

Christ's Way – Inclusive or Exclusive? (Part 2) (Rev. Dr. John Bartol)

Is Christ the true way to God or simply one more choice among many? To clarify this question let us take the position of those who reject the uniqueness of Christ and have the belief that it doesn't make any difference which religious road you follow because they all will lead you to God and heaven. .

So, if Jesus is not the true way to God, how many other ways are there? Let's look at a few examples- The terrorists who flew their planes into the World Trade Centre and the suicide bombers in Afghanistan believed that their actions guarantee them an entrance into Paradise. Would you recommend that as a way to God and heaven? In Eastern religions it is quite common to find people who are torturing their bodies in extremely painful ways, hoping thereby to merit the salvation of their souls. In our Western world, many people trust in their own good works along with baptism and church membership to make them fit for heaven. Still others believe they can buy their way into heaven by selling everything and giving to some ecclesiastical hierarchy.

But surely no one in their right mind would say that all of these represent true ways to heaven and God. If not, who decides which are true or false? Unless we insist that all ways, without exception, are right and true, we eliminate some and thereby adopt the same narrowness attributed to Christianity.

Man's effort to broaden the way to God actually narrows it more than the invitation of Christ, "Whosoever will, may come." A more generous, openhearted offer has never been extended. "The gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23 b). This offer, free to everyone who will accept it, can't be beat. All other ways prove more exclusive.

Now you may be asking, does this mean that all other religions are wrong and contain no truth whatsoever? By no means! Belief in the uniqueness of Christ should not cause his followers to be self-righteous or disrespectful of others. Christians are just ordinary people, sinners saved by grace through faith.

We must show compassion to others and respect their right to practice their faith. As you examine other beliefs, you will discover some good. In fact, in some cases their dedication and faithfulness, puts us to shame. But through an honest study of comparative religions, you will not find anything good and true that cannot be found in Christ.

Sociologist Tony Campolo clarifies these truths - "The Bible teaches that there is a natural and universal revelation of morals and values available to all people everywhere (Romans 1:19 – 20). On the other hand, I do affirm that the ethical precepts with which all peoples and religions grapple have their fullest expression in the life of Jesus Christ. He alone provides the way through which that fullness of humanity can be achieved... Christ alone is the way, the truth and the life."