

DR. ROBERT JEFFRESS

Is
CHRISTIANITY
the Only
RIGHT
RELIGION?



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BY DR. ROBERT JEFFRESS

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ANSWERS TO LIFE'S 7 MOST IMPORTANT
QUESTIONS

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Italics added to Scripture quotations reflect the author's own emphasis.

At a recent social with the staff at First Baptist Dallas, I recounted an email I had just received from American Airlines outlining my traveling statistics over the past year. I have an unusually heavy travel schedule, compared to the average person—just ask my wife, Amy—but I had no idea that I have become a world traveler, not because I often go to exotic places but because of the number of miles I clocked. According to American Airlines, in 2018, I spent over 100 hours in the air. Think about that—that’s two and a half workweeks sitting in a flying tube. And I covered so many miles I could have flown around the earth twice.

When you travel as much as I do it’s easy to ignore the safety procedures flight attendants go through before every flight. As some say, “Been there, done that”—thousands of times. I probably could stand up and from memory give the briefing about where the exits are located, how to operate the overhead oxygen mask, and where to find your flotation device. I am grateful that in all the hours and miles

I have flown I have never experienced a situation so serious that it was a matter of life and death. But I can guarantee you, if ever a pilot came over the intercom and ordered me to brace for an emergency landing, he would have my undivided attention. And if ever I am in a plane crash, with the lights out and smoke filling the cabin, and a flight attendant waves an emergency flashlight yelling, “Follow me to the exit. There’s only one way out,” she won’t have to yell at me twice. And I suspect that’s the truth for most people.

But isn’t it interesting that what we would do without debate or hesitation in the event of a plane crash—follow the flight attendant to save our temporal lives—we do not do when it comes to the salvation of our eternal lives. The flight attendant isn’t considered intolerant in insisting that there may be only one way out of a burning jetliner. And you wouldn’t consider me narrow-minded or bigoted if I grabbed your hand and persuaded you to follow me as I follow the flight attendant to that one exit. In fact, you

would thank me for saving your life. And yet, when Christians insist there is only one way to heaven, we are often tagged with the labels “Intolerant,” “Narrow-minded,” and “Bigoted.”

In my many years of ministry, whether in the pulpit or in public interviews, I am often reminded that the single greatest stumbling block to saving faith for many people is the exclusive claim that trust in Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven. You can explain Christianity with clear logic and reason, like waving a flashlight in a dark cabin, pointing to the one exit available for salvation, but many will simply refuse to listen if you insist that Christianity is the only right religion.

That has always seemed odd—and heartbreaking—to me, because exclusivity should not be a controversial position. According to Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias, “Every religion at its core is exclusive.”¹ And in the opinion of author Dinesh D’Souza, only two groups of people allege that all religions are the same: atheists and well-meaning but

uninformed religious people.² To those who do not believe in any God, all religions are simply variations of the same myths. But those who believe that all religions make the same truth claims are ignorant of the teachings of the major world religions.

In this last group, there are even many Christians who are confused about the exclusive claims of Christ. A 2008 poll from the Pew Research Center, surveying thirty-five thousand Americans, revealed “57 percent of evangelical church attenders said they believe that many religions can lead to eternal life.”³ Though that poll is dated, trend lines do not show improvement, leading me to conclude that a significant number of Christians do not accept the proposition that there is only one right religion.

What Makes Christianity Unique?

Obviously, any religion or philosophy or worldview can claim exclusivity—to being the one right way to truth and eternal life. So, what makes Christianity unique? How can

we know that Christianity is indeed the right religion? The answer is found in three distinct areas.

The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ

Few historians doubt that Jesus actually existed. Even the deist Thomas Paine, who believed the Bible was filled with errors and inconsistencies, accepted the historicity of Jesus. However, Paine embraced the view of Jesus that the majority of non-Christians have today:

He [Jesus Christ] was a virtuous and an amiable man. The morality that he preached and practiced was of the most benevolent kind; and though similar systems of morality have been preached by Confucius, and by some of the Greek philosophers, many years before; by the Quakers since; and by many good men in all ages, it has not been exceeded by any.⁴

But the problem with believing that Jesus was only a great moral teacher like others who preceded and succeeded Him, is that He claimed to

be more—much more—than that. In fact, no other philosopher or religious leader before or since Jesus has ever made the claims that Jesus made.

