

Is Jesus Merely One Path to God?

Last week, I heard about a California megachurch paying \$8 million to leave the Presbyterian (USA) denomination because the denomination will no longer affirm that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation. On the heels of that conversation, while driving through Nashville, Tennessee, I saw a church sign from that denomination that said, "God is too big for just one religion." I've learned that is actually part of a larger quote from a poet/songwriter named Michael Franti. The larger quote is "Life is too short to make just one decision, music is too loud for just one station, love is too big for just one nation, and God is too big for just one religion!" ("East to the West," 2006). Please be aware this says "religion," not "denomination." This is not even merely a misguided attempt to claim all "Christian" denominations are going to heaven but taking different ways; this is saying all religions provide a true path to God: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Mormonism, Bahá'í, Judaism, and even Christianity.

It's catchy. It has that wonderful quality of sounding profound and meaningful. I mean, after all, God is really, really big. Can any one religion actually claim to have the patent on access to God? Perhaps it really is like the ancient Hindu parable of the blind men and the elephant. When asked what an elephant was, the blind man who was feeling the trunk said, "An elephant is like a hose." The one touching a leg said, "No, the elephant is a tree." The one touching the side said, "An elephant is a wall." The one touching the tail said, "No, you are all wrong, the elephant is a rope." Are we like these men? Are we merely blind men groping around to feel for a God that is too big for us to comprehend and therefore every religion can lay claim to God, getting to Him through some different way?

So, is Jesus Christ merely one way to get to God?

The reality is this is the one thing we simply cannot say about Jesus. I am reminded of C.S. Lewis's argument about Jesus Christ the person. He pointed out that we can say many things about Jesus, but the one thing we simply cannot say is Jesus was simply a good man. When a fellow goes around claiming that He is the divine Son of God who is bringing hope and salvation to all men who will surrender their lives to Him, we can say many things. We might decide He is crazy. After all, if the person sitting next to us were to declare themselves the divine Son of God who was bringing hope and salvation to man, we would probably say he is crazy. We might even declare Jesus as an evil liar. Certainly, if someone knew he was not what he was claiming and he led millions of people to put their hope in him, sacrificing time, money, and sometimes even limb and life, we would call that person evil. Or we can claim that Jesus is exactly what He claimed to be. When it comes to Jesus, we can either laugh at Him as a lunatic, lambast Him as a liar, or laud Him as Lord. But the one thing we simply cannot say about Him is that He was merely a good man. We have to choose, but we must make sure we know what our real choices are.

The same is true about Jesus Christ as the path to God. The one thing we simply cannot say is He is merely one way to God. In **John 14:6**, Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (ESV). Then again in **Acts 4:11-12**, Peter says, "This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (ESV). **Ephesians 1:3-14** drives home the point that salvation, blessing, and eternal life are in Jesus Christ, saying "in Him" or variations nine times. Read **Colossians** sometimes and notice that Paul is dealing with the idea of syncretism ("the attempted reconciliation or union of different or opposing principles, practices, or parties, as in philosophy or religion"—dictionary.com). The resounding conclusion of reading **Colossians** is salvation is in Christ alone. Notice that in **Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22** when Luke provided the closest thing to a name given to the religion of those who follow Jesus, he called it "The Way."

As you can see, the one thing we simply cannot say about Jesus Christ and following Him is that it is one way among many valid ways. We may decide following Jesus is crazy, that those who do so make wildly implausible claims because they are ignorant and silly. Or we may decide the Way of Jesus is a wicked, evil, intolerant, arrogant, exclusive religion peopled by self-centered snobs who think they are the only ones in all the world going to heaven but are in fact wrong because they aren't getting to God at all. Or we may decide Jesus Christ is exactly what the Bible presents. He is the one true path to God; He is The Way. But we cannot decide He is one way among many. If He is a way to God, He is the only way to God. He cannot be right about being a way, but wrong in His claim to be the only way. Jesus, Peter, Paul, the Bible simply do not allow that as an option.

If you want to reject Jesus and His Way as lunacy or evil, I disagree with you and would love the opportunity to discuss that with you. But please do not make the insultingly ignorant statement that Christ's way is one good way among many. It simply cannot be that.

The problem with the statement “God is too big for just one religion” is that it misunderstands the fundamental characteristic of God. God’s fundamental characteristic is not His bigness. It is His holiness. The thing that makes God, God is not how large He is. It is how holy He is, both majestically and ethically. He is the Holy Creator (cf. **Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8**). When we recognize that, we understand God is too holy, too singularly pure to be divided up among multiple paths. If we are blind men groping to feel God and only examining one aspect of Him, it is only because we are not allowing Him to open our eyes through Jesus Christ. As **John 1:18** says, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known” (ESV).

We do not have to grope in the dark, following our meager attempts at connecting with the divine. We can take off the blinders in Jesus Christ and pursue God with all our hearts. If Jesus Christ is not the only way, then He is not a way at all.

Can I invite you to walk The Way?

—Edwin L. Crozier