

# Is Christianity Alone Fully True and Is Jesus Christ Really the Only Way to God?—Part 6

By Dr. John Ankerberg and Dr. John Weldon

For the moment let's assume that the Bible really is the only revelation of God, that biblical Christianity is the one fully true religion and that, as the Bible teaches, Jesus Christ is the only way to God. Jesus clearly claimed that He was the only way to God because He alone was the atoning sacrifice for the world's sin, "...the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28); "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

Did Buddha die for our sins? Did Mohammed die for our sins? Did Lao Tze, the founder of Taoism? Did Moses? Did Zoroaster, the founder of Parsism? Or Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism? None of these men ever claimed to do this. Put another way, isn't it rather startling that not one of the founders of a religion ever claimed that he solved the problem of human sin and death, the most fundamental human problems of all? J. I. Packer once noted, "No philosophy that will not teach us how to master death is worth two pence to us," and L. P. Jacks wrote in *The Inner Sentinel*, "No religion is worth its name unless it can prove itself more than a match for death." Only Jesus solved the sin problem and conquered death, so logically, only Jesus is the way of salvation and the way to God and eternal life.

We reiterate, because Jesus is the *only* incarnation of God, and God's *only* begotten Son (John 3:16,18), when He died on the cross for human sin, and rose from the dead, He became the only possible way of salvation for all men and women. This is why the Bible teaches, "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). Further, "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and *one* mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time" (1 Timothy 2:3-6). All this is why Jesus Himself warned, "if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins" (John 8:24).

But if Jesus really is the only way to God does this make the Christian faith "narrow-minded" or "intolerant" as so many people think?

## **2. Why Christianity isn't intolerant or narrow-minded for teaching there is only one way to God**

We have mentioned that the creation parallels the nature of its Creator through its unity and diversity. So we might just expect the same for the Creator's approach to salvation. In other words, that salvation itself would, in ways, parallel the nature of the Creator and the nature of the creation.

First, we noted earlier that if there is only one true God, then there should be only one true way of salvation because the way of salvation must be consistent with the nature of the one true God—His grace, love, mercy, truth, etc. As Dr. Robert Morey comments,

“Logically, since all religions contradict each other, there are only two options open to us. Either they are *all* false, or there is only *one* true religion. If there is only one God, there will be only *one* religion.” Perhaps it is really the person who objects to this who is being “too narrow” to accept the truth. <sup>41</sup>

Second, what we find *is* true in the creation that God has made *also* parallels the nature of salvation. Like everything else in the world, salvation must be done correctly to be successful. Consider some examples of how life works, or doesn’t work:

What happens if you’re driving your car in reverse? Or stopping in the middle of a busy freeway? Or if you drive on the wrong side of the road—or drive drunk? What happens is that you risk injuring or killing yourself and others. Driving the wrong way sooner or later has consequences, even if you’re only a bad driver.

When you build a house, what happens if you place the glass where wood should be and wood where the glass should be? Or build in a flood zone? Or use highly flammable materials? What happens is that your house is not functional, or you risk losing your home.

If everything in the world must be done correctly to be successful, and if our lives are literally filled with examples of the problems caused for us when we do things incorrectly, why should we conclude that salvation is any different? Why should we conclude there *won’t* be consequences for doing salvation wrong?

Do we say it is being narrow-minded, intolerant or bigoted for us to drive sober or for surgeons to operate on us properly? Indeed, our very lives may be at stake. And if our lives are already at stake in worldly things, isn’t it also possible that our souls may be at stake in spiritual things? But a life is only for a period of time; a soul is forever.

Then how much more vital is it that we be certain that *salvation* be done correctly if our very *souls* are at stake? The point is that the Christian claim to exclusivity is *not* something that is out of harmony with the manner in which all people experience life and with how the world itself functions. God made the world this way because He had to. Given His character, He also *had* to make the way of salvation through Christ and Christ alone. A fascinating and detailed study of this can be found in the late Canadian scholar Arthur C. Custance’s *The Seed of the Woman* (1980).

Christianity is indeed exclusive—it claims that only those who believe in Christ will find salvation—but it is not narrow-minded, intolerant or bigoted. *People* can be broad-minded or narrow-minded but not *ideas*. *Ideas* are neither broad nor narrow—they are true or false. The claim that Christ is the only way of salvation is either true or false. This can be determined only on the basis of the evidence, which we will briefly address under the third point.

Before we do so, we need to examine a side issue. Those who think Christianity is intolerant should ask whether or not *other* religions and philosophies are really as tolerant as they *claim*. In fact, they usually aren’t. So why should only Christianity be singled out for criticism? Merely because Christianity is the most honest about its beliefs?

For example, a literal reading of the Koran causes one to conclude that Islam consigns all infidels (non Muslims) to an eternal hell on the basis of the arbitrary decrees of Allah. Is this tolerant? What about *jihad*, the Muslim concept of holy war?

Even religions which claim to accept other religions—but usually don’t—characteristically assert that their path is far superior to all other paths. (If a given religion *isn’t superior* or unique in important ways, then of what value is it for a prospective convert?) To illustrate, in Eastern religions, whether Hindu or Buddhist, the claim is usually made that by following

the particular group's program, one will merely have a "few" incarnations to undergo to work off one's "karma" (bad deeds) rather than the dreary prospect of thousands, millions or billions of lifetimes.