Jesus claimed to be God.

Although many religious leaders and philosophers have attempted to point people toward God, none of them have ever claimed to be God. For example, the prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam, said, “Surely I am no more than a human apostle.”⁵ Muhammad’s confession is not unique. Moses (the founder of Judaism), Confucius (the founder of Confucianism), the Buddha (the founder of Buddhism), Joseph Smith (the founder of Mormonism), and Leo Tse (the founder of Taoism) never portrayed themselves to be anything more than sinful men.⁶

However, Jesus claimed to be equal to God Himself. In John 10:30, Jesus declared, “I and the Father are one.” When Philip begged Jesus to “show us the Father, and it is enough for us” (John 14:8), Jesus responded to his request by saying, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has

seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" (14:9).

Eighty-two times in the Gospels, Jesus refers to Himself as "the Son of Man." Many readers wrongly assume that this title refers to the humanity of Christ. However, those Jews who were listening to Jesus knew exactly what He was saying by using that phrase to describe Himself. The Old Testament prophet Daniel used the term "Son of Man" to refer to the Messiah who would one day rule over all of the earth:

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13–14)

During one of the trials prior to Jesus' crucifixion, the Jewish high priest Caiaphas asked Jesus point-blank: "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" (Mark 14:61). Jesus answered, "I am" and then He added the quote from Daniel 7:13: "and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62).

Caiaphas and the members of the Sanhedrin (the ruling council of the Jews) understood perfectly what Jesus was declaring Himself to be: the long-awaited Son of God. If there is any doubt as to what Jesus was claiming for Himself, notice Caiaphas' response to Jesus' words:

Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. (Mark 14:63–64)

One more example. In John 8 the Jewish religious leaders engaged Jesus in a discussion about His relationship

with Abraham, the revered patriarch of Judaism. Jesus flabbergasted His audience by declaring, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad. . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am” (John 8:56, 58).

If Jesus had only been referring to His eternal existence, He would have said, “Before Abraham was born, I was.” However, the term “I am” had great significance to the religious leaders. They knew the word “I AM” represented the most holy name of God (Yahweh) in the Old Testament. It was the name God used for Himself when speaking to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). By using the words “I am”, Jesus was not just claiming to be a prophet of God or some lesser version of God. He was declaring that He was God Himself. The Jewish leaders were so enraged by what they perceived to be Jesus’ blasphemous statement that they “picked up stones to throw at Him” (John 8:59).

Jesus claimed to forgive sins. No other religious leader or philosopher

ever claimed the ability to forgive people of their sins and grant them eternal life. For example, the Buddha said, “in reality there are no living beings to whom the Lord Buddha can bring salvation.”⁷ Yet Jesus believed that He had the authority to forgive people of their sins.

Mark 2 records a group of disciples bringing a paralytic man to Jesus. “And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven’” (Mark 2:5). The religious leaders, influenced by Jesus’ declaration, asked, “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mark 2:7). Jesus answered their question with a visual demonstration of His authority:

“But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, “I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.” And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, “We have

never seen anything like this.”
(Mark 2:10–12)

Jesus consistently taught that His primary purpose in leaving heaven and coming into the world was not just to point people to the path of forgiveness from God, but through His death to be the means by which people can be forgiven by God.

- “Just as 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).
- “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).
- “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14–16).
- “I am the resurrection and the life;

he who believes in Me will live even if he dies” (John 11:25).

Jesus claimed to conquer death. Jesus repeatedly prophesied that His enemies would kill Him but He would rise from the dead three days later.

From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. (Matthew 16:21)

And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, because it is written, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.’ But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” (Mark 14:27–28)

Furthermore, Jesus taught that His resurrection from the dead would be the signal proof that He was the Son of God.

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.”

But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”
(Matthew 12:38–40)

In other words, just as Jonah remained in the belly of the great fish only three days and nights, Jesus was predicting that His stay in the grave would be only temporary. If you think that it is too much of a stretch to read a resurrection into Jesus’ above words, remember that Jesus’ enemies clearly understood what He was predicting. On the Saturday after Christ’s crucifixion, the Jewish religious leaders met with the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate requesting help to secure Jesus’ tomb. Why were they so desperate to make sure Jesus’ tomb was sealed and guarded?

Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief

priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, and said, “Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I am to rise again.’ Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, ‘He is risen from the dead,’ and the last deception will be worse than the first.”
(Matthew 27:62–64)

Pilate acquiesced to their request to provide a guard unit because he, too, understood the severe ramifications of an empty tomb. Neither Pilate nor the religious leaders actually believed Jesus could conquer death, but they knew He had unequivocally claimed He would.

If the disciples faked Jesus’ resurrection by stealing His body, Pilate and the Jewish leaders knew what would happen next. All of Jesus’ followers would boast that He had fulfilled His own prophecy about the resurrection, which would prove Him to be the long-awaited Son of God. The Roman procurator and the Jewish

religious leaders were determined to make sure *that* didn't happen.

Of course, Jesus' resurrection did happen and is proved by a mountain of evidence.⁸ What is relevant to our current discussion is how Jesus' prophesied and actualized resurrection differentiates Him from any other religious leader or philosopher. No other religious leader or philosopher died in public, was buried in a guarded tomb, and rose again from the dead. And even if you are not sure that such a resurrection actually occurred, understand that no religious leader or philosopher even claimed he could conquer death, again demonstrating Jesus Christ's uniqueness.

Jesus claimed he would return to judge the world. Jesus also taught His followers that He would one day return to the earth to reward the righteous and to judge the unrighteous. No other religious leader or philosopher made such a grandiose claim. But Jesus did—frequently. In reference to Himself, Jesus said:

“But when the Son of Man comes

in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.”
(Matthew 25:31–33)

“Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.” (John 5:28–29)

Here is another notable distinction between Jesus and other religious leaders. Some other faiths teach that worshipping the founder's god or obeying the founder's edicts determines a person's eternal destination. But Jesus taught that people's eternal destiny depended upon their acceptance or rejection of Jesus Himself as the Son of God.

“For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:17–18)

“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” (John 8:24)

In his book *The World's Living Religions*, Robert Hume notes that all nine founders of the most popular non-Christian religions went through a period of uncertainty of their own identity or searching for spiritual light. But beginning at age twelve, Jesus evidenced a clear understanding of His identity and His life mission. Instead of searching for spiritual light like other leaders, Jesus claimed to be the Light of the World Himself (John 8:12).

These unique claims of Jesus present what some have termed a “trilemma” for people regarding

Christ’s identity, brilliantly summarized by C. S. Lewis:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: “I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.⁹

The Teaching of Jesus Christ

If you are not ready to label Jesus as a lunatic or a liar, then the only other possibility is that He was who He claimed to be: God in the flesh. If we conclude that Jesus is God, then we must also believe that everything Jesus said is true since God is incapable of deception (James 1:17; Hebrews 6:18). So, the natural question would be, did Jesus believe there are multiple paths to God? If Jesus is truly God, then He is obviously the most qualified Person in history to answer that question. What did Jesus have to say about this issue of exclusivity?

First, Jesus believed and taught that there are two possible eternal destinations for people after they die: heaven and hell. He said, “These [the unrighteous] will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matthew 25:46).

Not only did Jesus teach that there are two possible destinations for people when they die, but Jesus also observed that the majority of humanity chooses the wrong path that leads to the wrong

destination. Jesus warned:

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matthew 7:13–14)

Carefully consider how different Jesus’ words are from the popular idea that everyone is on the same path, en route to the same spiritual destination, or the notion that various religions represent different paths up the same mountain of truth. According to Jesus, there are only two spiritual paths: one leading to eternal life and another leading to eternal destruction. Alarming, among the “many” who are on the wide road leading to hell are religious people—some of whom claim to be followers of Christ.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will

say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’” (Matthew 7:21–23)

Finally, Jesus believed that He offered the exclusive way for people to escape the horrors of hell and experience eternal life. When people accuse me of intolerance for suggesting that faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to experience heaven, I remind them that I am simply voicing what the Founder of our faith, Jesus, said: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6). I’ve never had anyone offer an effective rebuttal to Jesus’ words—because there is none. He could not have been clearer.

As we have seen, Jesus taught that a person’s eternal destiny depends on his decision to embrace or reject Christ’s salvation: “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him

who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” (John 5:24). Sincere followers of other religions are not exempt from the requirement to trust in Christ alone for salvation.

