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Apologetics and the Exclusivity of Christ

by Jon Wood

There are five categories of objections to the exclusivity of Christ I commonly encounter in personal evangelism. While the truth of the exclusivity of Christ is rarely popular, God's Word is clear and authoritative. Rather than dismiss the exclusivity of Christ, we should embrace it as an aspect of the glory reserved for the Son of God, and it should motivate us to evangelism.

THE FAIRNESS OBJECTION

Objection | "It is not fair that those who have never heard of Jesus Christ will not be saved. It is not their fault that they will never have the opportunity to hear about Jesus because of where they were born."

Response | Fair according to whose standard of justice? From the limited perspective of a fallen idea of justice, it might appear unfair, but when you consider the

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issue from God's perspective, it appears differently. No human being, other than Jesus Christ, has ever lived a sinless life. The unfairness is that salvation for all nations has been extended to a humanity that is not entitled to it. None of us deserves salvation, and it is only by God's goodness that salvation is made available to anyone (Rom. 3:23–25).

THE UNIVERSALISM OBJECTION

Objection | "All religions basically say the same thing; we should be good people, treat others well, and seek after God. All roads lead to the top of the same mountain, so why get caught up in arguing one belief system over another?"

Response | A survey of world religions demonstrates there are genuine differences between Christianity and other religions. There are contradictory claims, for example, between the teaching of Christianity in the Bible and Islam in the Quran about the divinity of Christ. Christ cannot be both the fully divine second person of the Trinity as Scripture teaches and merely a human prophet as the Quran teaches. Ultimately, Jesus alone is sovereign over all false gods, and every knee will bow to Him alone (Phil. 2:9–11).

THE INCLUSIVISM OBJECTION

Objection | "Salvation is made possible by Jesus Christ, but He has provided avenues other than specific and conscious belief in Christ as a way for salvation. All salvation ultimately leads to Christ, but there are other avenues by which people who have never heard and are genuinely seeking God may be saved and eventually come to worship Him in heaven."

Response | The testimony of Scripture is this: "It is appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Further, the picture of the lost person who seeks after God is not one who is saved apart from Christ, but is in need of the revealed knowledge of Christ (Acts 10–11). It is a sobering, yet Christ-exalting, teaching of the Bible that humanity faces eternal judgment and this teaching should motivate us to give our lives completely to Him now.

THE JUDGMENTAL OBJECTION

Objection | "Christians are judgmental to think they have the only answer about God and salvation. It is overly closed-minded to think a majority of the world is going to hell forever because they do not believe in Jesus Christ, especially when so many have never heard of Him."

Response | Christians do not intend any judgmental attitude and extend the message of forgiveness in Christ because evangelism is the loving thing to do. Ultimately, it is not Christians who are passing judgment on others for their spiritual beliefs but, as followers of Christ, we serve as ambassadors for the message God has communicated about the consequences of sin for humanity and His loving extension of salvation in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:20).

THE AGNOSTIC OBJECTION

Objection | "We do not ultimately know what happens to those who have never heard about Jesus Christ. We agree salvation is made possible by Jesus Christ, but we just don't know enough about how God responds to those who might genuinely seek Him and live good

lives even though they have not heard of Jesus Christ.”
Response | This objection does not take seriously the passages in Scripture that clearly communicate humanity is spiritually dead apart from Christ and that salvation comes specifically through faith in Christ. For example, consider Ephesians 2, where those apart from Christ are described as “dead” and “children of wrath.” Yet, by faith “in Christ Jesus you who were once far off

have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:13). The New Testament is clear about the spiritual condition of humanity apart from Christ.

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The Exclusivity of the Gospel Comparison Chart

God/Creator	Salvation
 <p>CHRISTIANITY</p> <p>God is personal – He thinks, acts, knows, and interacts with His creation. There is only one God who exists as a triunity of persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.</p>	<p>Human beings are sinful and can only be saved by the free gift of God’s grace received through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.</p>
 <p>ISLAM</p> <p>There is strictly one God, Allah, who is the all-powerful creator, director, and judge of all creation.</p>	<p>Individuals gain paradise through faithful submission to Allah and obedience to his laws.</p>
 <p>BUDDHISM</p> <p>There is no personal god at all. All that exists is the product of an eternal chain of cause and effect. What we perceive as reality is an illusion and temporary. There is no permanent identity for persons.</p>	<p>Followers achieve Nirvana, an existence marked by peace and the cessation of desire and suffering. Nirvana ends the cycle of birth and death. This achievement is through the self-disciplines of meditation and right living.</p>
 <p>HINDUISM</p> <p>There is no personal god. Brahman is the absolute reality that encompasses and unifies all that exists. Hindu deities are expressions of this one reality.</p>	<p>Adherents achieve Moksha, or liberation from the cycle of birth, life, and death, through right action, knowledge, and devotion.</p>
 <p>JUDAISM</p> <p>There is one God, Yahweh, an all-powerful, all-knowing, and eternal creator. He is the holy lawgiver and judge.</p>	<p>Conservative Jews achieve heaven through obedience to the Law. Reformed Jews attain heaven through betterment of self and society.</p>

Chart courtesy of Don Grigorenko, Professor of Missions at Cedarville University. He earned his Ph.D. in intercultural studies.



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