

CHAPTER 18

JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY TO SALVATION

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

*¹¹I, even I, am the LORD,
and apart from me there is no saviour.
¹²I have revealed and saved and proclaimed—
I, and not some foreign god among you.
You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "that I am God.
Isaiah 43:11-12 (NIV)*

*"I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved...."
John 10:9(a) (RSV)*

*so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other.
1 Kings 8:60 (NIV)*

*To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him.
Deuteronomy 4:35 (RSV)*

*²⁴So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." ²⁵Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, ²⁶but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. ²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.
John 10:24-27 (ESV)*

*²² He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.
²³ And some one said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them,
²⁴ "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.
Luke 13:22-24 (RSV)*

¹³"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴"For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. ¹⁵"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. Matthew 7:13-15 (NASB)

We live in an unusual age in history. The Western church is probably weaker and more lukewarm than it has ever been. And it is more of a mixture of wrong beliefs and false religions than ever before. We see today a strange approach to the idea of 'tolerance'. All manner of wrong ideas or false religious beliefs will be tolerated freely, but not genuine, biblical Christianity.

A man can believe in Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, the New Age, yoga, spiritualism, paganism, Roman Catholicism, liberal wishy-washy Christianity, or a mixture of any or all of the above, and nobody will complain. However, if someone believes in genuine, biblical Christianity and says so openly, then people will aggressively object, and seek to silence him. However, there is no getting away from the fact that God says there is no God besides Him:

*⁵"I am the LORD, and there is no other;
Besides Me there is no God*

*I will gird you, though you have not known Me;
6That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun
That there is no one besides Me.
I am the LORD, and there is no other,
7The One forming light and creating darkness,
Causing well-being and creating calamity;
I am the LORD who does all these.
Isaiah 45:5-7 (NASB)*

The main thing the world objects to is Jesus' claim to be the *only* way to salvation. We could make Jesus far more popular if we were to present Him as *one of* the ways to salvation, or *a* way to reach God, or *a* Prophet or *an example* of how to live. If we were to present Him as just another option then few people would object to Him, or to us. But look how the apostle Peter presents Jesus:

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under Heaven given to men by which we must be saved."
Acts 4:12 (NIV)

Peter does not pull his punches. He tells it like it is, no matter how much controversy is caused. Look also at what apostle Paul says:

*For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.
1 Corinthians 3:11 (NIV)*

Note also how apostle Peter refers to Jesus as being **the** Prophet, namely the very special prophet that Moses had said God would send. This is first referred to in Deuteronomy:

*15 "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren—him you shall heed—¹⁶ just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, or see this great fire any more, lest I die.'¹⁷ And the Lord said to me, 'They have rightly said all that they have spoken.¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.¹⁹ And whoever will not give heed to my words which he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.
Deuteronomy 18:15-19 (RSV)*

Peter tells us that Jesus is this unique Prophet, whose coming was foretold by Moses:

19 Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,²⁰ and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,²¹ whom Heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old.²² Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.²³ And it shall be that every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.'²⁴ And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came afterwards, also proclaimed these days.²⁵ You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God gave to your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'²⁶ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness."

Acts 3:19-26 (RSV)

So, we know that Jesus is *the* Prophet that Moses said would come, whose words we must listen to or else we would be destroyed. Interestingly, Islam claims that Mohammed is actually this Prophet. But

he is not. It is Jesus and only Jesus. At any rate, that is the choice you have to make, as it cannot be both. Either Jesus or Mohammed must be a false prophet, otherwise words have no meaning.

Then look at what apostle John says:

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me. John 14:6 (RSV)

¹¹And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 1 John 5:11-12(NIV)

We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. 1 John 5:20 (NIV)

Whether we like it or not, and whether it makes us popular or not, Jesus also makes some startlingly absolute and exclusive statements about Himself. He does so in a stark and uncompromising way which, by today's standards, would be viewed as deeply "intolerant". It entirely contradicts the whole secular/liberal agenda of "diversity". Therefore, if you say that Jesus claims to be the only way to salvation, many people will take offence.