I don’t think it is accidental that Jesus chose to give His most detailed explanation about how to enter into heaven to a devout Jew rather than to a hardened atheist. Nicodemus is described as a “ruler of the Jews” (John 3:1), meaning that he was a member of the elite group of elders in Israel known as the Sanhedrin. He had spent his life trying to obey the Mosaic Law in order to please the one true God. If any religious belief system could have been an acceptable, alternate path leading to God, it should have been Judaism.

Yet Jesus said even Judaism was incapable of offering eternal life to Nicodemus. In order to experience eternal life, Nicodemus had to be “born again” (John 3:3). Jesus then explained the only means by which a person could be spiritually reborn:

“As Moses lifted up the serpent

in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that *whoever believes* will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that *whoever believes in Him* shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:14–16)

Some people argue that Jesus’ death on the cross provides salvation for everyone, including those who embrace different religions. Yet notice the repetition in these verses of the phrase “whoever believes.” Jesus never separated eternal salvation from personal belief.

A few years ago I took a group to the Holy Land. Many who have made that journey will say that one of the most moving experiences is to sit in the Garden of Gethsemane and pray, just as Jesus did immediately before His arrest and crucifixion. He pleaded with God to allow Him to escape the horror of bearing the sins of the entire world and thereby experience something He had never experienced for one second of eternity past: separation from His heavenly Father.

In great anguish Jesus cried out, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42). But heaven was silent. God provided no other way to absolve humanity of sin, because there was no other way. That is why Jesus insisted that He offered not just one path to God but the only path to God.

The Teaching of the New Testament

My friend Josh McDowell imagines a group of people traveling into a dense forest. As they get deeper into the forest they realize that they are lost. The group becomes fearful, understanding that their mistake may cost them their lives. However, as they peer into the distance, they see a fork in the trail and two human forms at the fork in the road. The group runs toward these two people. When they arrive, they notice that one has on a park uniform and is standing there perfectly healthy and alive. The other person is lying face-down, dead. Which person would you ask for directions to get out of the

forest? Obviously, the one who is alive! McDowell writes, “When it comes to eternal matters, we are going to ask the one who is alive the way out of the predicament. This is not Mohammed, not Confucius, but Jesus Christ. Jesus is unique. He came back from the dead.”¹⁰

Jesus’ clear teaching that He provides the only way to heaven should be enough to settle the issue of exclusivity since He is the only religious leader who has conquered the problem of death. However, the New Testament writers affirm—both by teaching and illustrations—Jesus’ declaration that faith in Him is the only means by which to escape eternal death.

Recently, I was talking with a Jewish businessman in our city who laughed and said, “I’m surprised you are even talking with me since you Baptists think all of us Jews are going to hell because we don’t accept Jesus.” Smiling, I responded, “Well, we got that idea from the Jews!” His demeanor changed as he asked, “What do you mean?” I went on to explain

that Jesus Christ claimed He was the only way to find salvation. “And Jesus was not a Southern Baptist evangelist, but a Jewish rabbi,” I reminded my friend. In addition to Jesus, other devout followers of Judaism suddenly changed their belief system, embraced Christianity, and proclaimed that faith in Christ was the only path leading to salvation. The apostle Paul was a self-described “Hebrew of Hebrews” (Philippians 3:5) and a Pharisee, the strictest sect of Judaism, known for its observance of the Mosaic Law. Paul’s zeal for his Jewish faith led him to devote his life to stamping out the heresy claiming that Jesus of Nazareth was the long-awaited Messiah.

But while on his way to arrest a group of Christians in Damascus, Paul encountered the resurrected Jesus (Acts 9) and was suddenly transformed from the greatest antagonist of Christianity to the greatest evangelist for the Christian faith. After his experience with Christ, Paul longed to see his fellow Jews also embrace Christ as Savior. In his letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul writes:

Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them [Israel] is for their salvation. . . . For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Romans 10:1, 3–4)

Paul clearly believed that Jesus Christ was the only hope of salvation for all humanity, including his own people the Israelites. And he wasn't timid about making such a claim. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

Similarly, the apostle Peter had been a devout follower of Judaism until he became a disciple of Jesus Christ. After Christ's resurrection and ascension into heaven, Peter was willing to experience imprisonment, beatings, and ultimately execution for his faith in Christ. On one occasion, the Jewish leaders arrested Peter and a

group of other disciples for preaching that Jesus Christ was the Messiah and for healing a lame man by invoking the name of Jesus. "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" the religious leaders demanded to know (Acts 4:7).

