



**M**any people are offended when they hear Christians claim, “Jesus is the only way to God”. They ask, “Why are you the only ones who are right?” “Why is your way the only right way?”

These same people are often surprised to realize their problem doesn’t lie with Christians, but rather with Christ Himself. Jesus was the first to make the claim that He is the only way to God. “I am the Way—yes, and the Truth and the Life. No one can get to the Father except by means of me,” Jesus said (John 14:6 TLB). “That is why I said that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am the Messiah, the Son of God, you will die in your sins.” (John 8:24 TLB).

For many, simply making such a claim is reason for offense. But, in itself, this claim to uniqueness should not offend anyone. By way of analogy consider the simple math problem,  $2 + 2 = ?$  In this equation there are many options from which to choose, but only one is right. Thus, the real issue is not whether such an assertion is permissible, but rather if it is true. Given this focus, then, why do Christians claim Jesus Christ is the only way to God?

### ***Man’s Fundamental Problem***

**T**he single most important reason to believe Jesus is the only way to God is that only His life, death and resurrection deal with the fundamental problem of man’s sin. If there is a heaven, the immediate question is how can we get there? The solution that most religions offer is to “earn your way there”—to be good enough that God will let you in. The problem with this approach is that it totally ignores the reason that man is



separated from God in the first place. We have all willfully chosen to disobey God, quite literally an act of cosmic treason. This rebellion is what the Bible calls sin.

The heart of the issue, then, is what do we do with our sin? It doesn't take being around too many people to realize that we're all stuck with bitterness, selfishness, anger, greed, deceit, lust, or hatred. The fact that we've never met anyone free of sin is proof that no one has totally overcome it. Being good enough to get to heaven is not a workable option. The only hope left for us, then, is forgiveness. With this in mind the necessity and uniqueness of the cross becomes apparent. God cannot forgive sin simply by ignoring it. In Hebrews we learn that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." (Hebrews 9:22 TLB) Sin must be paid for and only Jesus, of all the religious leaders, has paid the penalty for us. "Christ also suffered. He died once for the sins of all us guilty sinners although he himself was innocent of any sin at any time, that he might bring us safely home to God. But though his body died, his spirit lived on" (1 Peter 3:18 TLB).

If Christ is not the only way and if we are able to reach God by some other means, then His death on the cross was unnecessary. In fact, He would have been foolish to have willfully submitted to His own crucifixion. Why suffer needlessly when other options are available?

The root of this issue lies in our demanding mercy from God as if this is something He is obligated to do. It is our demand to be let off the hook that leads to the question, "Why is Jesus the only way?" Considering our rebellion against God the better question is, "Why is there any way at all?"



## ***Jesus Fulfilled Old Testament Prophecies***

**D**uring Old Testament times God instructed His people to expect a Savior. He would be the promised Messiah who would deliver people from their sins and provide a way to eternal life. To encourage their anticipation of the Messiah and to assure that they would not put their hope in the wrong person, God gave them clues as to how to recognize the Savior. These clues were the approximate 300 prophecies in the Old Testament foretelling the life, death and resurrection of the coming Messiah. Written hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, they indicate where He would be born, what family He would be born into, the things He would do in His life, how He would die and that He would rise again. Some of these prophecies are detailed in Book One.

## ***A Life of Working Miracles***

**W**hen John the Baptist was questioning whether Jesus Christ was God's appointed Messiah, Jesus made an interesting reply, "Jesus told them 'Go back to John and tell him about the miracles you've seen me do—the blind people I've healed, and the lame people now walking without help, and the cured lepers, and the deaf who hear, and the dead raised to life; and tell him about my preaching the Good News to the poor.'" (Matthew 11:4-5 TLB). Why did Jesus say this? Was he evading John's question?

Anyone can say, "Yes," to the direct question, "Are you the Messiah?" Jesus wanted to do more than this



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so He offered proof by pointing to His miracles. These attested to His being the Messiah in two ways. First, the miracles demonstrated that Jesus had supernatural powers—that He literally had control over creation. Jesus Christ is unique in His ability to heal the sick and raise the dead. Secondly, Jesus was quoting an Old Testament prophecy written hundreds of years earlier that foretold how God would save His people (Isaiah 35:5). When John the Baptist heard Jesus apply this “job description” to Himself he knew that Jesus was God’s unique Savior.

### ***The Ultimate Proof of His Deity***

**P**erhaps the most compelling reason to believe Jesus Christ is the only way to God is His unique resurrection. Often before His death Jesus predicted He would be killed by the religious leaders of the day and would rise again three days later. Much to the amazement of the disciples, He did exactly that. After His crucifixion He was placed into a tomb cut into a rock that was sealed by a large boulder. Three days later He presented Himself to His disciples and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days (Acts 1:3).

