

“One Way”

Transfer In :

- Today will conclude our series on apologetics
 - o These 5 weeks were intended to help all of us to be better prepared to give an answer
 - o 1 Peter 3:15
- We've spend several weeks establishing the credibility of the New Testament
 - o Why?
 - o Because that is where we find our primary source documentation on the life of Jesus and its important to know why those historical records are trustworthy
 - If somebody basically says to you, “I'm not willing to admit the NT into evidence”, I don't believe the document is trustworthy, its hard to make a case for him
 - If you've missed the 3 sessions on the NT, I will refer you to the recordings
- Today we'll conclude this series by taking a look at who this Jesus of Nazareth was

Offensive Claim

- I want to start by acknowledging something
 - o Christians claim that Jesus is not only a way to heaven but that he's the only way to heaven.
- To our pluralistic society that values tolerance, diversity and acceptance above all else, such a claim is highly offensive.
 - o The prevailing mindset seems to be that ALL belief systems are equally true and equally valid
 - If you think or state otherwise you are considered bigoted, intolerant, hateful.
 - Which is sort of ironic as this cartoon tries to depict
 - Rabbi Shumleys quote
- Can I take a moment to expose a flaw in the pluralism mindset (that all religions are true and valid)
 - o According to Islam, Jesus never died on the cross and claimed to be the Son of God
 - According to the Bible, he did
 - They both can't be equally correct on this point
 - o Was Jesus the promised messiah of Israel that the OT predicted?
 - If he was then the Christians have it correct
 - If he wasn't then the Jews have it correct
 - According to the Qur'an, he never claimed to be the messiah
 - He either claimed it or he didn't. He was either right or he was wrong
 - But everybody here can't be equally right. Their views are mutually exclusive
 - o What happens when you die?
 - Some religions profess that when you die that your body ceases but soul lives eternally
 - Some eastern religions believe you will come back into a new body (reincarnation)
 - Atheists believe you will cease to exist
 - Can they all be right? They can all be wrong but because their views are irreconcilable they can't all be equally true and right
 - o Well yours may be true for you but mine is true for me
 - You live in a pretend world if you think that truth is relative
 - Try applying the concept of relative truth on your tax return. Let me know how it goes...
 - “Enjoy your audit”

Let's Look at Jesus

- When we go to the NT, the “primary source material” on his life. What do we learn?
- Does he really say he's the only way to salvation? And if so, how do we make sense of this?

“I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the father but through me”
John 14:6 (Jesus' words)

“He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved.”
Acts 4:11-12 (Peter's words)

“Whoever denies the son does not have the father, the one who confesses the son has the father also.”
1 John 2:23 (John's words)

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ.”
1Tim 2:5 (Paul's words)

A Unique Focus

- The **Identity of Jesus** is the Central Issue of Christianity
 - o The Christian faith is not based not on the **content** of Jesus ethical teaching but on who He is
- Muhammad doesn't say unless you receive me as Allah's final prophet you will die in your sins
- Buddha doesn't say, unless you receive me as the one who taught the 4 Noble Truths...
 - o These guys just brought teaching and pointed the way
 - o Jesus said I am the way
- According to Jesus : The decision you make about his identity (not his teaching) will determine where you will spend eternity

“Unless you believe that I am he, you shall die in your sins”
John 8:24

So What's Unique About Jesus' Identity?

- If you were to ask **someone on the street the question, “Who was Jesus?”** What would they say?
 - o When I was 20 year old “un-churched” university student who had never studied the guy
 - Respected teacher / Kind to the poor / Good man
 - o But when you read the eyewitness documents, you realize those descriptions don't really fit

What was Jesus Self Understanding?

- “Before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:58).
 - o The Jews picked up rocks to stone him
- “My son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5)
 - o Followed by the question, who can forgive sins but God alone.