In fact, religions generally, as well as philosophies with a metaphysical bias to uphold, are actually quite *intolerant*—especially of Christianity. How tolerant have atheists, materialists, secular humanists, most committed evolutionists and skeptics in general been toward conservative Christianity? Collectively, aren't their attacks almost unrelenting? And few religions are as antagonistic to Christianity as Islam, but Islam is hardly unique. In any religion, the cases of bias against or spiritual intimidation exercised toward Christians, or against members who might think of converting to Christianity is legion. They may be threatened with divorce, expulsion, or reincarnation as a bug. They may be told how spiritually unenlightened or useless Christianity is. They characteristically twist and redefine the teachings of Jesus so that He becomes a Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Mormon, Baha'i, etc. (Is that being tolerant, open-minded or fair?) The person who thinks of accepting traditional Christianity is made to believe they are accepting a corrupt and dangerous view of religion.

Even religions and groups which boldly proclaim their acceptance of all other religions are characteristically syncretistic, finally remolding all other religions into their own preferred beliefs. In such groups, it is only at "lower" levels of belief that other religions are accepted. In other words, despite the claim for religious acceptance, at the ultimate level of reality, *all* other religions are rejected as false, as "corruptions" of the one true religion that these groups alone have preserved and protected.<sup>42</sup>

Characteristically, those who claim such tolerance, especially among liberal so-called "Christian" theologians, are only engaging in a self-serving religious invention. "They insist upon tolerance for all but always end up by grossly misrepresenting what religious believers actually believe."<sup>43</sup> Such people may claim all religions are the same and all religions lead to the same God. But all religions are not the same nor do they lead to the same God. In Hinduism the world is an illusion; in Christianity it is real. The Hindu *Brahman* is anything but the biblical *Yahweh*. In Islam the incarnation is blasphemy; in Christianity it is central, while *Allah* and *Jehovah* are literally worlds apart. Buddhism is founded upon the denial of personality while Christianity is founded upon the assertion of personality—and on it goes. In the end, to tolerantly "unite" all religions, all religious doctrine must be thrown out and mystical experience exalted.

Those who think they sit in an elevated position criticizing biblical revelation while speaking hypocrisy or nonsense seem unable to comprehend the consequences of their positions. They do just as much injustice to other devout religious beliefs as they think Christianity does and therefore can hardly be considered morally superior. To tell the Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu that their faith is the same as an emaciated version of Christianity (as in liberal theology) can hardly be considered honoring or tolerant of the Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu. It is far more tolerant and respectful to the members of these religions to accept their beliefs as they are than to attempt a false syncretism that destroys each believer's religion. In essence, when claims of tolerance are not viewed critically, truth itself is the victim.

In conclusion, when people claim to be tolerant, open-minded, objective, and fair, they often aren't. Biblically speaking, if people in their natural state, prior to regeneration, are said to be God's enemies (Romans 5:10) who *suppress* the truth by unrighteousness (Romans 1:18) and who actually hate God (Romans 1:30) where is their tolerance, neutral-

ity, or objectivity?

Of course, most people *think* they are open-minded, but a critical self-exam will show this to be false. The truth is that neutrality and objectivity are myths. “Religion is rooted deep in the heart of any living person. Therefore, neutrality is a self-deception.”<sup>44</sup> I, John Weldon, can remember priding myself on my liberal “tolerance” for all views and behaviors while a non-Christian undergraduate at San Diego State University. But it was not real tolerance at all. When confronted with moral absolutes or Christian beliefs, I expressed a strong or fearful aversion. My self-proclaimed “tolerance” was either an excuse for moral and intellectual laziness or a rationalization for my strongly preferred worldview of relativism. What I *was* tolerant and open-minded about were invariably things that were hedonistic, prideful and self-serving.

Again, it is frequently those people who claim to be accepting and tolerant of almost anything who are almost never tolerant of one thing—Christian faith. *Literally* thousands of examples could be cited of bigotry, hypocrisy, narrow-mindedness and intolerance expressed towards Christians for doing no more than living out the logical, benevolent consequences of their own religious faith<sup>45</sup>—something that those who malign Christian faith claim to defend in all religions. We challenge our readers to find a single religion anywhere that accepts Christianity as being fully true. Obviously, there are none, because all religions claim *they* are fully true. As we said, Christianity is exclusive, but it is not intolerant. While it seeks to convert others to faith in Christ, it respects the right of all men to choose their own destinies.

**Notes:**

41. Robert A. Morey, *Introduction to Defending the Faith* (Southbridge, MA: Crowne Publications, 1989), p. 38.
42. See, e.g., John Ankerberg, John Weldon, *The Secret Teachings of the Masonic Lodge* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 192-201 and John Weldon, *The Baha’i World Faith*, ms, copy on file at the ATRI office.
43. Dewi Arwel Hughes, “Christianity and Other Religions: A Review of Some Recent Discussion,” *Themelios*, January 1984, p. 20.
44. Joseph Tong, “On the Finality of Christ,” *Stulos Theological Journal*, Vol. 1, no. 1, May 1993, p. 6.
45. E.g., for illustrations in science see Jerry Bergman, *The Criterion* (Richfield, MN: Onesimus, 1984).