Not only does Jesus’ resurrection demonstrate His power over sin and death, it also authenticates everything else He has to say. To illustrate:

Suppose a friend of yours told you that he would soon be shot and killed, but that a few days later he would visit you again, very much alive, and you would talk, eat and laugh together. Certainly, you would dismiss this as impossible. But then you watch as a man shoots your friend. A coroner pronounces him dead



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and you bury him in a cemetery. However, three days later he actually does visit you. His body is real and healthy and you talk, eat and laugh as was promised. Imagine your amazement and joy to see your friend alive! From this moment on, though, you would never doubt anything else he said, for if he was right about this “impossible” event, then everything else he says would surely be true as well.

### ***A Legacy of Changed Lives***

**W**hile Christianity is founded upon objective, historical events and deep philosophical truths, it would certainly not be unique if it was not relevant to our lives. Christianity must be significant to the human experience. Indeed this is so. Millions through the centuries have testified of the transforming power of the living Jesus Christ in their lives. In every age and in every culture Jesus Christ has given people love, joy and meaning they had not experienced before.

So pervasive is Christ’s influence that Kenneth Scott Latourette, a historian at Yale University, states:

“Through Him movements have been set in motion which have made in society for what mankind believes to be its best—in the inward transformation in human lives, in political order, in the production and distribution of goods to meet the physical needs of men, in healing physical ills, in the relations between races and between nations, in art, in religion and in the achievements of the human intellect. Gauged by the consequences which have followed, the birth, life and resurrection of Jesus have been the most important events in the history of man. Measured by His influence, Jesus is central in the human story.”



## ***The Second of Three Required Statements***

**R**emember our question posed by God outside the gates of heaven? "Why should I let you in?" The first statement was: **We must be able to tell God that we are a sinner deserving eternal punishment.** We now must add a second statement which must be embraced in order to qualify to enter heaven's gates: **We must be able to tell God that we believe Jesus Christ paid our penalty by His death on the cross.**

### ***Christ Is the Perfect Substitute***

**W**e have already discussed the fact that God's justice requires man's moral debt to be paid. The good news is that God has provided a plan which enables Him to remain just and still enables sinful man to avoid punishment. He does this by allowing a sinless person to be punished in substitute of a sinful person. That sinless person was God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ who was perfect (God) and yet man, became the substitute qualified to pay man's penalty. Because of this Jesus could say "Because of his kindness, you have been saved through trusting Christ. And even trusting is not of yourselves; it too is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good we have done, so none of us can take any credit for it." (Ephesians 2:8-9 TLB).



## ***Consider the Following Illustration***

**L**et's imagine you are a teenager and your father is a judge. One day as he is holding court he notices that just as the next case is about to begin, a police officer escorts you into the courtroom. Your father looks down in surprise, then turns to the officer and asks, "With what offense has my son been charged?" The officer doesn't realize until now that you are the judge's son, and he says, "Your Honor, I didn't realize this was your son, but we caught him going 60 miles per hour in a 30 mile per hour zone." Your father asks you if you are guilty, and you've got to admit you are. So your father says, "Son, the penalty for this offense is \$200.00 or a week in jail. Do you have the money?" You say, "Dad, you know I don't have the money." So your father has a decision to make. On one hand he could be merciful and say, "Son, you know how much I love you; now go on home and don't ever do that again. And by the way, officer and clerk, this is not to be recorded; it's to be kept secret." Even if this were considered to be loving, it certainly would not be just, would it?

On the other hand, your father could turn to you and say, "Son, you deserve this, and it's good you got caught. Now go on to jail, I hope you've learned a lesson." If he did that, the father would be completely just, but not very loving.

Yet, there's one way your father could be both just and merciful. What if he stepped down from his bench, took off his robe, and handed you \$200.00. Now he's being both just and merciful, isn't he? Justice is served because the penalty is paid, but he also



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demonstrates his gracious love for you by paying your penalty.

In essence that is just what God did for us. Being perfectly just, He couldn't let man off the hook when man broke His law. However, being a merciful God, He stepped down from heaven in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, and made the payment for us by shedding His blood.

### ***The Clincher***

**S**o that we would never have to doubt the validity of Christ's claims, God proved that His death paid for our sin by His bodily resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

The conclusion we draw from all this is that heaven is a free gift which cannot be earned or deserved by human beings. Therefore, the answer to our original question of how we would answer God if He were to ask why He should let us into heaven is, "because of Christ's substitutionary death on my behalf."

Can you sincerely tell God that you believe Christ paid your penalty for you by His death on the cross?

Continue reading the Gospel of John. Note any questions which arise as you read.