

# Do all roads lead to God?

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## **Do all roads lead to Rome and all religions lead to God?**

I know plenty of people who pick and choose - a bit from this religion, a bit from that - until they construct a system of belief that sits just right for them. They feel all religions are the same, or if not the same at least equally valid. There is no need to choose just one. Any road will take you home, however circuitous and odd the route might be. They believe there is no one exclusive truth and there are no wrong paths and all lead directly to goal!

I know plenty of people as well, who are frozen in the headlights - staring at the armada of religions bearing down upon them and too confused to make any decision at all. For them, there is no litmus test for truth and so, in the absence of absolute certainty, they choose not to make any decision at all.

Whatever works for other people is fine, but they'll just live their own lives without any defined spiritual framework.

But what if all religions are not the same? What if they don't all sit happily side by side, each compatible with all the others? It's a fact that the teachings of some religions are diametrically opposed to the teachings of others. Just to take the most basic of examples: Hindus believe that there are millions of gods, Jews believe there is only one and many Confucians don't believe there is any god at all (1). They can't all be concurrently true, it's simple mathematics (2). If there are contradictions between the basic beliefs of different



religions, there must be error somewhere and it can hardly be suggested that a religion that denies the existence of God is a road that leads to him/her/it/them (3).

And what if there is objective truth somewhere here and it can be distilled or discerned by some means? Surely we must at least consider the possibility that, just as in math, there is only one right answer (4). If there is a single true religion, that doesn't automatically mean there is absolutely nothing worthwhile in any of the others, that every other religion is absolutely and irredeemably wrong on every level, so it is not inherently disrespectful to suggest there may be just one truth. It's easy to imagine that there could be a single absolute truth that finds full expression in just one religion, but that glimpses of that truth can be caught elsewhere (5).

Christians believe that truth has been revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. We pretty much put all our eggs in the one truth basket and the merits of that truth are pretty easily assessed. We believe He lived. We believe He did the most amazing things - imparting the most life changing teaching, living the most perfected life, performing miracles that demonstrated authority over sickness, demons, sin and death itself. We believe He was crucified, died and rose again. We believe He is coming back to usher in a new and perfected heavens and earth.



We believe that Jesus was God with skin on, personally and savingly active in a unique way through the cross (6). No other person in human history has lived as He lived, risen from the dead as He rose from the dead or accomplished what He has accomplished to redeem mankind and make it possible for us to be in relationship with God.

Much of that system of belief is historical assertion. To an enormous extent, Christianity stands or falls on the facts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Those assertions of historical fact form the

bedrock on which our faith is built. If they can be disproved then the whole thing comes crashing down around us. If Jesus didn't live, He is just a myth or fable; if He didn't rise from death, He was just a man whose life poses more questions than it answers. But, if those assertions can be proved to be true (to whatever standard of satisfaction we require), then we've got to make a choice. If Jesus really did live, if He really did die, if He really was resurrected – then that's unique in history and unique amongst all the pantheon of religions. If we get to the point where you accept that these assertions of fact are probably true by an objective, historical measure, surely we've got to seriously consider the claims He made about Himself, about God and about the road by which we get to God.

Not all of his claims were spoken. Often it is what he did, rather than what he said, that slaps us in face and screams, "I am more than just a man!" He wasn't born into a privileged or educated family, yet even by the time He was twelve He could hold His own in debate with the religious big-wigs of His day (Luke 2.41-51). He lived just like any normal bloke until He emerged into His public ministry, probably when He was about 30 years old.



From then on He just amazed and confronted everyone He ever met.

Not confronted in the sense of picking a fight with them (although he didn't mind finishing a verbal stoush if someone else was silly enough to start one), but confronting in the sense that they were challenged to respond to Him in some way, whether positive or negative.

He healed sick people by the truckload. Wherever He went He was surrounded by those who wanted to be healed - to the point where sometimes He was forced to leave town to make sure He still got the opportunity to do all the other things He came to do (Mark 2.38).

He cast out demons. He calmed the wind and the waves. He showed love and respect to those who were generally viewed as deserving of neither. When a good mate died, He was so moved that He cried – and then promptly brought His mate back to life (John 11.35-44). Somehow He was human enough to be moved to tears but at the same time demonstrated his authority over man and nature by performing miracles of every shape and size.



Whatever people thought of Him, they just **had** to respond in some way. Some thought He was mad. Some thought He was possessed. Some thought He was God. Some just wept uncontrollably at His feet. Some thought He was a danger to their status quo and so they falsely accused Him of being subversive to the Jewish religion and the Roman state and had Him killed.

So who did He say He was? When He was on trial before the Jewish authorities He claimed to be the Messiah and the Son of God (Mark 14.61f). The night before, He had said to His disciples, His closest friends and followers who had been with Him throughout His public ministry:

*"I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. ... I am in the Father and the Father is in me ... In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live." (John 14.6f, 10 & 19)*

They're huge claims! He's claiming to be the exclusive revelation of truth, the exclusive way to God, the exclusive means of life – for His disciples, for me, for you. He's saying He is somehow one with God; that, though He is soon to die, He will live again and His disciples will see Him. As one of his closest disciples, Peter, later said:

*“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4.12)*

Those claims don't leave us with much wriggle room if we come to them as a non-believer. By making them, Jesus pretty much rules out the possibility that He was just a wise teacher or a good man. If He claims to be these things but is not, He is neither wise nor good. He can only be a complete nutter, an egomaniacal manipulator of the highest order or exactly who He says He is – the way, the truth and the life, to the exclusion of all others (7).

But He couldn't be a nutter and consistently teach with the richness of timeless wisdom that He did. He couldn't be an egomaniac but prefer to associate with the poor and marginalised rather than the rich and influential. At least for me, there is only one logical conclusion. He is who and what He says He is - God incarnate - a fact borne out by the whole of His life, teaching and works. He died but, just as He claimed He would, He rose from the dead, lived again and, in some sense, is still alive and with us today. He was and is the one and only Way to God, the one and only Way to truth, the one and only Way to life.

And, again at least for me, that demands some sort of response as much as it did when he was walking around Judea. Having lived with Jesus throughout His public ministry, Peter understood the only right response to the truth revealed in Jesus was to repent and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out and times of refreshing may come from the presence of God (Acts 3.19).

**But I guess the real question is, “What do you believe?” Did He live? If He did, who was He? If He was who He claimed to be, have you responded to that in some way? Is there anything more you need to do now?**



#### *Appendix 1: Resources*

*Holy Bible (New Revised Standard Version), 1989, World Bible Publishers, Inc., Iowa Falls, Iowa*

*Aldwinkle, R.F. 1982, Jesus – A Savior or the Savior: Religious Pluralism in Christian Perspective, Mercer University Press, U.S.A.*

*Dickson, J. 1992, A Sneaking Suspicion, St Matthias Press, Kingsford, Australia*

*Gumbel, N. 1994, Searching Issues, Kingsway Publications, Eastbourne, England*

#### *Appendix 2: Notes*

1. *Dickson 1992, 80; Allan et al 1981, 26*

2. *Dickson 1992, 80*

3. *Gumbel 1994, 34*

4. *Gumbel 1994, 31*

5. *Lewis 1952, 39*

6. *Aldwinkle 1982, 61*

7. *McDowell 1999, 158*



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