

LESSON 29 - THE WAY AND THE TRUTH

Besides Christianity, are there other ways to get to God and Heaven?

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Excerpted from: Holmes, Brian. "[The Empowered Christian Road Map](#)" Clearwater, FL: MPowered Christian Publishing, 2020.

Excerpted from: Holmes, Brian. "[Driveway Discipleship](#)" [The Empowered Christian Series] Clearwater, FL: MPowered Christian Publishing, 2021.

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Do you need to be Christian to know God or go to Heaven? There are thousands of religions, surely some of them are correct about some things. After all, the Bible *does* teach that God created every human in His image and likeness, breathed His breath of life into us, gave us a spiritual nature so we're able to know Him, and gave us a conscience (His moral law written on our hearts) for us to listen to and obey. He also desires that none perish but all would know the truth, repent, and be saved. In *Eternity in Their Hearts* author Don Richardson documented how many different ancient cultures believed in a Supreme God for centuries even though they were completely removed from other civilizations and *hadn't even heard* of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam! Since God intended for humans to know Him and have eternal life, and has guided humanity towards this in many unique ways, it's reasonable to conclude most religions have at least some truth in them. Besides Christianity, are there other ways to get to God and Heaven? No. You can find *some* truth in every religion. The problem is most deny or distort Jesus and the Gospel. The full truth is: 1) All are under God's wrath; 2) Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; and 3) salvation is available only through faith in Jesus alone.

1. All Are Under God's Wrath. God is holy, righteous, and perfect; He desires us to be perfect too (Matthew 5:48), yet none of us are. We're all sinners who have fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). God created humans for relationship and desires to have relationships with us. However, because He's righteous He cannot tolerate sin or wickedness in His presence. That's why He's separated Himself from us. Our sins have caused an infinite chasm between us and God. There's no way to obey laws, do good deeds, fast, donate, meditate, or do any other spiritual activity to bridge this chasm. God is perfect. There's no deed so good that it can erase our sin and make us fully blameless and perfect. All sin is a crime against God. God is the judge of the universe, and He is just, so we're under His wrath. Someone must pay the penalty for our sin. Jesus did that. He is the only way. This may sound exclusive. It is. It's still true. This can be offensive to people who think they're already blameless, or have a false imperfect god so it's easy to meet its lower standards. Consider your perspective of God. If God is exceptionally good, totally righteous, intolerant of sin, and we deserve His wrath, then we *need* Jesus. Period. Every false religion teaches that you can get to their version of God/Heaven by doing spiritual activities because their god isn't *that* much different from us. But the True God has higher standards. Ephesians 2:1-4 says, "*You were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed*

the ways of this world... All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath."

2. *Jesus Is The Way, The Truth, And The Life.* Apart from Jesus, we're *all* under God's wrath, and if we reject Jesus we *remain* under God's wrath. John 3:36 says, "*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.*" However, if we believe and receive Jesus as Lord we will have eternal life. John 3:16 says, "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*" This is God's first and only plan of redemption for humanity. Jesus's death on the cross, in our place for our sins, is *the way* that God's wrath against sin is satisfied and His justice is served. Jesus's willingness to become human and die for us is the *way* that God's love, mercy, and grace is shown to those who love Him. Jesus is *the Way* that the infinite chasm is reunited between us and God. In John 14:6, "*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* All other paths besides Jesus are false and they all lead to eternal death. In John 10:9 Jesus said, "*I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.*" Everything broken will be united and restored in Christ. Ephesians 1:7-10 says, "*In him [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us... according to his good pleasure... to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.*"

3. *Salvation Is Available Only Through Faith In Jesus Alone.* As it was taught at the launch of the church, in the very first sermon by the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost, "*Jesus is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.' Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.*" (Acts 4:11-12) Jesus is *the way*. We need to go through Him, by faith alone, apart from good deeds or works. Good works are the *evidence* of our salvation, but they do not contribute to our salvation. We are saved by our faith in Jesus alone. Ephesians 2:4-5 says, "*Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.*" It is because of God's love and mercy that He gives us grace and saves us. Grace is just unmerited kindness and favor. Catholic and Orthodox Christianity wrongly teaches that grace is given by God *so that* we can resist sin and do good works, and these efforts contribute towards salvation through Jesus. But, the Bible defines grace in Hebrews 11:6, "*If by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.*" Salvation is not by grace, through faith and works, but by God's *grace alone* through *faith alone!* Ephesians 2:6-9 says, "*God... seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that... he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.*" Picture Jesus asking you the same question He asked Martha in John 11:25: "*I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I confess my sins against You. I believe Your eternal Son, Jesus, became a man, died for my sins on the cross, and then rose again. Thank You for Your love and grace. Amen.