



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 Four •

Who is Jesus?

1. Jesus is more than a prophet
2. Jesus is more than an example

Worship

A meditation based on various passages from Scripture*

Leader: In that day you will say: "I will praise you, O LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me.

Group: Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.

Leader: With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. In that day you will say:

Group: "Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world.

Leader: Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.

All: Oh, worship the King, all-glorious above; Oh, gratefully sing his pow'r and his love, Our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days, Pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise. (CW 243:1)

Leader: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.

Group: Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy.

Leader: All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

Group: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever."

All: Lord, I will tell, while I am living, Your love and grace with every breath And greet each morning with thanksgiving Until my heart is still in death, And, when at last my lips grow cold, Your praise shall in my sighs be told. (CW 242:4)

*Isaiah 12:1-6; Revelation 11:15; 15:3,4

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Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are the Savior of all people. You want all to know and love you in faith. Help us know you more completely. Speak to our hearts through your Holy Word, and graciously grant that we recognize you alone as the way to everlasting life and peace. Help us fix our eyes on you, for in your perfect life and innocent death, we see the love of our Father and find reason to use our lives in service to your name. For your name's sake. Amen.

Introduction

Consider the ways Jesus is viewed today. Some regard him as a fine teacher, whose words of wisdom have value for all people. Some portray him as a fine example of love and patience, worthy of our emulation. Others consider him a martyr, who so firmly believed in what he was saying that he was prepared to die for it. With which of those statements would you agree? disagree?

However, Jesus is much more than a teacher or an example. We are wasting our time and energy if Jesus is just a man or a prophet or an example. In his Word, God has revealed to us who Jesus is.

Studying God's Word

Jesus is more than a prophet

Read Mathews 16:13-20

1. Jesus certainly knew what the people were saying about him. Why would he ask the disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" (verses 13-15)
2. What makes Peter's analysis of Jesus more accurate than the opinions of the people?(verse 16)
3. What strong statement does Jesus make about Peter's confession? (verse 18)
4. How does Jesus demonstrate himself to be the Prophet, who wants the gospel preached to the ends of the world? (verse 19)

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Do the other religions of the world have a Savior?

Islam: Muslims believe that each person is responsible for his own deliverance. No one can deliver another. Allah will show mercy and compassion to those who show themselves deserving of such treatment by following the Five Pillars. Jesus is considered a sinless prophet, but not a savior.

Judaism: Since they teach that people are inherently good and therefore capable of doing God's will, Jews have no real need for a savior. While people may sin, it is more in the nature of a mistake than a damnable offense. People can earn forgiveness for themselves through repentance, prayer, and good action. Many Jews still look for a Messiah, but that Messiah is primarily portrayed as one who will usher in an era of goodwill on earth. Jesus is rejected as a false prophet.

Hinduism: Man is basically good and needs to become aware of the truth. There is no need for a savior in Hindu thought. Each person is responsible for freeing himself or herself from the endless cycle of reincarnation by achieving good karma.

Buddhism: The individual is responsible for gaining enlightenment and thus freeing himself or herself from suffering.

His Word in My Life – Option 1

Muslims recognize Jesus as a messenger from Allah, calling him a sinless prophet. Muslims consider Muhammad the last and greatest prophet of Allah, a prophet who Jesus promised would come.

1. How do these statements contradict what the Bible says about Jesus?
2. Suppose you are talking to a Muslim. He is willing to grant that Jesus is a sinless prophet. How could you use that statement to witness to him?

His Word in My Life – Option 2

Orthodox Jews maintain that the Messiah promised on the pages of the Old Testament has not yet come. In none of the branches of Judaism is Jesus even recognized as a prophet, let alone the Messiah.

The Jews were the chosen people of God and the caretakers of his Word. Yet they rejected Jesus. What important warning for us is there in their experience?

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Who is Jesus? This is an important question because eternity hangs in the balance. Jesus is more than a prophet. He is the Prophet. He is the Christ, the one the Father appointed to come into the world. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The church that doesn't confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, is no church, no matter how spiritual or religious it may seem.

