

Truth Is Exclusive  
August 14, 2016

There was a time that there were few religions in America. But that time is long past. Today, there are not only many religions, but there are many devotees of all the major world religions here in America. There are millions each of Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists in America. You may have a Muslim or Hindu neighbor.

Having contact with so many good people of other religious beliefs raises questions for many people about religions in general. For example, one common question today is this: **Do all religions worship the same God?**

I want to address this question today so you will have a way to answer this question if it comes up on your job, at school, or out in the neighborhood.

**Most of the world's religious traditions share some ethical teachings.** For example, no religion says that adultery and murder are okay. The Golden Rule can be found not only in the Christian Bible and the Jewish Talmud but also in Confucian and Hindu books.

However, there are very few religions that see ethics alone as their central teaching. Any study of religions shows them to be very different from each other. Reducing religions down to what they have in common throws out the most important beliefs about each. Subsequently, you end up with not much religion at all.

It is like saying that all you need to get from here to California is a wheel. If you reduce the methods of transportation between here and California to what they have in common, about all you have is a wheel. You could travel from here to California by plain, train, automobile, bicycle, or even on a skateboard. What they have in common is a wheel. So the conclusion is that all you need... to get from here to California... is a wheel.

But a wheel alone won't get you to California. A wheel won't get you anywhere better or faster than walking, because, in fact you will have to carry the wheel. A wheel, all by itself, won't take you down the street, much less to California. Reducing modes of motorized transportation down to what they have in common doesn't leave you with

Now, I know, you could also get there by horse. And a horse doesn't have a wheel. Most such illustrations break down eventually. You can't fit every religion into a nice neat package of ethics with all the others either. Not all religions teach belief in a god and be kind to others.

**It is not what religions have in common with other religions that is most important to each religion.** It is not what Christianity has in common with other religions that is most important to Christianity. It is what makes Christianity different from all other religions that is most important to the Christian faith.

While it is a good thing for us to be tolerant of different religious beliefs. It is not a good thing to try to reduce religions to what they have in common. Different religions believe in different numbers of gods. Those with no Gods such as Buddhism and Taoism are

atheist religions. Those with many Gods are polytheist, including Hinduism, ancient Roman Religion, and Wicca. Monotheism is a religion that involves just one God.

Christianity is not the only religion that believes in only one God. Muslims believe there is only one God. Jews believe there is only one God. Sikhs believe there is only one God. There are others, but these are the largest of the one-God religions.

Can we really say that all the one-God religions worship the same God? I don't believe we can. I don't believe we can, even if they start at the same point.

**Judaism, Christianity, and Islam affirm Abraham.** All three of these go back to a man named Abram. The one, true God revealed Himself to Abram and made a covenant with him. God changed the man's name to Abraham. He became the forefather of many descendants. God promised to bless Abraham's descendants.

Muhammad, who began Islam, taught that the Old Testament scriptures were inspired by God. He taught that Jesus was a prophet from this God and that He was the messiah promised by God. However, Muhammad branched off from there. He denied the crucifixion of Jesus. He denied, by implication, the resurrection, and denied that Jesus is God.

These three religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, are very different. Yet, because they started from the same base, some say they worship the same God.

Last December, a woman professor at a Christian college decided to wear a head scarf (**picture of hijab**) over the holidays. In her statement she said she was showing solidarity with Muslim women in protesting anti-Muslim rhetoric.

But what really got the attention of her employers was her statement that Christians and Muslims worship the same God. That was the spark that created a firestorm of comments and articles across America and the internet.

All three of these religions want to get to the same destination. We all want to get to heaven or paradise. We all want good things after death. But we take different routes and end up in different places.

Let's imagine, for a moment, that Ocean City is heaven. I know that is a stretch for some of you. But we are working on a map (**Map 1, Rt. 50**) Try to get to Ocean City from Annapolis. Head out on US 50/301. But if you get on the other side of the bay bridge and follow 301 you will not get to Ocean City. Comparing this to our religion question, we could say that the Jews are following 301. (**Map 2, Rt. 301**) So on the other side of the bay, they turn north and do not end up in Ocean City.

Christianity turned in a new direction, but is still headed for Ocean City. The Muslims are with us for a bit. Muhammad claimed that all the OT scriptures were true and that some of the NT scriptures were true. So he started in Annapolis, took the US 50 turn off from 301, but then when he got to Salisbury (**Map 2, Rt. 13**), turned south onto US 13 towards Virginia and not towards Ocean City at all.