Peter didn't waver in his response:

"Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health." (Acts 4:10)

Peter could have qualified his statement by saying, "For this lame man, Jesus was the source of healing, but followers of other religions might call on a different name." But political correctness was not a concern for Peter. Instead, the apostle made it clear that faith in Jesus Christ provided the only means by which a person can escape the wrath of God.

"There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name

under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

Think about it. The three most prominent Jews in the New Testament—Jesus, the apostle Paul, and the apostle Peter—declared that no other religion (including Judaism) offered a road to heaven. Instead, the consistent message of the New Testament is that every person, regardless of his religious faith, is required to exercise personal faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

One of the greatest illustrations of the exclusivity of Christianity is the conversion of a Roman centurion named Cornelius. Luke describes Cornelius as “a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually” (Acts 10:2). Cornelius met all the criteria that the majority of people today believe qualify a person for heaven: he believed in God, he prayed to God regularly, and he possessed a healthy fear of God that motivated him to give money to

the poor. And if those actions were not sufficient to merit entrance into heaven, Luke records that God actually communicated to Cornelius in a vision (Acts 10:3).

But the message God communicated to Cornelius was that his worship of God and righteous deeds were insufficient for his salvation. Instead, God commanded Cornelius to send for the apostle Peter, who would communicate to the Roman centurion the message he needed to embrace in order to be saved. God orchestrated a series of miraculous events to bring Peter to Cornelius (not least of which was convincing Peter that non-Jews can be saved). When Peter finally met Cornelius, he wasted no time in telling him the details of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection from the dead. In the climax of his message to Cornelius, Peter declared:

“He [Jesus] ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Of Him all the prophets bear

witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.”

(Acts 10:42–43)

Cornelius and those living in his house embraced the message of Jesus Christ and were saved and baptized that day (10:44–48). I am often asked by people, “What about those who have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ? Do you really believe God is going to send them to hell?” This story of Cornelius reminds us that when God sees someone who truly wants a relationship with Himself, He will move heaven and earth to make sure that person hears the message of Jesus Christ. However, this story also illustrates the truth that a person must hear and embrace the specific message of Jesus Christ in order to receive the forgiveness of his or her sins.

The Unique Solution to Our Dilemma

All religions are not all wrong. C.S. Lewis writes in *Mere Christianity*, “If you are a Christian you do not have

to believe that all the other religions are simply wrong all through. . . . If you are a Christian, you are free to think that all these religions, even the queerest ones, contain at least some hint of the truth.”¹¹ One of these truths about which many of the world religions agree is that we are riddled with selfish and destructive desires that lead men and women away from experiencing happiness in this life or in the afterlife (if that particular religion happens to believe in one).

However, all the major world religions, except for Christianity, posit that the solution to our dilemma begins with each of us. For Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, meditation is a solution that allows men and women to confront and conquer those destructive desires. Islam and Judaism are similar in that they require us to keep prescribed laws and follow religious rituals to appease their respective deities. Although Islam and Judaism have different laws and rituals, found in different religious books, in order to satisfy two different deities, they

both teach the importance of human effort to satisfy their respective deity's requirements.

The impossibility of fulfilling the multitude of requirements each religion demands has led many followers to give up on complete obedience to their religions' standards. Reformed Jews and Muslims select those laws and rituals from their respective faiths they think are reasonable and possible to keep, and discard the rest. Perhaps they are hoping that God grades on a curve.

Like many other religions, Christianity also teaches that our basic problem is internal. But the diagnosis of our affliction is much more serious than other religions would have people believe. At the root of our problem is rebellion against our Creator. The Bible labels our innate hatred of God as "sin." Because we are infected with this spiritual virus, we are incapable of keeping all or even most of God's requirements. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," Paul declares in Romans 3:23.

Furthermore, Christianity does not allow for selective obedience to God's requirements, as Paul reminds the Galatians who were trying to merit eternal life by keeping the law:

For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them." (Galatians 3:10)

Remember when you were in school and loved those classes that were "pass/fail"? As long as you met the minimum requirements of the class, you were immune from the pressure of striving for a better grade. The Bible has some good news and bad news for all of us when it comes to our eternal destiny. The good news is that God utilizes the "pass/fail" system when judging us.

