

Confronting Christianity – Part 3

How can you say there's only one true faith?

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Sept 11th, 2022

Intro:

- The idea that all religions describe one spiritual reality in different ways has gained a lot of traction over the last few decades. This could be a response to all the harm that has been done in the name of religion, including the attacks on America 21 years ago today. You may have seen the "coexist" logo slapped on car bumpers and tee-shirts or perhaps the one that says "God is too big to fit into one religion."
- The view that all religions are equal paths to God is often illustrated by an ancient Hindu text of a group of blind men describing an elephant. One man feeling the tail describes the elephant as being like a rope. One feeling the leg describes the elephant as being like a tree. Another leaning against the side describes the elephant as being like a wall. While another feeling the trunk says it is like a snake. Yet another at the ears describes it to be like a fan, and still another feeling the tusk describes the elephant as being like a spear. The point of that illustration is that all religions are like the blind men; they all describe the same spiritual reality from their limited vantage point.
- There are several significant problems with this way of thinking, and we are going to look at a few of them this morning.

The Problem of Respect

- Too much respect. For some of us in this country, we "respect" the opinions, positions, rights, and freedoms of others to the point that we do not challenge them on what they believe and how they behave. In the name of "love" and "peace," we tolerate all types of things, even when we know that what they think or do is contrary to what is true to Christianity and the Bible. If we truly love and respect people, we will lovingly and respectfully challenge them on how they think and what they do. "When questions of truth carry life-and-death consequences, we see persuasion as an act of love" (McLaughlin, Rebecca. *Confronting Christianity* p. 48).
- Too little respect. This is where we have little to no respect for someone or a group of others, to the point that we will not listen to anything they say. We belittle and bash. We demean and demonize those with whom we disagree. We "love" them in unloving ways and remove and "cancel" anyone who disagrees with us, creating unhealthy "echo chambers" in our lives. We say things that appeal to our tribe but don't reflect the truth. In today's society, we are losing the ability to keep relationships with those we disagree. Look to keep and cultivate friendships with smart people who disagree with you. Choose to be a seeker of truth rather than to score points for your prospective.

The Problem of Truth

- Truth has to rightly correspond with reality in order to be true. It has become popular and acceptable in our country to hold "our truth" versus holding on to "the truth." This seems like a way to get around uncomfortable subjects. This way, no one will be wrong, and everyone has a right to "their truth," regardless if it is contradictory to "my truth."
- Now, on one hand, "your truth" can be something that you have learned through your experience and have claimed for your own. However, what is true is not based upon your

opinion but on what is true regardless of what you believe. For example, if you took something from a store and claimed that "your truth" is that you were permanently borrowing the item versus stealing the item, the reality is that you stole the item. "Your truth" does not matter and will not hold up in a court. A judge does not have the freedom to grant a decision based upon "your truth" but has to make a judgment on what is true.

- If there are contradictory "truths," one has to be true to reality, and the other one is not true. Logic has to be followed, even and especially when it comes to religion. Some religions teach all Gods are true, and others teach there is one true God. Some religions teach we are reincarnated after we die, and others do not. And they both can't be true. Something is not true because you believe it is true. It is true because it is.

The Problem of History

- Events either happened in the past, or they did not. By saying something did happen in the past does not make it true if it did not happen, and saying something did not happen does not make it so. There are some today who deny that Hitler's regime exterminated over 6 million Jews, even in the face of overwhelming evidence that it indeed happened. The same is true for other historical events like the assassination of Abraham Lincoln or Martin Luther King, Jr. Regardless of what you believe, they either happened or did not happen.
- This is also true about religion.

"The central truth claim on which Christianity stands or falls is that Jesus was physically raised from the dead. There is historical evidence for this claim, outrageous as it may seem. Alternative theories are surprisingly unpersuasive, and the extraordinary phenomenon of the early church erupting from a small group of dispirited and cowardly followers of a crucified rabbi cries out for an ignition spark.

But whether we think the evidence is strong or weak, it is still a historical claim. Just as Julius Caesar either was assassinated on March 15, 44 BC, or was not, so Jesus either was raised from the dead in ca. AD 33 or was not. Our believing or not believing in the resurrection may change us, but it does not change the objective reality of what took place two thousand years ago. And this is a question on which the three great monotheistic religions disagree.

Christians believe that Jesus rose from the dead. Muslims believe that Jesus did not die, but that he was instead taken up into heaven. Jews (and atheists and agnostics, for that matter) believe that Jesus died and remained dead. These claims are mutually exclusive. At this foundational level, religious truth cannot be untangled from historical truth. Even when we narrow our scope to monotheistic faiths, to say that all religions are equally true is to lose our grip on history" (McLaughlin, Rebecca. *Confronting Christianity* pp. 53-54).

The Problem of Monotheism

- There are many religions throughout time that claim that there are many gods, including the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Norse religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Neopaganism of today.
- Then there are those who claim there is no god or gods, or if there is a god or gods, we don't know, nor can we know.

- These two groups stand in stark contrast to the three monotheistic religions of the world, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. All three claim that there is one God. While Islam claims a different god than Judaism and Christianity (even though there has been a movement to say they are the same, which they are not), Judaism, Islam, and Christianity all differ greatly on Jesus.
- The claim that all religions lead to the same place or that all religions describe the same spiritual reality is either incredibly false, or those who claim this to be true are incredibly ignorant of what the religions of the world believe.

The Problem of Jesus

- The primary question of every religion and of every person was a question Jesus asked of Peter and of us **"Who do you say I am"** (Luke 9:20). Jesus taught things, said things, and did things that no other in history taught, said, or did. Jesus said:

John 14:6-7 ESV

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also."

John 11:25-26 ESV

"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die."

John 6:37-40 ESV

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

Mark 14:61-64 ESV

The high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" 62 And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." 63 And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? 64 You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death.

1 John 5:10-12 ESV

Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. 11 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

- These are either the words of someone who was delusional or a fraud or one telling the truth. As Oxford professor and author C. S. Lewis argued, this is the teaching of an egotistical maniac or an evil manipulator, or God in the flesh. Jesus claims rule over all of heaven and earth. He presents himself not as one possible path to God, but as God himself. We may choose to

disbelieve him. But he cannot be one truth among many. He has not left us that option" (McLaughlin, Rebecca. *Confronting Christianity* p. 58).

Conclusion

- Based on the evidence, there is no way that all religions describe one spiritual reality in different ways. There are way too many problems with this way of thinking. This morning we have just named a few. Think and examine the truth claims, beliefs, and practices of different religions and look at spirituality and religions deeply. Examine them closely and carefully. According to Jesus, your life and your eternity hang in the balance. Be fully convinced in what you believe and live your life accordingly.
- If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, God in the flesh, the only way to the Father, read His words carefully and follow His words closely.
- I think the major sickness in the body of Christ today is not that our beliefs are untrue. We don't believe them strong enough or live them true enough.
- Closing Song and benediction prayer.

*This sermon series is guided by the book *Confronting Christianity – 12 hard questions for the world's largest religion* by Rebecca McLaughlin.