- To prove his claim was not an empty boat he healed the man.
- “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the blessed one?” (Mark 14:61-62)
 - “I AM and you will see the son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven...”
 - (Jesus quotes Daniel 7.)
- So you see when someone says that Jesus is a good man or a wise teacher, it kind of misses the mark.
 - Good men / wise teachers don’t claim to be God
 - This guy does not fit in the category of wise teacher or good man if he’s saying stuff like this...
 - Let’s look at the logic of this.

Three Possibilities For Jesus

- Jesus either was God or he wasn’t God.
- **The first possibility** is that Jesus knew what he said about himself WAS NOT true
 - What do you call that person? (DRAW) **A Liar**
 - What he said about himself was not true (he was God) and he knew it was not true.
 - The **problem** with this is that Jesus showed **impeccable character**
 - Peter called him, “A lamb without spot or blemish” (1 Peter 1:19)
 - Paul said that Jesus, “knew no sin” (2 Cor 5:21)
 - Jesus Arrest : “Which one of you convicts me of sin?” (John 8:46)
 - Jesus trial : False witnesses that could make nothing stick
 - Pilate : “I find no basis for a charge against this man.” (Luke 23:4)
 - The thief on the cross : “This man has done nothing wrong” (Luke 23:41)
- How can we conclude this man is a liar in light of the life he lived?
- **The second possibility** is that Jesus truly believed he was God but was really only a man.
 - Imagine you go home from church today and your next door neighbor comes up to you & says
 - I am living water, if you drink from me you will never thirst again
 - I am the pre-existent one, Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day
 - I forgive you of your sins
 - How would you be classifying your neighbor?
 - You stay right there, maybe sit down. I’ll call the nice men that bring straight jackets
 - This guy is one fry short of a happy meal!
- Was Jesus a lunatic?
 - When you look at the historical record, this isn’t the way that people responded to him.
 - People were transfixed by Jesus words. He did not speak the words of a madman.
 - People were overwhelmed by the power of what he had to say.
- The people of his day took Jesus seriously, because they saw him doing things that were consistent with his claims.
 - Nobody thought he was a madman.
- **The third possibility**
 - It doesn’t make sense that he was wrong and he knew it.
 - It doesn’t make sense that he was wrong and he didn’t know it.

- Only one option remains... That he called himself God and he was right
- What do we call that? (DRAW) "LORD"
 - That he knew what he was talking about
 - Now that's a HUGE claim and it would have to be backed up
 - How did Jesus back up his claim to be Lord?
- In the eyewitness accounts, we find that He offered unique and repeated supernatural confirmations of his claims
 - Specifically... Jesus
 - Performed Numerous Miracles of Nature (incl Grand Miracle)
 - Lived a life without sin (no imperfection)
 - Fulfilled OT Prophecy (explain)

Connecting the Dots

- So why was Jesus a religious exclusivist?
 - Why was he not tolerant of other religious views?
 - Why did he say things like "No-one comes to the father except through me..."?
 - To comprehend that, we need to understand why Jesus came

Humanity has a problem

- All of mankind is conscious of a separation that exists between man and God. A gap that divides us
- All of us are aware of a moral law that has been hard wired within us (a standard of right and wrong)

"Human beings all over the Earth have this curious idea that they ought to behave a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it...Something appears in me as a law urging me to do right and make me feel responsible and uncomfortable when I do wrong..."

- All of us have all broken this moral law

"I am only trying to call attention to the fact that this year, or this month, or more likely this very day, we have failed to practice ourselves the kind of behavior we expect from other people... all cultures agree in prescribing behavior which their adherents fail to practice. All men stand under condemnation, and this condemnation does not come by alien code of ethics, but by their own, and men therefore are conscious of guilt"

(Including some trying very hard to live well...)

"It is an unbroken torture to me" that I am still so far from him whom I know governs every breath of my life and whose offspring I am. I know it is because of the evil passions within me that keep me so far from him; yet I cannot get away from them."

