love and devotion. He is the Creator who desires a relationship with you but will never demand it or force it upon you!
 - All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. God is just...*
2 Thessalonians 1:5-6a NIV
 - By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.*
1 Corinthians 15:2-6 NIV

3. God is Love

- For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*
John 3:16 NIV
- God's love is all-inclusive, for it says "Whoever believes."
- Because of God's love for His creation, He promises to reveal Himself to anyone who seeks Him out.

i. *Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*

Jeremiah 29:12-13 NIV

ii. *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

Hebrews 11:6 NIV

4. God Provides Us With a Great Cloud of Witnesses

a. Jesus is the only religious figure to not only die as the atonement for sin, but He is also the only one that was resurrected. How do we know that? Because of the great cloud of eye witnesses.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-5 NKJV

So, I leave you with this question: Do you believe that “Jesus is the Only Way?” Before you answer that question, read this quote from C. S. Lewis.

*"I am trying to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would be either a lunatic – on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make a choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about him being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, pp. 55–56)*

Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. ²¹ To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

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Now it's time for you to draw your own conclusion. What do you say? Is Jesus the only Way to heaven?