Strangely, the strongest objections are from liberal nominal churchgoers, rather than outright unbelievers. They have fallen for the diversity agenda and say that a Jesus who claims to be the only way to God is not the kind of Jesus that they would want to believe in.

Many will accept Jesus as a *teacher* but not as "Lord" because, if He is Lord, then that means He is way above every other person or religion. They don't like that. But look at what Jesus Himself says:

²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world." John 11:25-27 (NASB)

"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. John 13:13 (NIV)

Likewise many will accept Him as a *prophet*, but not as *the Son of God*. However, look at what Jesus Himself says just before He is about to raise Lazarus from the dead in John Chapter 11. He calls Himself "God's Son":

¹Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. ³So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." ⁴When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." John 11:1-4(NIV)

Note also below how Jesus accepts as true and accurate this amazing comment from Nathanael. He does not contradict him or deny being the Son of God:

⁴⁹Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." ⁵⁰Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." ⁵¹He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." John 1:49-51 (NIV)

Now look at how Jesus speaks to the Samaritan woman at the well and how he openly declares Himself to be the Messiah:

²²You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." ²⁵The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." ²⁶Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he." John 4:22-26 (NIV)

Then see the response of the Samaritan people in that village and how they clearly knew Him to be the Messiah and the Saviour of the world:

³⁹Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." ⁴⁰So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. ⁴¹And because of his words many more became believers. ⁴²They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world." John 4:39-42 (NIV)

There is a widespread school of thought that wants to view Jesus as just a "good teacher". If we choose to see Him that way then He can be fitted in *alongside* other belief systems or religions. Many people think Jesus would not object to such mixtures. They see Him as a liberal with an "inclusive approach" who would want to "promote diversity" But, it's not true. That is a false view of Jesus. There are a number of reasons for that false view of Him being so widespread:

Reasons why people present a false picture of Jesus as being just one of many alternative ways to God:

a) That is how many people think and there is a tendency to assume Jesus is like oneself.

We tend to read into the Bible an assumption that Jesus is rather like us. We can easily reinterpret Him as holding opinions very much like ours. We have to guard against that. All we can validly do is to read the Bible and interpret plainly what Jesus *actually said*. We cannot weave into it any of our own opinions or prejudices. Yet, unless we consciously stop ourselves, we will do that, without even noticing we are doing it.

b) Because an 'inclusive' 'liberal,' 'tolerant' Jesus who accepts all people, no matter what they believe, seems more attractive to worldly people.

He is much less threatening and offensive to some of us if viewed in that way. It appeals to our worldly nature and it avoids causing arguments or upsetting people. From a selfish point of view, there would perhaps be certain advantages if Jesus was like that. Yet, the Bible tells us plainly that He is not. Therefore we either have to believe what the Bible says or ignore the Bible and view Him any way we wish. You have to choose. But when you do, you must also take the consequences of your decision.

c) Because a Jesus who fits in with our preferences and opinions is more convenient.

Jesus would then be the sort of person that you can keep as a mascot. Following Him would be like joining a fan club. You could add Him into your existing lifestyle without Him challenging you or trying to interfere with your life. That is attractive to many people. Being a "fan" of Jesus, rather

than His disciple, offers the appearance of being a Christian, plus an enhanced lifestyle or culture, but without the cost or inconvenience of obeying Him.

The main thing that people do not want Jesus to be is Lord. We instinctively recognise that if we accepted Him as Lord, then He would want to act like a Lord. He would want to rule and reign in our lives like a king. But, that would mean we would not be in charge of our own life anymore. Thus many people reinvent Jesus as someone who fits in with them, rather than accept Him as someone with whom they must fit in.

The real Jesus – the only way to salvation

Let's look at some more of the startling things that Jesus actually says about Himself being the one and only King and Lord. I also want to dwell on the theme of Jesus being the *only* way to be saved, no matter how unpopular that is with those who are politically correct. It is simply a truth, which we must either accept or reject. Consider these passages:

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
John 14:6 (NIV)

but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.
John 20:31 (NASB)

And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,
Hebrews 5:9 (NASB)

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under Heaven given to men by which we must be saved."
Acts 4:12 (NIV)

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."
John 8:12 (NIV)

"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."
John 8:24 (NASB)

Note how angrily the Jewish authorities reacted when Jesus said the words "I AM". It is very significant, because "I AM", or "Yahweh" in Hebrew, is God's personal name. Thus, Jesus was taking God's personal name and applying it to Himself, making Himself equal to God. That is why they reacted so angrily. They could all see what He was doing.

