



Right Questions, Wrong Answers:
A Study of World Religions
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Adult Bible Study - World Religions

Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Class 9am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org



Right Questions, Wrong Answers: A Study of World Religions

• Lesson Five •

What Must I Do to be Saved?

1. It is impossible for humans to save themselves
2. God graciously gives life to those who trust his promises

Worship

A meditation based on various passages from Scripture*

Leader: Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep."

Group: The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Leader: Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life— only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

Group: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Leader: When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Group: Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

All: The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

*Psalm 23:1-6; John 10:11-18; 19:30

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Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd. In love you freely offered your life in our place and poured out your holy blood for our sins. We raise our hearts and voices to you in joy and thanksgiving, for your death gives us life and your rising gives us hope and a future. Increase our faith through the study of your Word. Lead us to throw away our works and cling only to your merits. Drive away our doubts and grant us peace of heart and mind that we may stand with confidence and eagerly await the day of your returning. Amen.

Introduction

We live in an age of fine print. Sweetheart deals that seem too good to be true generally are. Experience has taught us that nothing is free. Everything comes at a price (just read the fine print). Sadly, people think the same principle applies in spiritual matters. They suppose it necessary to pay their own way. But in the bold, clear print of Scripture, God instructs us that deliverance from the guilt and punishment of sin comes to us in a different way— through Christ.

In this lesson we will study this truth and see how other religions teach just the opposite.

Studying God's Word

It is impossible for human beings to save themselves

Read Mark 10:17-27

1. What impression do you receive of the young man in verse 17?
2. Jesus knew that the rich young man couldn't earn his way to eternal life. Jesus could have said, "Believe in me, because I am here to die for your sins." Why don't you think he said this? (verse 19).
3. Why was the young man disappointed with Jesus' initial response to his question?
4. Jesus diagnosed the young man's situation by saying, "One thing you lack." What was that one thing? (verse 21).
5. Why is it impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God? (verses 23-25)
6. What is Jesus' simple answer to this important question: "What must I do to be saved?" (verse 27)

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How do followers of other religions gain salvation?

Islam: The Five Pillars are the most important works a Muslim must do to earn a favorable judgment from Allah.

- (1) **The Creed:** "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet." That must be said with conviction sometime during life. Most repeat it many times a day.
- (2) **Ritual prayer:** Prayers are said five times a day, at set times, with set postures and rituals, facing Mecca.
- (3) **Almsgiving:** 1/40 of all that a person possesses must be given to those in need.
- (4) **Fasting:** During the month of Ramadan, Muslims are to refrain from food, drink, and sexual intercourse from sunrise to sunset.
- (5) **The pilgrimage to Mecca:** Those who are financially able should travel to Mecca once during their lives.

Judaism: Judaism teaches that all Jews are, in essence, saved by virtue of their connection to Abraham. People are considered naturally good and, therefore, capable of resisting evil. By resisting evil and living in line with God's commands, they can present themselves to God as worthy of forgiveness. If Jews fail to resist evil, they can atone for their sins by sincere repentance and by striving to help others and serve God.

Hinduism: There are three main ways to find release from the cycle of rebirth. (1) The way of knowledge: Intense meditation delivers a person from the idea that he or she is separate from Brahman, the "world soul," and ultimate reality. (2) The way of works: Carrying out prescribed duties, such as reciting scriptures, worshiping various gods, fasting, or going on pilgrimages. (3) The way of devotion: Public and private worship of a specific god is seen as a way to approach Brahman and to loosen the world's grip. This is the most popular way to Moksha.

Buddhism: The way to remove suffering from life is to follow the Noble Eightfold Path:

- (1) Right knowledge: understanding that suffering comes from desire and attachment to this existence
- (2) Right attitude: freeing one's self from sensual desire, hatred, and malice
- (3) Right speech: not gossiping or lying; wise, truthful words are to be the norm
- (4) Right action: showing proper moral behavior
- (5) Right occupation: earning a living in a way that doesn't hurt others
- (6) Right effort: striving for noble thoughts and attitudes
- (7) Right mindfulness: carefully considering words and actions
- (8) Right composure: centering concentration within, rather than on things of this existence

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His Word in My Life – Option 1

The Koran says and Muslims believe, “They who set their face Godward and do what is right—their reward is therefore with their Lord, and no fear shall come on them, neither shall they be grieved.”

What does such a statement fail to take into account?

His Word in My Life – Option 2

Your Muslim friend has probably spent more time reading the Bible than you have spent reading the Koran. In response to your words of witness, he may very well point to the Bible and say, “Your Bible teaches that those who do good will live and those who do evil will be condemned.” How would you answer your friend?

