

Defend Your Faith

Lesson 5

IS CHRISTIANITY THE ONLY WAY?

“And in none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. We Must Be Ready To Give An Answer (1 Peter 3:15).

B. The Importance of This Question.

1. One of the most popular topics today in apologetics is the subject of Christianity as it relates to other world religions. Many people believe it is “un-American” to claim that Christianity is the only way to God. We live in a culture of tolerance and pluralism that advocates a “different-strokes-for-different-folks” approach to religion. According to many, all sincere religious persons should be allowed to worship their Supreme Being in their own way.
2. We are told that we should not be *exclusive* about religion, but *inclusive*. We are told that Christianity is only one of many valid religious experiences. According to many people, all religions are equal, similar in teaching, and acceptable to God (or some Supreme Being or Higher Power). This approach is comfortable and is considered the “enlightened” attitude in our modern society. Surprisingly, the *inclusive* approach to religion is even advocated by some “evangelical Christians”.
3. “The real religion of most Americans is equality; that is their absolute, self-evident value. God must be an American, an equal-opportunity employer. All religious roads, if only followed sincerely, must equally lead to God” (*Pocket Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli, page 121).

C. The Logic of This Question.

1. First, the *inclusive* approach to religion would lead ultimately to universalism (everyone is saved). It is a logical consequence. This is the teaching of the Unitarian Universalist Church. But, where do you draw the line in religion? Are there *any* religions that are excluded? If not, would the *inclusive* approach to religion include deadly cults or even the Church of Satan? The truth is, not everyone will be saved (Matthew 7:13-14; 25:41,46).
2. Second, opposing views in religion cannot all be right or true at the same time. It is a logical impossibility. $(2 + 2 = 4)$ and $(2 + 3 = 4)$ cannot both be right.

D. Two Important Terms: Worldview and Religion.

1. What is your worldview? A worldview is a presupposition (belief) through which everything in life is seen. The Christian’s worldview is biblical. The worldview of others is non-biblical or anti-biblical.
2. What is your religion? A religion is a system of beliefs, practices, and ethical values that a person holds to fervently. (A religion does not have to involve membership in a church, synagogue, or mosque to be a religion. For example, atheism is technically a religion.) The religion that one holds to is the worldview through which he acts.

II. PRESENTING YOUR CASE.

A. Man-Made Religions Are In Rebellion to the One True God.

1. There is only one, true God (Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:1-3).
2. All mankind *from the beginning of time* had revelation from the one, true God (Genesis 2:16-17; 4:1-5,26). What followed was rebellion (Genesis 6:1ff). All mankind *from the beginning of the new world* had revelation from the one, true God (Genesis 8:20ff; 9:1ff). What followed was rebellion (Genesis 11:1ff).
3. Examples of religious rebellion.
 - a) Secular religions.
 - (1) Agnosticism sets forth an *unknown* God. But, mankind is without excuse for not knowing God (Acts 17:23; Romans 1:20).
 - (2) Atheism believes that there is *no* God. But, it is foolish in the face of evidence to say that there is no God (Psalm 14:1; Romans 1:19ff).
 - (3) Humanism, like atheism, believes in a life *without* God and that man is the measure of all things. But, when man is left to following his own standard, terrible things always follow (Deuteronomy 12:8; Judges 21:25; Proverbs 12:15; Jeremiah 10:23).
 - b) World religions.
 - (1) Islam has a *monotheistic* God (Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not divine). But, there are three in the Godhead (Colossians 2:9).
 - (2) Judaism, like Islam, has a *monotheistic* God. But, there are three in the Godhead *and* Jesus Christ is the promised divine Messiah (John 1:1,14,18).
 - (3) Hinduism and Buddhism have a *pantheistic* God (all is God) and a *pantheon* of Gods. (The New Age Movement in America came out of Hinduism and advocates the same *pantheistic* God.) But, God is separate from his creation (Genesis 1:1) *and* one (Ephesians 4:6).
 - (4) Animistic religions (Native Americans, Aborigines, African tribes, Polynesians) have a *spirit, god-like* religion. But, God is spirit (John 4:24) *and* the only true God (2 Chronicles 15:3; Jeremiah 10:10; John 17:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 John 5:20).
 - (5) Other world religions like Shintoism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Baha'i deny various truths about the one true God.
 - c) Cult religions.
 - (1) Mormonism believes in a *polytheistic* God where all can become gods. But, there is *one* God (Ephesians 4:6).
 - (2) Jehovah's Witness believe in a *monotheistic* God and Jesus is not God. But, Jesus *is* God (John 1:1,14; 20:28; Hebrews 1:8).
 - (3) Other cults like Christian Science, Unitarianism, World Wide Church of God, and the Unification Church deny various truths about the one true God.
 - d) Denominational religions.
 - (1) Many denominational churches exist today that claim follow Jesus Christ, but they are all divided in their teaching and practice of different things. They claim to follow Jesus, but they do not practice what Jesus said (Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 6:46).

- (2) Many denominations like Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic, Methodist, Lutheran, and Episcopalian, fail to practice many things that Jesus and his Apostles taught. Even some Churches of Christ bare the marks of denominationalism and practice things that are not authorized.
 - (3) God's word does not approve of the divided denominationalism that exists today (Matthew 16:18; John 17:20-21; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Ephesians 4:4-6; 2 Timothy 1:13; 2 John 9-11).
 - e) The religious world today is in rebellion to the one, true God (Rom. 1:28). All religions not planted by God will be plucked up (Matthew 15:13).
- B. Christianity Is the Only Way Back to God From This Rebellion.
- 1. The Bible is the only true representation of God's word (John 8:32; 16:13; 17:17); therefore, the Bible is the only way back to God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Bible authors confirmed the reliability and truthfulness of their divine message with miracles (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4). This is something that no other religious author has ever done! (See Lesson 3.) The Hindu Vedas, the Quran, the Book of Mormon, etc. cannot make this claim and prove it.
 - 2. Jesus is the only true representation of God (John 1:1,14,18); therefore, he is the only way back to God (John 8:24; 11:25; 14:6-7; Acts 4:12). Jesus confirmed his divine identity with miracles, the resurrection being the ultimate confirmation (Acts 2:22; Romans 1:4). This is something that no other religious leader has ever done! (See Lesson 4.) Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, etc. cannot make this claim and prove it.