In fact, Jesus emphasises God's personal name, "I AM", and applies it to Himself seven times in John's gospel, making what are known as His "I AM" statements". That is their main significance, i.e. His claim that He is God and equal to God. That makes Him totally unique in all of world history:

While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."
John 9:5 (NIV)

⁷Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. John 10:7-9(NIV)

²⁴The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." ²⁵Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, ²⁶but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷My

*sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one." ³¹Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, ³²but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" ³³"We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God
John 10: 24-33 (NIV)*

Look also at how Jesus describes Himself in the book of Revelation:

*¹²"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. ¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. ¹⁴"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.
Revelation 22:12-14 (NIV)*

*"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."
Revelation 22:16 (NIV)*

Take a careful look at all of those remarkable verses above. Does Jesus seem to you from those passages to be someone who is willing to embrace all beliefs and religions and fit in with whatever you choose to believe, without objecting? On the contrary, Jesus sounds from these verses like someone who thinks that He is God. There is a simple reason for that: He is God.

The Lord Jesus Christ is certainly a man, but at the same time He is also the Second Person of the Trinity. He is God the Son, and is equal to God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. When Jesus speaks, it is God speaking. He is totally unique. Nobody else can match Him. He is God in human form. That is not true of any other religious figure.

Therefore, He is not simply giving opinions or suggestions. He is telling us the truth as a matter of absolute fact. Whatever Jesus says is utterly true. He is not just another voice that we can listen to alongside many others. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. We are to worship, honour and obey Him in all things. He not only expects that, He commands it and He has every right to do so. He is unique. He is sovereign. He rules as an absolute monarch and He gives commands, without any apology.

The word “*command*” is offensive to modern ears. It is socially unfashionable in the current climate, and it offends our pride. It sounds as if He thinks He is better than us or as if He considers us to be His servants. Our fleshly nature does not like that and recoils against it. Yet, He is better than us. In fact He is more than just “better”; He is perfect, whereas you and I are corrupt, selfish and sinful.

Jesus Christ has to be either a liar, a lunatic or the LORD

Christianity is absolutely unique in comparison to all the other belief systems and religions on the face of the earth. It makes claims about itself which nobody else makes. Just look at the way that Jesus speaks with such absolute authority. There is no way that an ordinary human being could ever speak like He does without being a liar or a lunatic. Yet He is neither of those things, because He is precisely what He says He is. Therefore He is entitled to speak as He does.

Throughout His life no one could ever find Him guilty of any crime or sin of any kind. Even when he was falsely put on trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin, then before King Herod and then Pontius Pilate,

no charge against Him could stick. Nobody could find any evidence that stood up. Would that be true of you?

How long would it take for people to dig around in your life or mine and find evidence of hypocrisy, pride, dishonesty, selfishness, greed, impatience, rudeness, unfaithfulness, inconsistency, or a host of other sins or crimes? It would not take long in my life. Yet nobody could do it in Jesus' life.

If that is so, then how can He possibly be a lunatic or a liar? It simply does not add up, and our own instinct confirms that. We know it simply by reading the words that He spoke. **The problem is that that leaves us with only one option, which is that He is exactly what He said He is, i.e. the LORD.**

You can try as hard as you like, but there are no other options. He is either a liar or a lunatic or He is the LORD. He cannot be a *mixture* of these three things, i.e. part liar, part lunatic and part telling the truth. Yet He also cannot be *anything else* outside of these three things. You therefore have to pick one of them. In my experience, people agree that He is not insane or a liar, but they shrink back from conceding that He is exactly what He said He is. The main reason they hold back is they don't *want* to accept the implications of that.

If Jesus is the LORD, as He says He is, then all the other things He says must also be true. That has massive implications for our lives. It means that we need to change radically. *But, we don't want to.* Thus, many people reserve judgment on what Jesus really is and decide not to come to any decision. They leave it hanging in the air. Then they don't have to reach a place which requires them to change or take action. That self-delusion makes them feel better, but it is foolish.