His Word in My Life – Option 3

A Hindu, unlike a Muslim, does not look for deliverance to a paradise. Instead, he or she simply seeks to be released from the spinning wheel of death and birth. The way to such deliverance (Moksha or Mukti) is to follow one of three ways: The way of works (carrying out prescribed Hindu practices), the way of knowledge (consisting of strict self-discipline and focused meditation), or the way of devotion (worshiping of a particular deity).

1. What do all three ways have in common?
2. Though Christians reject work-righteousness, they may fall prey to an internal work-righteousness similar to that of a Hindu. In what ways?

The sinful nature with which all people are born will always believe that there is one way to be right with God: earn his favor. The old Adam is as self-righteous and work oriented as can be. The world’s religions call on people to live according to prescribed rules and follow certain paths to merit God’s blessing. These religions are appealing because they cater to the old Adam.



God graciously gives life to those who trust his promises

Read Galatians 3:1-14

1. Explain: Abraham didn't do a single thing and yet God considered him righteous. (verse 6)
2. The Judaizers likely told their listeners that all true children of Abraham would certainly submit themselves to the ceremonial laws given by God to Israel. What does Paul say in response? (verse 7)
3. In what ways have all nations been blessed through Abraham? (verses 8 and 9)
4. How do righteousness before God and eternal life come to us? (verse 14)

What blessings do followers of other religions receive?

Islam: Those who persistently adhere to the Five Pillars and submit to Muslim canon law will cause the scales to weigh in their favor on the day of judgment. They can hope to receive forgiveness from Allah and be given a life of unending pleasure thereafter.

Judaism: Those who study the Torah and the Talmud and endeavor to live according to the law of the Lord will find blessing in this life. Most Jews don't think that there is anything after this life that they could receive. Some Jews hope for a life after this one as a reward for the good works they have done.

Hinduism: By following one of the three ways of salvation, Hindus release themselves from the cycle of rebirth. A Hindu may give credit to a god or to Brahman for the release, but ultimately the person alone achieves moksha.

Buddhism: Traditional Buddhism promises nirvana to those who have followed the Noble Eightfold Path. Nirvana is the absence of ties to existence and therefore the end of suffering. While traditional Buddhism (Theravada) primarily describes nirvana as the removal of suffering, the broader Buddhism (Mahayana) pictures it as a paradise.

His Word in My Life – Option 1

Many Jews today are so focused on this life that they don't bother to ask this question: "What must I do to be saved?" The ones who are concerned about the life that follows this one are confident that God will be gracious to them because they are Jews and because they believe in him.

How is that faith any different from the Christian faith?

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His Word in My Life – Option 2

Your Muslim neighbor may talk a great deal about believing. He believes in Allah. He believes that Allah is all-gracious and all-compassionate. He believes that Allah will be merciful to him if he does enough good deeds. The Koran says that on the Last Day “those whose scales are heavy, they are successful. Those whose scales are light are those who lose their souls, in hell abiding.”

1. Explain: The Muslim cannot have the same certainty about salvation that a Christian has.
2. How might similar thinking manifest itself in a Christian’s life?

Because it is impossible for human beings to save themselves, a gracious God chose to act. He sent his Son into the world to rescue all people from the guilt and punishment of their sins. From beginning to end, God is the actor. He graciously gives. We simply receive. This is a refreshing relief from the work-righteous themes of other religions.

Summary

“What must I do to be saved?” is the most important question anyone can ever ask. The answer a person gives to that question is a matter of eternal life and death. Non-Christian religions hold out happiness to their members, but that happiness must be earned in various ways. Those who allow themselves to be instructed by God’s Word know that they cannot gain eternal life on their own. God graciously gives eternal life to those who despise their own works and look alone to Jesus’ merits. Those people do not earn life by their works or even by believing. God does it all.

Life with God

Day 1: Read Romans 9:30-10:17. Righteousness is by faith, not by works.

Day 2: Read Ephesians 2:1-10. By grace we are saved, through faith.

Day 3: Read John 3:1-20. Everyone who believes has everlasting life.

Day 4: Read John 6:25-59. No one can believe unless God graciously grants faith.

Day 5: Read Acts 16:16-34. “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”

Day 6: Read Psalm 32. The Lord graciously forgives our sins and considers us righteous.

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Lesson 5 Readings – What Must I Do to Be Saved?

Mark 10:17-27 – It is impossible for human beings to save themselves

New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

The Rich Young Man

¹⁷ As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

¹⁸ "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.' "

²⁰ "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

²¹ Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

²² At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

²³ Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

²⁴ The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

²⁶ The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"

²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

Galatians 3:1-14 – God graciously gives life to those who trust his promises

New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

Faith or Observance of the Law

¹ You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. ² I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? ³ Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? ⁴ Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing? ⁵ Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

⁶ Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." ⁷ Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. ⁸ The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." ⁹ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

¹⁰ All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." ¹¹ Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." ¹² The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." ¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

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