But the bad news is that if in a moment of weakness we fail to keep just one of God's requirements, it is as if we have failed to keep any of God's requirements. James wrote, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet

stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all” (James 2:10). The penalty for such a failure is eternal separation from God. In demanding absolute perfection, the God of the Bible raises the performance requirements above that of any other religion or philosophy.

Our natural reaction to such a demand is, “No one can measure up to that kind of standard!” Exactly. Although some of us have failed to keep more of God’s requirements than others, we nevertheless have all failed and are deserving of God’s retribution. We are in a helpless and hopeless situation from which we cannot escape.

But a loving God was able to do for us what we could never have done for ourselves. He formulated a plan by which He would endure the punishment we deserve for our transgressions so that we might experience an eternity in heaven with Him. When Jesus Christ died on that wooden cross two thousand years ago, He offered to take our sin so that we could receive His righteousness. The

apostle Paul explained the greatest exchange in history this way:

[God] made Him [Jesus Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

God offers to forgive us of every failure to keep His laws on the basis of what Christ has done for us, not what we have done for Him. Unlike every other religion in the world, Christianity does not require that we earn God’s favor in exchange for His forgiveness. It doesn’t even allow for us to try.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8–9)

Many years ago, during a British conference on world religions, experts were discussing the similarities and contrasts between the most popular faiths. Was there any concept truly unique to Christianity? During the heated debate, C. S. Lewis walked

into the room. “What’s the rumpus about?” the famous scholar asked. They explained they were discussing if there was anything unique about the Christian faith. “Oh, that’s easy,” Lewis replied. “It’s grace.”¹²

Every other religion has a long list of to-dos in order to merit whatever prize it may be offering. Only Christianity says that there are no to-dos because everything required for us to receive God’s forgiveness of our sins has been *done* by God Himself. All we must do is receive the gift that God offers. Again, quoting Lewis: “Christ offers us something for nothing. He even offers everything for nothing. In a sense the whole Christian life consists in accepting that very remarkable offer.”¹³

And perhaps that is the strongest argument for Christianity being the right religion. Christianity provides an exclusive answer to our greatest dilemma, expressed by Job when he asked, “How can a man be in the right before God?” (Job 9:2). Every other religion answers that question with

“work.” Only Christianity answers, “grace.”

What Is Your Conclusion?

You have heard my argument for why you can know that Christianity is the only right religion. But if all I have done in this small booklet is to convince you intellectually, then I have failed. Coming to the conclusion that Christianity is the right religion is more than merely believing it as an academic exercise, like believing that George Washington was the first President of the United States. It’s important, but not necessarily life-changing. But the very heart of Christianity being the right religion is that it *is* life-changing—that it will lead to the forgiveness of your sins and to eternal life. The apostle John was clear about this when he said that the purpose of his gospel—his argument for the Christian faith—was about an eternal life-change. John wrote: “These [things] have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may

have life in His name” (John 20:31). He restated the same purpose in another letter: “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13).

So, this is a good time to pause and ask: What is your conclusion about the uniqueness of Christianity? What do you really believe? All of heaven is waiting for your answer, because your eternal destination hangs in the balance.

Perhaps you are ready to concede that Christianity is the right religion and that conclusion requires you to open your heart to receive God’s forgiveness through His Son, Jesus Christ. If so, I invite you to pray this prayer to God.

There’s nothing magic about the words. They are merely a way to express your trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus as the only means to pay for your sin and receive God’s forgiveness.

Dear God,

Thank you for loving me. I know that I have sinned. And I’m truly sorry for the bad things I’ve done. But I believe that you sent Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. Right now, I’m trusting in Jesus and what He did for me to save me from my sins. Thank you for forgiving me. Please help me live the rest of my life obeying you. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

If you prayed that prayer you have done the right thing, and I praise God with you for the eternal life that is now yours. I encourage you to start reading God’s Word, making it a habit to speak with God through prayer, and getting involved in a church that faithfully teaches the Bible. As the days pass and you learn more about the Christian faith, I know you will become even more convinced that Christianity is the only right religion.