III. ANSWERING OBJECTIONS.

- A. Objection #1: Many Terrible Things, Like the Crusades or the Inquisition, Have Been Done in the Name of Christianity.
- 1. When terrible things are done in the "name" of Christ, those who do it are in the wrong. Doing something in the Lord's "name" does not necessarily make the person or action right (Matthew 7:21-23). Christianity, when practiced according to the New Testament, does not lead to terrible things, but to peace and goodness (Galatians 5:22-23).
- B. Objection #2: There Are Many Who Claim to Be Christians, But Are Actually Hypocrites.
- 1. All hypocrites, religious or otherwise, will be judged and condemned (Matthew 23:13,15,23,25,27,29).
 - 2. Not all religious persons are hypocrites. It is actually possible to faithfully practice true, New Testament Christianity with a genuine and sincere heart of love and be pleasing to God (2 Corinthians 6:6; Ephesians 6:24; 1 Peter 1:22).
- C. Objection #3: All Religions Have Valid Truth Claims.
- 1. Are all religions true? One's idea of "truth" differs between religions. Therefore, we must first define what is "true". "Truth" is God's objective word (John 17:17). There are in fact elements of "truth" in all religions (even Satan speaks some truth sometimes). All religions present some truths in their teachings. The problem is that religions other than New Testament Christianity contain elements of truth *and* falsehood at the same time. Illus. Rat poison that contains both good and bad ingredients.
 - 2. Are all religions morally good? (Same as above.)
 - 3. Are all religions educative? (Same as above.)
 - 4. Are all religions useful? (Same as above.)

5. Are all religions able to save? This is the question that gets to the heart of the issue. While all religions contain elements of truth and are useful in many ways, they fail to produce a true savior and a true plan of salvation. The *exclusivism* of Christianity rests upon the nature of Jesus Christ (the divine Son of God) and the nature of the Bible (the divine word of God). The claims of Jesus Christ and the Bible are true (see Lesson 3 and 4 in this series). This makes Christianity the only way to God! Christianity has the only valid book and the only valid savior that can lead mankind back to God.
- D. Objection #4: All Religions Offer a Valuable Way of Life.
1. While all religions contain elements of truth, they do not offer the best way of life. Not all worldviews are equal.
 2. Jesus offers forgiveness of sins in this life and a hope of heaven in the next life (Mark 10:30). Other religions offer endless cycles of reincarnation, meritorious works, cessation of existence after death, no hope, fighting, hatred, oppression of women, polygamy, etc.
- E. Objection #5: Jesus Was Just a Mystic Guru Like Others in Eastern Religion.
1. This is a “No,” for several reasons. Jesus was a Jew, not a Hindu. Jesus taught what could be verified outwardly by God’s law, not by an esoteric (private), inner experience. Jesus taught that God and man are separate, not one and the same. Jesus taught that God is an individual person, not all-in-all (pantheism). Jesus taught that time and history are real, not illusionary. Jesus believed God is knowable, not unknowable. Jesus taught that God seeks us, not that we seek to be God. Jesus taught that God gives us morality (right and wrong), not that we give ourselves morals. Jesus taught about a coming judgment, punishment, reward, separation, heaven and hell, not universalism.
- F. Objection #6: What About Those Who Have Never Heard About Jesus? How Can You Say They Will Be Lost?
1. First, God has revealed himself to everyone everywhere in *general* revelation – the creation (Romans 1:19-20). Additionally, God has given all mankind a conscience that leads him to do right or wrong (Romans 2:14-15). God has also revealed himself to everyone everywhere in *special* revelation – the Bible. The gospel has gone (and continues to go) into the entire world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Colossians 1:23). The Bible has been translated into hundreds of languages today and distributed all over the world.
 2. Second, mankind must seek God and God has promised that he will be found by all who seek him (Matthew 7:11-12; Acts 17:21).
- G. Objection #7: A Sincere Attempt to Find Truth Is All That Matters to God.
1. No. Sincerity is not the issue. Sincerity alone is not enough. One can be sincere and be wrong (Matthew 7:21-23; 1 Timothy 1:13).
 2. Obedience to the gospel is what matters to God (Luke 6:46; Romans 1:16; 6:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 5:9; 11:6).

IV. CONCLUSION.

- A. Satan’s Attack From the Beginning Has Been Against God.
1. Adam and Eve were tempted regarding their relationship with God (Genesis 3:1-5).
 2. All false religions have begun with a false view of God.

- B. We Believe Christianity Is True and the Only Way Because It is Reasonable and Rational to Do So.
1. Christianity is not a mystical religion, a mythical religion, or a misinformed religion. Christianity is a religion grounded in objective, historical fact that can be defended with certainty: the Bible (Luke 1:1-4) and Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-6,12-19).
 2. Come be a New Testament Christian (Acts 11:26), a member of the Lord's church (Matthew 16:18), and a true follower of Jesus who abides in his word (John 8:31).
 3. We will be judged in the last day by no other words than the words of Jesus Christ (John 12:48).
- C. Do You Have the Will to Believe (John 7:17)?