

WHO IS THIS MAN?



DEVOTIONAL | JESUS VS. THE REST

MARCH 28, 2021

Discussion Starter: How would you explain to a nonbeliever who is open to truth the difference between Jesus and other religious leaders?

Key Passage: *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*
(John 14:6)

In last week's lesson, we looked at how the real, historical Jesus is quite different from the misperceptions that the unbelieving world has of the "cultural" Jesus. In our lesson today, we will look at how Jesus is different from every other religious leader.

A good place to start is with Jesus' claim in our text: *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* (John 14:6) Jesus said this in response to Thomas' question, "If we don't know where we're going, how can we know the way there?" In His response, Jesus denies the popular belief that there are many ways to Heaven and clarifies that He is the only way. Interestingly, before followers of Jesus were called "Christians," they were referred to as followers of "the way" (Acts 24:14). Jesus lets Thomas and the disciples (and us!) know that the way of salvation is not a process—such as religious rituals, rules, or good works—but a Person: Jesus Christ. It is only through Christ that we can come to God.

- **As the only way** (v.16a), Jesus was asserting that there is no other path to heaven, no other way to the Father. Peter reinforced this truth to the Jewish religious leaders years later when he proclaimed, *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). Paul made the same claim when he wrote: *"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time"* (1 Timothy 2:5-6).
- **As the only truth** (v.16b), Jesus was saying that He as the incarnate Word of God (John 1:1) is the source of all truth.
- **As the only life** (v.16c), Jesus was claiming to be the source of all life. In John 14:19, He gave the promise that *"because I live, you also will live."* Jesus would not deliver merely a political or social deliverance that most of the Jews were seeking; rather, He would provide true deliverance from bondage to sin and death to a life of freedom in eternity.

Discuss: What are some religious rituals, rules, and good works non-Christian religions require people to perform for salvation?

Discuss: Why is God's way of grace through faith in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9) superior to all man-made approaches to salvation?

Jesus vs. Other Religious Leaders

Here are three key differences between Jesus and every other religious leader:

- 1. Every other religious leader has either died or is alive today and will die one day. Only Jesus died, is now alive again, and lives forevermore!**

“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last,¹⁸ and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.’” (Revelation 1:17-18)

Discuss: How would you explain the importance of the resurrection of Jesus to a non-Christian who is open to the truth?

- 2. Other religions and their teachings can continue after their founder died. Only Christianity rests upon the Founder, Jesus Christ, Himself, and not just on His teachings. If Jesus died and stayed dead, Christianity would have died with Him!**

Muhammed, the founder of Islam, died, but his teachings go on. Buddha died, but his teachings go on. Many swamis have died, but Hinduism goes on. However, Paul asserts in 1 Corinthians 15:13-19 that if Christ were not raised from the dead, then our faith is empty, and we are still in our sins. The claims of Christianity rest completely upon the resurrection of Christ. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then there is no truth to Christianity whatsoever since Christianity is based upon Christ and not just His teachings. Throughout the New Testament, we find that the truth of the gospel hinges upon Christ's resurrection.

- 3. In other religions, truth is a concept to believe. In Christianity, truth is both a concept to believe and a Person, Jesus Christ, to relate to.**

Jesus is the only way of salvation because He personally possesses divine truth and life that are exclusive qualities of God. Jesus transcended the concept of truth by identifying Himself as the truth. We cannot separate the idea of truth from the Person of truth—Jesus Christ. Jesus did not merely call people to follow His teachings; He called people to believe Him (John 11:25) and to follow Him (John 21:9) as the truth! Truth is so relational that it dwells in us through the Holy Spirit (John 16:13-14). Having truth ultimately means knowing Christ personally through his Spirit.

Discuss: How would you explain to a non-Christian interested in Christianity how Christianity is unique in its belief that truth is both conceptual (believing certain truth claims) and relational (having a relationship with Jesus who is truth)?

For Further Study

The Case for the Real Jesus by Lee Strobel

Christ Among Other Gods by Erwin Lutzer

Video: “William Lane Craig: Is Jesus the Only Way to God?” on YouTube