

TITLE: What Religion Do I Trust? Part 1

TEXT: John 6:60-69

PREACHED AT: Castine 2/12/2023

MAIN POINT: Jesus, His life and words compared to other religions.

SERMON SERIES: Who or What Do I Trust

INTRODUCTION

1. Last week, I introduced our series “Who or What Do I Trust?” Since many trust some religion, I want to focus on what this may mean. There are major world religions, and all believe they have the “correct” understanding of God or the gods they worship. Actually, they have trusted their eternal lives to their belief. Therefore, I conclude there are two primary positions to consider; one, it does not matter what religion you choose because all lead to the same place; and, two, one leads to God, and by definition, the others do not. In other words, for us, is Christianity unique among all religions, and can it be trusted to lead someone to God and eternal life with Him? Succinctly stated, should I trust Christianity with my eternal soul?
2. Do all religions lead to the same place is today’s subject. According to the “Unbounded Wisdom Community,” the answer is yes. Their mission “is to share enlightening knowledge with the world. I [the organization’s author] established the website because I am a professional writer who loves writing. I’m addicted to reading books and thinking about life and I love sharing knowledge. For this reason, I have dedicated myself to gathering and sharing knowledge to those who love wisdom.”
<https://www.unboundedwisdom.com/all-religions-are-basically-the-same-top-7-similarities-between-the-major-religions/> **Note, I strongly disagree with the information shared and do not support any content from this website.**

2.1. One of their articles, published July 17, 2019, makes the following claims about major religions.

- 2.1.1. “God can be realized through all paths. All religions are true. The important thing is to reach the roof. You can reach it by stone stairs or by a rope.” – Ramakrishna (1836-1886, Hindu religious leader and founder of the Ramakrishna Order).
- 2.1.2. “I believe it’s foolish and unspiritual for an individual to believe his religious beliefs are right and other religious beliefs are wrong because all religions preach the same things in different ways.”
- 2.1.3. “I’ll enlighten you by discussing the top seven similarities between different religions so that you strive to learn something from all religions instead of being judgmental.”

1. All religions believe in the Existence of a Transcendent Place/State

Christians call it Heaven, Muslims call it Jannah, and Buddhists call it Nirvana. These faiths believe there is no suffering in this place/state since it is characterized by happiness and peace.

2. All religions believe in the Creator

Christians call it God, Muslims Allah, Hindus Brahma, and African Traditional Religions (ATRs) [have] several names for this entity. All religions believe this power is all-powerful, omnipresent, and omniscient.

3. All religions provide Ways of Overcoming Suffering

Islam, Christianity, and ATRs believe prayer can help an individual overcome suffering, while Buddhism teaches that practicing the Noble Eightfold Path liberates one from suffering.

4. All religions encourage generosity

Christianity encourages generosity because ‘The Lord Loveth a cheerful giver,’ while Islam claims Zakat (charity) results in blessings and purifies a giver’s heart. Buddhism encourages generosity because it paves the way to enlightenment, while ATRs provided thousands of reasons for generosity.

5. All religions believe in Celestial Beings

All religions believe in the existence of spiritual entities. Muslims and Christians believe in angels, while Hindus believe in deities such as Shiva. ATRs believe in spirit guides.

6. All religions encourage Moral Behavior

Buddhists encourage moral behavior through the Noble Eightfold Path, while Christians encourage it through the Ten Commandments. Muslims encourage moral behavior because it pleases God while the ATRs believed moral uprightness [is] good for society’s well-being.

7. All religions have Holy Places of Worship

All religions have special places for performing spiritual practices. Christians perform praise and worship in the church while Muslims pray in the mosque. African cultures and Hindus use shrines to worship their gods.

In conclusion, instead of judging religions with teachings that differ with our spiritual beliefs, we must study them because doing so will provide us with several spiritual insights that our religion lacks. Lastly, studying various religions will enable us to pinpoint spiritual truths we won’t know if we believe ours is the only true religion.

DISCUSSION, John 6:60-69

1. In deciding where you place your trust, you must weigh the statement, “I believe it’s foolish and unspiritual for an individual to believe his religious beliefs are right and other religious beliefs are wrong because all religions preach the same things in different ways.”
2. “The Gospel of John was written to persuade people to believe in Jesus (20:30–31). The opening verses declare that Jesus is God, stressing his unique relationship with God the Father. The book focuses on seven of Jesus’ signs (miracles), to show his divinity. Jesus called people to believe in him, promising eternal life. He proved he could give life by raising Lazarus (ch. 11) and by his own death and resurrection. John features Christ’s seven ‘I am’ statements, his encounters with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, his Upper Room teachings and washing of the disciples’ feet (chs. 13–16), and his high priestly prayer (ch. 17). It includes the most well-known summary of the gospel (3:16). The author was probably the apostle John, writing about A.D. 85.” (The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn.)

3. Jesus, in John 6, makes claims about eternal life. His claims cause at least three reactions: (1) Jesus is one of many voices that claim to know how to get to eternal life, and all are trustworthy; (2) the lack of desire to consider spiritual things and instead remain content with material things; (3) to understand Jesus' claims as exclusive to all others. I believe that Jesus' words are exclusive to all other religions. Therefore, I place my trust in Jesus as a faithful guide to eternal life as I review His claims in John 6 as well as John 14:6.
 - 3.1. "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you." (John 6:27)
 - 3.2. "Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." (John 6:32-33)
 - 3.3. "Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life." (6:35)
 - 3.4. "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life." (John 6:40)
 - 3.5. "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life." (John 6:47)
 - 3.6. "If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." (John 6:51)
 - 3.7. "This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." (John 6:58)
 - 3.8. "Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:67-69)
 - 3.9. "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:5-6)
4. Peter made his declaration in John 6:67-69 in the context of many religious options, much like our current culture.
 - 4.1. "Understanding the nature of early Christianity and the New Testament texts depends on understanding the practice of religion in the Roman Empire. Several features distinguish religion in the Graeco-Roman period from religion in Western cultures: 1. Religion permeated all aspects of culture, in both public and private life. 2. Roman policy included a commitment to polytheism; the acceptance and integration of additional gods was part of that commitment.
 - 4.2. As the Roman Republic and then the empire expanded geographically, it tended to tolerate and support the deities associated with the places and cities that it conquered. Religious inclusivity became a value and an intentional imperial policy. . . . With this inclusive policy, there were perhaps hundreds of religions practiced throughout the empire." (Cynthia Long Westfall, "Roman Religions and the Imperial Cult," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).)
5. Something to consider in placing your trust is Jesus' "heaven" statement in John 6. Jesus claims to have come from where many want to go. I know of nothing like this in any other religion.

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- 5.1. John 6:32, “Jesus then said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.’”
 - 5.2. John 6:33, “For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”
 - 5.3. John 6:38, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.”
 - 5.4. John 6:50, “This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.”
 - 5.5. John 6:51, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”
 - 5.6. John 6:58, “This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”