(Hindusim : From Ghandi's Autobiography)

Guys, it's the "Human condition"

- All of us (Like Ghandi) feel far from God. We perceive a sense of guilt examining our conduct
- I did not need to be convinced of this as a 21 year old who had never been to church
 - I knew that if God existed and I happened to die at that moment it would be a bad day
- We may hope that God grades on a curve or that he'd charitably look the other way when judging my time on this earth but if he's all knowing and all seeing, my rap sheet today is....

“Your sins have separated you from your God” (Isa 59:2)

“All have sinned and fall short...” (Rom 6:23)

“...do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:9)

“The wages of sin is death.” (Rom 3:23)

This is Where Jesus Comes In

Jesus lived a sinless life. He's the only person who has ever lived that didn't break any of God's laws. If it's our sin that separates us from God and Jesus never sinned then **he doesn't experience** this divide.

As you may have heard, Jesus died 2000 years ago **on a cross**. An innocent man was put to death. What does this have to do with me? Jesus offers you a free gift. (**Stand in the gap**) He has offered to take your sins upon himself and pay for your offenses so that you can go free. He imparts to you his righteousness and assumes your sin **so that you can stand blameless** before a Holy God. Your place for his.

“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

2Cor 5:19,21

Why is Jesus The Only Way?

- It's because Jesus is the only one who has solved the problem of sin
 - o This is the core issue.
- Why can't Muhammed save you or Buddha save you, or Confucius save you, or Joseph Smith?
 - o They can't solve the problem of sin,
 - o They can't do anything to help you with your sin because they are busy paying for their own
 - They don't have the resources to change your situation
 - Only Jesus is able to help
 - o By the way, that's why the graves of these other religious people are still occupied

“Ponder the achievement of God. He doesn't condone our sin; nor does he compromise his standard. He doesn't ignore our rebellion; nor does he relax his demands. Rather than dismiss our sin, he assumes our sin and incredibly sentences himself. God's holiness is honored. Our sin is punished, and we are redeemed. God is still God. The wages of sin is still death. And we are made perfect.”

Max Lucado : The Grip of Grace

Objection : As long as my good deeds out-number my bad deeds... God will accept me..... right?

- This is basically a works based salvation formula that is held by many around the world (incl other faiths)
 - o The Bible is literally the only salvation by grace formula
 - o Sura 23(v102-103) in the Quran describes this / Brigham Young refers to this

- This way of thinking supposes that as long as my good deeds “outweigh” my bad deeds in this life that God will let me into heaven.
 - There are two problems with this
 - First : Let’s assume you can offset your bad deeds with good ones
 - How will you ever know if you’ve done enough to balance the scales
 - If Jesus is right (Semon on the Mount) that sinful thoughts are still counted as sins
 - The second problem is more significant.
 - This way of thinking ignores the essence of how law works
 - You cannot stack up times you’ve kept the law to offset times that you haven’t
 - Drive home from church doing 65 mph in a 40 zone
 - You don’t understand officer, I’ve driven 38-40 mph on this road 1000 times
 - What is he going to say to you?
 - The law presumes obedience...
 - Only one violation of the law puts the full weight of the law against you
 - If the Bible is right that the wages of sin is death, then I’m a dead man
 - My first sin sealed my fate and I am in need of a savior

God is offering you a pardon on His terms

You can either accept the pardon through Jesus and go free or reject the pardon and pay for your sins yourself
Its YOUR choice!

Salvation is a FREE GIFT, but even a free gift needs to be not only offered but accepted to be yours

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever should believe in him shall not
perish, but have everlasting life.”

John 3:16

Sending

Heavenly Father, I realize that I am a sinner and have broken your laws. I understand that my sin has separated me from YOU. I am sorry for that and I ask you to forgive me. I accept the fact that your son Jesus died for me, was resurrected and is alive today and hears my prayers. I open my heart’s door and invite Jesus in to become my Lord and savior.

Rom 10:9

- This is all for not unless we leave here and start putting into action what we are learning.
 - Jesus is the hope of the world and our job is to make him known
- Step up your game and be willing to initiate a conversation and see where it goes
 - Trust that the Holy Spirit will join you and give you guidance

Read John’s Creed for the last time