

ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS OUTSIDERS MOST OFTEN ASK US

Part I: Answering The Five Questions Unbelievers Most Often Ask Us

C. Answering The Question Of The Exclusivity Of The Bible's Way Of Salvation

I. Introduction

- A. Though many people have many questions about our Christian faith, we have noticed over the years ten questions that many people outside our Church *most often* ask us, questions 1 Peter 3:15 calls us to **answer**.
- B. Five of the questions come from unbelievers and five from believers, so we answer them in this lesson series, and I am indebted in part to Josh McDowell, A Ready Defense, 1991, p. 405-424 for the format of the lessons.

II. Answering The Question Of The Exclusivity Of The Bible's Way Of Salvation.

- A. This question is: "Why is the way of salvation taught in the Bible that claims that faith alone in Jesus is the only way to be saved if there are so many other faiths?"
- B. Since this question rises from ecumenists who believe that all faiths lead to God and salvation, we note other major religions each claim to teach the only way of salvation, thus countering the validity of ecumenism:
 1. Islam asserts it is true versus Christianity and Judaism: its Qur'an states: "Take not the Jews and Christians for friends . . . slay the idolaters wherever ye find them . . . Fight against those who . . . believe not in Allah nor the Last Day" (5:51; 9:5, 29, 41)," D. Hunt, "Islam and the Gospel," The Berean Call, 4/99, p. 1.
 2. The Roman Catholic Church holds it teaches the sole way of salvation: the Second Vatican Council held "that no changes would be made in the doctrinal structure of the church" (L. Boettner, Rom. Cath., 1978, p. x), and its 16th cent. Council of Trent, in canons of justification, anathematized the claim that "the impious is justified by faith alone" ("The Council of Trent," Canons on Justification, can. 9, cited in Henry Bettenson, Docs. Of the Christ. Church, 1966, p. 371), adding in its 1564 Tridentine Profession of Faith that its "true Catholic Faith" is the one "without which no one can be in a state of salvation," *Ibid.*, p. 376.
 3. Thus, one errs in charging Bible Christianity with wrongful exclusivity when Jesus claims to be the only way to God in John 14:6 as supported by Peter in Acts 4:10-12 and Paul in 1 Timothy 2:5, for the major religions of Islam and Roman Catholicism each claim to teach the true salvation versus the other faiths.
- C. So, the only **valid** question is: "**Which faith is correct?**", and we show it to be Bible Christianity (as follows):
 1. Bible Christianity has the only workable way of salvation, that of faith alone in Christ alone (as follows):
 - a. All the other religions teach justification by works or by faith plus works, suggesting that God grades man "on the curve" either to be saved or to be damned as in an academic setting.
 - b. However, were God thus to "grade" one to be saved at the "60 per cent level" of righteousness, He would be unjust in condemning one with 59.999 per cent righteousness, being seen as harsh and unloving!
 - c. Yet, it would be unrighteous for God to keep on lowering the per cent level to remain loving until all the heinous sinners in history like Adolph Hitler and the antichrist entered heaven with all other people.
 - d. Conversely, for God to go in the other direction and keep raising the required per cent level until He excluded all men with any sin from heaven would make Him loveless, for all men sin, Romans 3:23!
 - e. Scripture thus teaches that God put all men under condemnation (Rom. 3:19-20), but gave opportunity for salvation for all through the provision of Christ's substitutionary atonement (Rom. 3:21-25), saving anyone who believes in Jesus that God might justify him as a gift, not grading anyone on the curve, Rom. 3:26-28. That is the only possible way for God to be perfectly righteous and perfectly loving toward man.
 2. At this point, many ask, "Why couldn't God just forgive?" (*Ibid.*, McDowell, p. 409) so we answer: in real life, where there is forgiveness, there is also a payment for the wrong committed. Josh McDowell offers an example (as follows): "(L)et's say my daughter breaks a lamp in my home. I'm a loving and forgiving father, so I put her on my lap, and I hug her and I say, 'Don't cry, honey. Daddy loves you and forgives you.' Now usually the person I tell that story to says, 'Well, that's what God ought to do.' Then I ask the question, 'Who pays for the lamp?' The fact is, I do . . . This is what God has done. God has said, 'I forgive you'; but He was willing to pay the price Himself through the cross." (Romans 3:25-26; *Ibid.*)

Lesson: *Major faiths each claim to be or to teach the only way of salvation, so the only valid question to ask on the Bible's exclusive way of salvation is: "How is Bible Christianity's way of salvation by faith alone true?" Logic and Romans 3:19-28 reveal God cannot grade on the curve of human merit as all non-Bible faiths teach and yet be loving and righteous, but the Bible's way of salvation by faith alone keeps God loving and righteous as the truth.*

Application: *May we believe on Christ to be saved (John 3:16) and defend this WAY of salvation to questioners.*