Moving back to our original question, which is whether Jesus is the only way to salvation, we need to look at Him and His claims against the back drop that we have just painted. Look at the things He says about Himself. If you or I said any of those things, then people would laugh at us or even put us into a mental institution, yet not Him.

Even His enemies could not deny that He was doing vast numbers of astonishing miracles in front of large crowds. He did so whilst representatives of the High Priest were standing at close quarters watching His every move and listening to every word. They witnessed almost everything He did, and they could never fault Him or find any way to expose Him or trip Him up. They saw that everything He did was genuine.

Have you ever noticed in the Bible how many times the Sadducees, Pharisees, Scribes, and even members of the Sanhedrin, were present when Jesus was teaching, and that they questioned Him about the things He said? Why were they even there? It was because they were constantly following Him around. The reason they were doing so is that He had performed certain miracles which were viewed as "*Messianic miracles*".

These were specific miracles that Jewish tradition said could only be done by the Messiah Himself. For example, the healing of a Jewish leper inside the Land of Israel or healing a person born blind, were said to be things that only the Messiah would do. Therefore they were following Him to verify these miracles and to find out whether He really was the Messiah they were all waiting for.

Therefore, when Jesus performed miracles it was necessary for the representatives of the High Priest to follow Him and investigate it all to certify whether they were genuine miracles. If they could have somehow exposed Him as a fraudster or His miracles as fake, then they would have done so. Yet they never did, because they couldn't. On the contrary, they openly acknowledged that He was performing these Messianic miracles.

They could not deny it. They had seen Him do them on many occasions in front of large crowds. Yet they still stubbornly refused to become His disciples. In fact they hated Him all the more, because they felt envious and because He condemned many of their traditions and practices as being false and unbiblical. So, if anybody could have caught Him out or exposed Him as false, they would have done so eagerly.

It simply does not make any sense to believe in Jesus and to try to accept any other religious system or practice at the same time. For example, if Jesus is who He says He is, and if what He says is true, then Hinduism must be false. Equally, Islam, Sikhism and Buddhism must be false. So must Confucianism, Spiritualism, Mormonism, the beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses and any other religion or cult.

I have no desire at all to offend anyone, yet, if you examine this, you will have to concede that what Jesus said and what the founders and followers of all cults and religions say are mutually exclusive. **They cannot both be true. It is either Christianity or some other belief, but it cannot be both.**

For example, Jesus teaches that He is the Son of God, i.e. the Second Person of the Trinity. Yet, Islam teaches that God has no Son. That is what Mohammed said. Those two statements cannot both be true. One of them must be wrong.

No matter how polite or diplomatic you might wish to be, you will not be capable of explaining how the claims of Jesus about Himself and the teaching of Islam about Jesus can both be true. They simply cannot be. At least one of them is false. Likewise, as we saw earlier, they cannot both be the special Prophet that Moses said would come. If Jesus is that Prophet, which He is, then Mohammed is not.

Moreover, the Lord Jesus and Mohammed cannot both be the mediator between God and men. Only one person has that place, and it is Jesus:

⁵For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time. 1 Timothy 2:5-6 (NIV)

Apostle Peter confirms this further in Acts:

⁴²And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³To him all the prophets bear witness that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” Acts 10:42-43 (RSV)

Now consider Hinduism. This is a polytheistic religion. That means that they have many different gods, in fact millions of gods. Yet, Jesus tells us that there is only one God, namely the God of Israel, i.e. the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He alone is God and there is no other. The Bible clearly teaches that any other 'gods' that people worship are simply demons pretending to be gods.

We might feel that it would be convenient and diplomatic if we could simply fit Christianity and Hinduism together. Then we could accept that Hinduism has many gods and that Jesus is just another of them who fits in alongside all the others. But we cannot do so. If we are honest we will have to concede that we cannot hold these two beliefs at the same time. It would be illogical and absurd.

