

4 JESUS SAID, “I AM THE WAY”

KEY POINTS

1. *If Jesus' claim to be the only way to God is true, all other suggested paths are invalid.*
2. *If there are many ways to reach God, there was no reason for Jesus to sacrifice himself for our sins.*

IN THIS LESSON YOU WILL STUDY THESE QUESTIONS:

- Are there many ways to God?
 - Just how precarious is humankind's position?
 - Is it possible to earn your way to God?
 - Is it possible to meet God's standards by doing good work?
 - Is there a bridge to God?
-

Now let us focus on one of the most profound statements that Jesus ever made, which, if true, is astounding. If this statement is true, you are confronted with the decision about how you choose to live life—either with Him or apart from Him. He said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”³²

ARE THERE MANY WAYS TO GOD?

Jesus did not say, “I am a way.” He said, “I am the way.” A lot of people think that God is sitting on top of some mountain, and the people of the world have all these different ways to climb up this mountain and get to God who lives on top. They think that it really does not make any difference how they get to the top where God is because everyone is climbing to the same place to know God. Therefore, they conclude that any way they get to the top is fine, or any belief they choose will get them to God. Any path is legitimate because we are all climbing the same mountain, right? Not if you consider a principle of logic called the law of non-contradictions, which states, if “A” contradicts “B” or

Does the law of non-contradictions support the more-than-one-path-to-God theory?

“B” contradicts “A,” either one is right and the other is wrong, or they are both wrong. For example, if I say all pens write with black ink, and you say some pens write with blue ink, both of these statements cannot be true. Either I am right and you are wrong; or you are right and I am wrong; or we are both wrong.

The foundation of logic is the proposition, a thing is what it is, and is not what it is not. Aristotle put it formally as “A is not non-A at the same time and in the same relationship.” A tree is a tree and is not a non-tree. It is not a dog, a fish or a cloud. A tree is a tree. That statement is both reality and logic at the same time. This is the law of logic, known as the Law of Non-Contradiction.³³

Here is another example. The Muslim says, “Jesus was just a prophet; he was a good moral man, but he did not die on the cross, and he did not rise again on the third day. To get to God one must obey Mohammed.” The Christian agrees with Jesus who said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” The Christian believes that Jesus died on the cross and three days later rose again from the dead. Both of these positions cannot be true; either one is right and the other is wrong, or vice versa, or they are both wrong. Furthermore, Jesus said, “I am the way,” not “a way,” and that is an exclusive statement. If Jesus’ words are true, He eliminates all other paths up the mountain to God. If Jesus is the only way that we can come to God, then no one else—not even Mohammed, Confucius, Buddha, or self—is a way to God.

That statement did not come from human logic. Jesus said it. If any path to God exists other than through Jesus Christ, then Christ's death on the cross loses all meaning. If more than one path to God exists, He did not need to send His only Son Jesus Christ to die on a cross in your place.

Does that seem narrow? Exclusive? Rigid? Perhaps so, but God said it clearly and with no ambiguity because it is very important.

JUST HOW PRECARIOUS IS HUMANKIND'S POSITION?

There is another way to view Jesus' statement that He is "the way." When you consider that God is perfect, the overriding reaction is amazement that we can have a relationship with Him at all. When we consider the state of humankind, it is unbelievable that there is any way to have a relationship with this holy and righteous God.

Look at humankind's precarious position. We have violated the standards and laws of a perfectly holy, perfectly righteous, and just God. How? In the words of the Holy Bible, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."³⁴ If you know Greek you know the graphic definition of the word *sin*. It was an archery term. When an archer's arrow fell short of the target, a checker on the archery range called back, "Sin!" meaning he missed the mark or target.