ENDNOTES

1. Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message* (Nashville: Word, 2000), 7.
2. See Dinesh D'Souza, *What's So Great About Christianity* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2007), 278.
3. Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2009), 219.
4. Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason, in The Works of Thomas Paine: A Hero in the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: Moss Brothers & Co, 1858), 9.
5. Sura, "The Night Journey," in N. J. Dawood, trans. *The Qur'an* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1972), 235.
6. See *The Portable World Bible: A Comprehensive Selection from the Eight Great Sacred Scriptures of the World*, ed. Robert O. Ballou (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), 134, 147, 151.
7. Buddha, as quoted in John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Handbook of Biblical Evidence: The Fact on Jesus, Creation, the Bible* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1997), 52.
8. See Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, *Evidences That Demands a Verdict: Life-Changing Truth for a Skeptical World* (New York: HarperCollins, 2017); and Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).
9. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 52.
10. Josh McDowell and Don Steward, "How Can You Say That Jesus Is the Only Way to Get to God?" *Discipleship Journal*, March/April 1997, 49.
11. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 35.
12. C. S. Lewis as quoted in Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 45.
13. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 147.

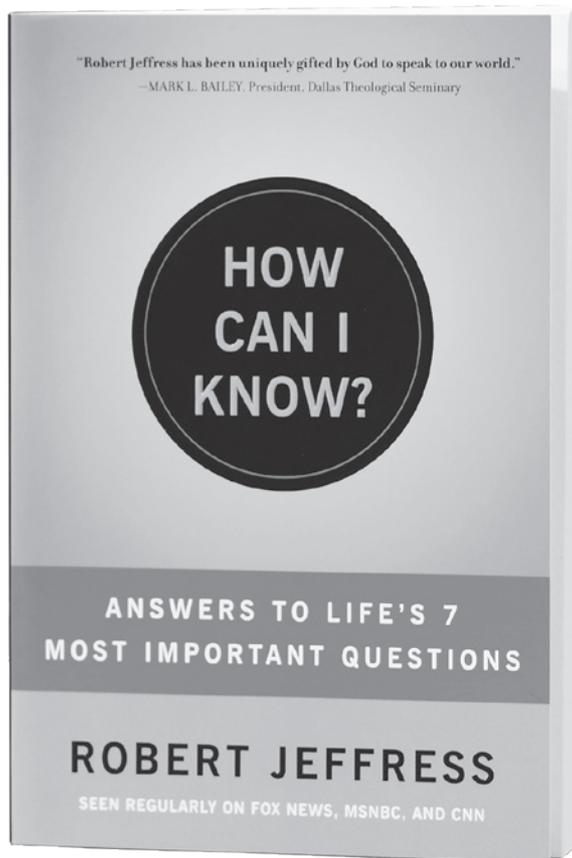
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DR. ROBERT JEFFRESS

is Senior Pastor of the 13,000-member First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas and a Fox News Contributor. He is also an adjunct professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. Dr. Jeffress has made more than 2,000 guest appearances on various radio and television programs and regularly appears on major mainstream media outlets, such as Fox News Channel's "Fox and Friends," "Hannity," "Lou Dobbs Tonight," and "Judge Jeanine," as well as ABC's "Good Morning America," and HBO's "Real Time with Bill Maher."

Dr. Jeffress hosts a daily radio program, *Pathway to Victory*, that is heard nationwide on over 900 stations in major markets such as New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, Portland, Denver and Seattle. His weekly television program can be seen in 195 countries and on 11,283 cable and satellite systems throughout the world, including India, and on the Trinity Broadcasting Network, Daystar and The American Forces Network.

Dr. Jeffress is the author of 23 books including *When Forgiveness Doesn't Make Sense*, *Perfect Ending*, *Countdown to the Apocalypse*, *Not All Roads Lead To Heaven*, *A Place Called Heaven*, and *Choosing The Extraordinary Life*. Dr. Jeffress led his congregation in the completion of a \$135 million re-creation of its downtown campus. The project is the largest in modern church history and serves as a "spiritual oasis" covering six blocks of downtown Dallas. Dr. Jeffress graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary with a D.Min., a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary, and a B.S. degree from Baylor University.

In May 2010, he was awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree from Dallas Baptist University. In June 2011, Dr. Jeffress received the Distinguished Alumnus of the Year award from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Dr. Jeffress and his wife Amy have two daughters, Julia and Dorothy, and a son-in-law, Ryan Sadler as well as three grandchildren.

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