

**Putting First Things First (Building our Faith)  
The Exclusive Claims of Christianity Are Offensive to Other Faiths**

**Intro:** It used to be that most of our neighbors were Bible believers who if not a member of the church of Christ was a member of one of the many so-called Christian denominations. But now the world has come to our door. And that means our neighbor might be an atheist, a Buddhist, a Hindu, or a Muslim. It also means that our teaching must prepare us to talk with people we may not have had opportunity to talk with in the past.

**In my "building faith" series this year, I'm addressing some of the challenges to faith often made by those who do not believe in God or in the God of the Bible.**

In January we looked at the argument that since there is so much suffering in the world, God cannot exist.

In February, we looked at the argument that since miracles contradict science, then God cannot exist.

In March, we looked at the argument that since science affirms that life can be explained by naturalistic causes, belief in God as a creator is unnecessary.

In April, we looked at the argument that since the God of Bible approved the slaughter of the innocent, He is not worthy of faith.

Now let's consider another objection, this time more specifically made against the faith of Christians.

**Today many people find the truth claims of Christianity unacceptable. They contend that the exclusive claims of Christianity are insulting to other faiths and express arrogance toward others--that it is a form of spiritual racism that fosters animosity toward other religions. How can we respond to this argument?**

**First we must acknowledge that the truth claims of Christianity (religion of Jesus) truly are exclusive, that is, they indicate that faith in Jesus is the only way of salvation.**

**Jesus made this claim himself to Thomas at the Last Supper:**

*Jesus \*said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. (Jn. 14:6)*

**Jesus' resurrection confirmed in the mind of His apostles that this claim was true; and they boldly presented it to their fellow-Jews in Jerusalem.**

*And 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. (Ac. 4:12)*

**Paul, a later witness of the resurrection, likewise stressed that Jesus' resurrection made him God's chosen judge of the entire world.**

*Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." (Ac. 17:30-31)*

**These claims from the NT make clear that Jesus stands in a unique position among the religious founders of the world and that the faith of Christ is the only way to eternal life.**

**Second we must point out that other major religions of the world lay claim to exclusivity as well.**

*When people of other faiths call Christians arrogant for claiming that Jesus is the only Savior, they should consider the truth claims of their own faiths.*

For example, Islam is radically exclusive. It claims that the Koran is the perfect revelation of God. Moreover that its truth is only recognizable in Arabic. So imagine this, in order to be saved one must have mastered Arabic and placed faith in the Koran as God's revelation.

Buddhism came into existence through the Buddha's rejection of two doctrinal pillars of Hinduism, namely, the Vedas as authoritative Scripture and the caste system. Buddhism does not tolerate Hinduism. It actively opposes it.

In contrast, Hinduism is dogmatically committed to the concepts of karma, the authority of the Vedas, and the doctrine of reincarnation.

*The point is, every religion makes a series of truth claims that they consider uncompromising and essential to knowing and following the truth. If it is arrogant for Christians to say they believe that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, then it likewise arrogant for the other religions of the world to make similar exclusive claims. Christians in making a claim that Jesus is the truth are only doing what the advocates of other religions are doing.*

**Third the nature of truth will not allow all truth claims to be accepted as valid.**

Today we continue to hear people making absurd statements like "everyone is entitled to their own truth." Or, "whatever you believe is truth to you." Of course, such statements of relativism are popular because they dismiss the need to investigate and determine what is right. They allow everyone to believe what they want without being challenged to consider the possibility of error.

**However, if truth exists at all, then by nature it must be absolute and knowable; and what contradicts truth must be judged as false. These fundamental principles lie behind the statements of Scripture.**

*Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (Jn. 8:31-32)*

*We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. (1 John 4:6)*

**In view of the nature of truth then, one cannot affirm the truthfulness of all the world's great religions without putting oneself in irresolvable contradiction.**

If the Koran in Arabic is the perfect word of God, then how can truth exist in the translated Christian Scripture when they contradict each other on numerous points?

The Christian concept of morality as defined by the Creator cannot be reconciled to the Buddhist concept of morality without affirming the existence of a creator.

The Hindu concept of reincarnation is itself logically self-contradictory since it involves repayment for past lives. What then would one's first birth be a payment for? But if we granted the concept, it cannot be reconciled to the concept of a single death, a final judgment, and of eternal reward and punishment as taught in other faiths.

**Consequently we are forced by the nature of truth to choose which religion adequately answers the fundamental questions of our existence and supplies the needed verification of its truth claims.**

*The religion of Jesus, in contrast to all other faiths, provides the answers to the fundamental questions of origin, meaning, morality, destiny. (I take these from the thoughtful work of Ravi Zacharias)*

It reveals that we are distinct from the creator and were brought into being by Him.

It reveals that meaning is derived from our experience in knowing and worshipping God.

It reveals that morality is defined by the character of God.

It reveals that our destiny is determined by God's plan of redemption from sin.

Only the religion of Christ provides an adequate and coherent system of faith that addresses all these points.

*The religion of Jesus in contrast to all other faiths provides a means of verifying its truth claims through God's acts in history.*

It is verified by the remarkable unity of the Scripture. Though written by numerous people over many centuries, it is unified by the thread of redemption that runs throughout. What is lost by sin in Genesis is regained by redemption in the Revelation.

It is verified by fulfilled prophecy as God's prophets confirm that their message is from God by predicting the future.

*"Present your case," the Lord says. "Bring forward your strong arguments," The King of Jacob says. Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place; as for the former events, declare what they were, that we may consider them, and know their outcome; or announce to us what is coming. (Is. 41:21-22)*

It is verified by miracles that confirm God's presence and approval culminating in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

*Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. (Jn. 20:30-31)*

It is verified by the historical birth of the church which confirms the credibility of the gospel to its original hearers.

**Therefore the religion of Christ among all the world's religions provides a coherent and verifiable teaching.**

**As Christians we must present the truth to others with an attitude of love and patient understanding.**

**Rarely do we win any person by simply overpowering them with the force of argument. Certainly we can win no one by hostility and dishonest argument. As Zacharias put it, it will do no good to cut off someone's nose and then hand them a rose.**

**And so our approach to people needs two the essential things.**

We must teach with the firmness of conviction that is based on truth. *For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. (2 Timothy 1:12)*

We must teach with the depth of love that is based on patient understanding.

*And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (2 Tim. 2:24-26)*

The German philosopher Nietzsche once said, "I will believe in the Redeemer when the Christian looks a little more redeemed."

**However, even with these things in place, we cannot guarantee acceptance.**

Many cultures are closed by the dominance of the cultural religion. Here in America no one risks their lives to practice their faith; but in many foreign countries being a Christian can put your life at risk. This makes it difficult to win others to the religion of Christ.

It is difficult for people to think outside one's own culture. Most people will never consider whether their faith is valid in comparison with that in another part of the world.

It is easier to believe that it doesn't matter what one believes than to do serious investigation into the truth.

Some will react hostilely to the truth no matter who presents it or how it is presented (Cf. Jesus).

**Conclusion: If Christianity is indeed the truth, then we do no one a favor by withholding from them the truth they need to be saved, even if there is risk that they will be offended by the offer. Our goal then as Christians is to proclaim the truth to as many people as possible, with as much conviction, humility, and love as possible.**