Jesus is more than an example

Read Colossians 1:15-23

1. What proofs does Paul offer regarding the divinity of Jesus? (verses 16-18)
2. Agree or disagree: Jesus entered into this sin-filled world to teach people how to live at peace with one another. (verses 19 and 20)
3. Why was Jesus' blood able to effect peace between God and human beings? (verses 19 and 20)
4. The Gentiles in Colosse had been religious people. They believed in gods. Why, then, would Paul say that they had been "alienated from God"? (verse 21)
5. What has God done for all people through the death of the God-man, Jesus? (verse 22)
6. What can we do to make sure that we "continue in [our] faith"? (verse 23)

How do other religions define salvation?

Islam: The Muslim's greatest hope is to survive the day of judgment, when Allah raises all people from the dead and judges them. Those whose faith and good works outweigh their evil works will enjoy everlasting pleasure in paradise.

Judaism: Generally speaking, the primary interest of Judaism is the present life. Some Jews do hope for a life "with the fathers," but they don't spend much time defining that life. The Jews who do believe in an afterlife rely on their connection to Abraham as their guarantee for life. They believe that because they are Abraham's children, they will live forever (as long as they have believed and endeavored to live according to God's will).

Hinduism: The highest desire of the Hindu is to be released from samsara, the unending cycle of reincarnation based on an individual's performance in past incarnations. Moksha (or Mukti) is the term for the soul's liberation from the karma that causes each reincarnation. A state of bliss is the result.

Buddhism: Nirvana is the goal of a Buddhist. Nirvana is the state of being free from desire and attachment to the present existence. Those who are free from desire are also free from suffering, since desire attaches a person to the present life. Buddha described it as bliss.

In all of these contexts, Jesus as Savior means nothing.

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His Word in My Life – Option 1

Only because Jesus is the God-man can he be the Savior of all people. Unfortunately, your Muslim acquaintance rejects the idea that Jesus is God. In fact, if your friend has opportunity, he will have you open your Bible to prove to you that Jesus didn't think of himself as God. He will point you to passages in which Jesus said that he did nothing on his own authority. He may cite passages in which Jesus referred to God as "my God." If Jesus recognized the Lord as God, and there is only one God, then Jesus cannot be God. Or so your Muslim acquaintance would argue.

How might a concerned Christian respond to such an argument?

His Word in My Life – Option 2

Islam teaches that each person is ultimately responsible for his own soul. Each person must live in such a way that his good deeds outweigh his misdeeds. Since a person, according to Islam, is basically good and capable of obeying the law of Allah, those who wish to have a positive eternal experience must work at it. The best "use" of Jesus, then, is as an example of sinless life.

How could you use this concept of Jesus as a starting point to witness to a Muslim?

Since Scripture speaks of Jesus' example, Christians want to imitate him. It is wrong, though, to picture him primarily as an example. Jesus is the Savior. He came into the world not with an eye on setting an example for human beings to follow but "to seek and to save what was lost." Jesus wants all to see him as the God-man, who reconciled a holy God with sinful people through his life and death. He desires for us to look to him as our Savior, our sole hope for eternal life. Only then will we have peace.

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Summary

Many so-called Bible scholars employ rich vocabulary to praise Jesus as an extraordinary man. But in the final analysis, that's not praise. When people confess and trust Jesus alone as their Savior from sin and death—that's praise. The five-year-old girl who says and believes, "Jesus died for me to give me heaven," praises her Savior. In fact, with her simple vocabulary, she has offered more sublime praise than anyone whose words end up describing Jesus merely as the greatest example of all time.

Finally, people in non-Christian religions are only interested in finding someone to guide them to happiness. We cannot expect them to be able to appreciate Christ as their Savior. Only when they realize that their sins condemn them—not just rob them of happiness— will they accept Jesus as their Savior. To lead them to repentance and faith is the task God has given his church.

Life with God

Day 1: Read Mark 5:1-20. Jesus is God.

Day 2: Read Hebrews 2:14-18. Jesus is human.

Day 3: Isaiah Read Luke 1:26-38. God becomes human through the miracle of the virgin birth.

Day 4: Read Isaiah 53:1-12. The sinless Son of Man accepted the guilt of our sin.

Day 5: Read Matthew 27:45-54. Jesus suffered hell for all.

Day 6: Read Luke 24:1-12. Jesus rose from the dead to prove that he is the Savior of all.

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Lesson 4 Readings – Who is Jesus?

Matthew 16:13-20 – Jesus is more than a prophet

New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

Peter's Confession of Christ

Peter's Confession of Christ

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

¹⁵ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." ²⁰ Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

Colossians 1:15-23 – Jesus is more than an example

New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

The Supremacy of Christ

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— ²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

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