Either there is one God and all other gods are demons masquerading as gods or the Bible is not true. If so, Hinduism could be true, but not if the Bible is true. We can accept one or the other, but we cannot logically accept both. You have to choose. God urges you to choose Him:

***"Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth;
For I am God, and there is no other.***

Isaiah 45:22 (NASB)

Look what the Bible says about other gods. These gods referred to below and declared to be false and empty include Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism and so on. They are all false and man-made religions. They do not lead to salvation but to Hell and then the Lake of Fire :

***⁹ All who make idols are nothing,
and the things they treasure are worthless.
Those who would speak up for them are blind;
they are ignorant, to their own shame.***

***¹⁰ Who shapes a god and casts an idol,
which can profit him nothing?***

Isaiah 44:9-10 (NIV)

***"Gather yourselves and come;
Draw near together, you fugitives of the
nations; They have no knowledge,
Who carry about their wooden idol
And pray to a god who cannot save.***

Isaiah 45:20 (NASB)

***¹⁸ "Of what value is an idol, since a man has
carved it? ¹⁹Or an image that teaches lies? For
he who makes it trusts in his own creation; he
makes idols that cannot speak. Woe to him who
says to wood, 'Come to life!' Or to lifeless stone,
'Wake up!' Can it give guidance? fashioned and
made the It is covered with gold and silver;
there is no breath in it.***

Habakkuk 2:18-19 (NIV)

***²⁵ For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
he is to be feared above all gods.***

***²⁶ For all the gods of the nations are idols,
but the LORD made the Heavens.***

1 Chronicles 16:25-26 (NIV)

***¹⁶ Half of the wood he burns in the fire;
over it he prepares his meal,
he roasts his meat and eats his fill.***

***He also warms himself and says,
'Ah! I am warm; I see the fire.'***

***¹⁷ From the rest he makes a god, his idol;
he bows down to it and worships.***

***He prays to it and says, "Save me; you are my
god."*** ¹⁸ ***They know nothing, they understand
nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they
cannot see, and their minds closed so they
cannot understand.***

Isaiah 44:16-18 (NIV)

***¹⁶ All the makers of idols will be put to shame
and disgraced; they will go off into disgrace
together.¹⁷ But Israel will be saved by the LORD
with an everlasting salvation; you will never be
put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting.***

***¹⁸ For this is what the LORD says he who
created the Heavens, he is God; he who earth,
he founded it; he did not create it to be empty
but formed it to be inhabited he says: "I am the
LORD, and there is no other.***

Isaiah 45:16-18 (NIV)

We could go on and on looking at the distinctions between genuine, biblical Christianity and any religion or cult that you could ever think of. At some point, in some way, every religion or cult denies an essential truth about biblical Christianity. Usually they deny the vital truths about *who* Jesus Christ is.

For example, a Jehovah's Witness will not accept that Jesus Christ is *God*, i.e. that He is the Second Person of the Trinity. They say that He is only a man. They are either right or wrong. If they are right, then biblical Christianity would be false. If however we do not want to say that, then we must say that the beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses are false. We can't say that *neither* is false.

All of this goes entirely against the grain of modern secular thinking and political correctness. In the modern Western world people do not like to arrive at clear conclusions or call anything 'false'. Western thinking is now 'relativist'. Our society believes that there are no absolutes and that all things are relative. Thus a bundle of contradictory things can all be true at the same time and many people are comfortable with that.

Relativism enables us not to have to make any clear choices. We can assume that there is 'merit' in a host of different and conflicting viewpoints and that there is "*truth in all of them somewhere.*"

Relativism is relaxed about leaving it at that, without digging any deeper or trying to reach clear conclusions or labelling anything as true or false. That is the way that much of the Western world now thinks. It is so widespread that it is not even considered illogical anymore. In the past a man who believed two contradictory things at the same time would have been considered to be a fool, but not now.

However, if the Bible is true, we have to make a clear decision about the Lord Jesus Christ. He will not allow anything less than our total acceptance of what He teaches. He also insists that we follow Him unreservedly, with all our heart and with absolute loyalty. To do that we must forsake all other gods and all other competing claims on our lives.