God, who is perfect, must have perfect righteousness and perfect holiness in His presence. Those are His standards. We cannot hit that mark. And because we all fall short of that standard, we all are sinners. If we are honest, we must acknowledge that our lives are not perfect. We have lied, stolen, coveted, envied. We have been jealous, angry, and full of lust and greed. We have not been perfect in any relationship. We may compare our lives to someone else to feel better. Certainly we have not committed the crimes of Stalin or Hitler. But that comparison is a futile exercise. No matter who we are, the best of us have fallen short morally of the perfection of God's standards. And because of our sin we are completely separated from God who loves us.

When God says "yes," we say "no." When God says "no," we say "yes." Most people, if they are honest with themselves, will agree that something deep inside is wrong and missing. That emptiness and aloneness we have is because we are separated from the One who made us. He alone can give us peace, purpose, and joy for living.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO EARN YOUR WAY TO GOD?

Most people think in terms of earning their way to God on the points they get for doing good. Certainly that is how people think in some cultures. If we work hard, we get promoted. If we study hard in school, we make good marks. If we work hard at football practice, we make first team. We reason that we can reach God the same way. Because He is a good God, humankind must work hard at doing good things to get to Him. But that is where the logic breaks down. God is perfect goodness, and our good works can never raise us to His level.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO MEET GOD'S STANDARDS BY DOING GOOD WORKS?

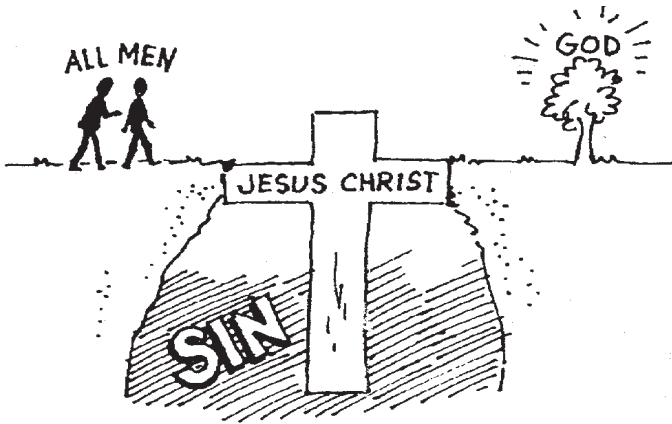
Here is a mental picture to illustrate this idea. Suppose God is in England and all the people in the world live in New York. God says, "If you want to have a relationship with me, you must swim the ocean from New York to England." So everyone dives in.

Some people can swim only one kilometer. Some, ten kilometers. Some strong athletes may get as far as 300 kilometers. An Olympic swimmer might even cover 500 kilometers. However, no one can swim all the way to England; it is impossible.

Like the different levels of swimmers, we can compare our goodness to that of those around us. We can say, "I never left my wife," or "I rarely cheat," or "I am not a murderer." But ultimately we are not ranked in comparison to others. We are judged against the perfection of God's goodness, and we fall short of the mark. We are guilty sinners according to the standards of the God who made us. Moreover, because of our sin, we can anticipate nothing but separation from God. Even though our goodness when compared to other humans may be like the Olympic swimmer, we will fall short (or drown) when trying to swim across an ocean or meet God's perfect standard of holiness and righteousness.

Now it stands to reason that if swimming from North America to England is impossible by our own power, we need something to carry us from one shore to the other.

IS THERE A BRIDGE TO GOD?



Jesus is the bridge that brings the holy God and sinful humankind together. That is why Jesus Christ died. That is why the cross of Christ is the focal point of human history. The drawing above illustrates this great truth.³⁵

The New Testament says: “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.”³⁶

None of humankind’s ways lead to God. That is why reaching God requires more than a random path up a mountain. We can never offer God perfection—the mountain cannot be scaled. God said that He alone determined how people would come into His presence. Jesus said, “I am the way...I am the door,”³⁷ and entering the door takes you into God’s presence.

A QUESTION FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:

“If Jesus’ claim to be the only way to God is true, why would anyone try to reach God some other way?”