So while all three started with the same revelation of God, as God continued to give more information, the Jews peeled off the right path. Later the Muslims turned off the

right path. Jews and Muslims do not accept the New Testament scriptures as being true about Jesus or how we get to heaven. **Christians, but not Jews or Muslims, worship the God who has revealed Himself in Jesus.**

**Hebrews 1:1-4 (NIV)** In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Jews and Muslims do not worship this truth about God. They have failed to accept this truth and have believed in substitute paths for getting to heaven. They reject what Jesus said about Himself.

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

There is a difference between saying something is A way and saying it is THE way. **The word "the" is called the definite article. It speaks of something particular.** A way means one of more-than-one. THE way means a specific one. For example, if I say, "Let's read the book," I mean a specific book. If I say, "Let's read a book," I mean let's read any book.

Jesus leaves us no room for interpretation. He said He was THE way, THE truth, and THE life. He claimed to be the way to God, the truth of God, and the life with God.

His followers agreed and preached the exclusivity of Jesus.

**Acts 2:36 (NIV)** "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

**Acts 4:12 (NIV)** Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

Jesus was raised by God from the dead and made Lord of all. The way to God is only through Jesus. This is the central to the Christian faith. Any explanation of Christianity without this would not be Christianity. It would be a different religion.

To say that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam worship the same God is to cut the heart out of the Bible and the Christian religion. The New Testament leaves no margin for misunderstanding. To deny that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the earth, is to teach something other than the Christian faith.

Jesus died for our sins, died in our place, died to take on Himself the consequences of all our sins. All our sins will be forgiven if we put our faith in Him, and Him alone. To add anything else to the death of Jesus is to deny the Christian faith.

Jesus did not die to make you good enough for heaven. He did not die so your good character or good works or religious acts could get you to heaven. Salvation is in Jesus alone, or it isn't salvation. You cannot add anything to Jesus and be saved.

It is not where you start with God that matters. It is where you end up. Both Jews and Muslims end up somewhere other than Jesus. They are following a different path, a path that they believe will get them to heaven. But they are not following Jesus.

And by Jesus' statements neither the path of Jew or Muslim will bring them to God and heaven. **Jesus proclaimed Himself as the only way to God. The only way that these three can worship the same God is if Jesus was mistaken, insane, or a liar.**

So looking back at our original question, "Do all religions worship the same God?" is the same as saying that Jesus was wrong. Or to put it in another question, **"Can anyone truly worship God (the Father) while rejecting Jesus (the Son)?"**

The Christian answer to that question comes from Jesus. It is a big NO. Salvation is not about where you start, but where you end up. It is about accepting Jesus as your personal savior and Lord.

Of the major religions of the world, all but one of them teach salvation through human effort. Only Christianity teaches that salvation is a gift from God that man cannot earn for himself. There are irreconcilable conflicts between Christianity and other religions.

**The law of non-contradiction says that if two statements about one particular issue contradict each other, then (1) only one of them is true, or (2) they are both false. They cannot both be true in the same sense and at the same time. Truth, by definition, is exclusive.**

Jesus said He was the only way to God. His followers said the same. That is not to say that there are many good people in other religions. And they are sincere in their faith. But you can be sincere in your faith and believe something that is not true. Truth is exclusive. If Jesus is the truth, then many have excluded themselves by rejecting Him.

One reason to try to combine religions into one is to focus on man's efforts to save himself. Such an approach assumes that God has not revealed the truth about Himself. We look at all the religious people around us and think, surely some of them are sincerely praying to God to know the truth?

Well, evidence from around the world reveals that God is not silent. God is guiding such people to the truth of Jesus. Even people in countries where Jesus is not preached are hearing from God in dreams to seek the truth of Jesus. And they are doing so. I hope you read the article in the Baptist Life about the Muslim man who saw the error of Islam before he turned to the truth of Jesus. God will lead sincere seekers to the truth of salvation from God in Jesus.

## Invitation

So not every religion worships the same God. The picture of God sitting on the mountain top and any path up the mountain taking you to God is not exactly true. Not every path will bring you to heaven.

In another sense, everyone WILL stand one day before the one, true, living God. And He will judge every person guilty of their sins. He alone can read hearts. He alone will know and prove the sincerity and faith of every person. Only those whose names have been written in Jesus' book of life will be saved. All others, no matter their religion, no matter how much devotion they showed in that religion, all of them will be cast into the lake of fire. Make sure you are not one of them. Don't reject religion, but reject every false religion. Receive Jesus today as your Savior and Lord.