And there must be no fudge or compromise. We cannot try to have it both ways by recognising and worshipping other gods and also worshipping the true God at the same time. There is a strong temptation in our day to mix Christianity with other religions so as to fit in better with other people and avoid pressure.

This kind of mixture is called "*syncretism*" and it is very widespread in the Western churches today. There are many joint services where people of different faiths "*come together*" and "*worship together*". This has been participated in by Pope John Paul II and also by Pope Benedict XVI. Very many Anglican, Methodist and other leaders have done the same. However, it is not acceptable to God.

Compare that confused and compromised approach with the firm, clear stance taken by the three friends of the prophet Daniel. They were faced with a crisis when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon tried to force them to worship his false gods or else be put to death. Most people went along with it and cooperated in order to avoid being executed. But Daniel's friends did not:

¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? ¹⁵"Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?" ¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. ¹⁷"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸"But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

Daniel 3:14-18 (NASB)

As it happened, on that occasion, God rescued the three men from the fiery furnace. However, that is the exception. Normally we are not rescued and we have to face the consequences of remaining faithful to the one true God. It shows, however, how seriously God takes the need for us to hold firm to the truth. We must not be joined to any false religion or participate in the worship of any false god.

Jesus' claim to be the only way to salvation must either be true or false. If it is false then He is either lying or mistaken about this. If so, then that claim falls down, and so does everything else about Him. In other words, if He is wrong about that, then He is not worthy of being worshiped, or followed at all.

Yet, if He is the only way to salvation, then we have a colossal problem on our hands. I say that because the vast majority of our world doesn't believe in Jesus Christ or follow Him.

If that is so, then it means that most people are not saved, which means that they do not have eternal life. Thus when they die they will stand condemned before God at the Great White Throne judgment. But those people who face that judgment are all around me. They are my friends, family, neighbours and work colleagues. Does that mean they are going to go to Hell and the Lake of Fire unless they repent? The Bible says they are, which is a terrible thought.

I wish that I did not have to believe that last point, and that there was some way round it. I wish that it could somehow be true to say that all men will be saved and that nobody will go to Hell or the Lake of Fire or stand condemned before God. Yet, there is no biblical basis for believing that. If we believe what Jesus said, and take Him at His word, then there is no other position that we can take.

It means that He is the only way to God. That means that salvation cannot be found through anyone else, or in any other belief, system or practice. Saying that is going to make us unpopular. Yet, it is the truth.

These are horrifying thoughts. Even to imagine the people we know going to a lost eternity in the Lake of Fire is awful. Many people deal with that by just ignoring it or blocking it out of their minds. I can't do that. What good would it do to pretend that something isn't true when we know it is?

If what Jesus says is true then we urgently need to take action. We must repent and turn to Him. We must also tell others. To simply bury our heads in the sand and not worry about it, which is what most of us do, is surely the worst possible response.

I would urge you to go against the instinct to bury your head, or any other ways of avoiding painful realities. Instead face up to the dilemma head on. Jesus is the only way to salvation. There is no other way to be saved, no matter how unfashionable or controversial it may be to say that. Therefore let's respond to Him while there is still time. And let us forsake any other gods or philosophies which we may have put in His place.

Look at what Joshua said to the Jewish people after they had escaped from Egypt and just as they were entering the 'Promised Land' of Israel. God spoke through Joshua to warn the people to get rid of any other gods and, instead, to worship God alone.

¹⁴ "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." *Joshua 24:14-15 (NIV)*

Remember also the first commandment which God gave to Moses:

¹ And God spoke all these words: ² "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ³ "You shall have no other gods before me" *Exodus 20:1-3 (NIV)*

And we are told again in 2 Kings not to worship any other gods:

³⁷ You must always be careful to keep the decrees and ordinances, the laws and commands he wrote for you. Do not worship other gods. ³⁸ Do not forget the covenant I have made with you, and do not worship other gods.
2 Kings 17:37-38 (NIV)

You now have to decide whether to take these commands seriously, or to disobey, dodge or deny them. You must also decide whether Jesus is just one of many equally acceptable ways to get to God, or the one and only way. Be careful how you make that choice because, according to the Bible, your whole eternal future depends on it.

³⁶ "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."
John 3:36 (NASB)