

I AM THE WAY, JOHN 14:1-11

Who Is I Am? #5

◆ **Intro:** [Read "The Door" by Alyce Garret, Discipleship Journal, issue 83.]

◆ Philosophers have called philosophy the "Royal Way." Confucius called his teaching "Tao" or "the way." So Jesus' claim to be the "Way" is not unique. But at the same time, what he meant by is quite unique. Buddha never claimed to be anything more than a man. Mohammed, the founder of Islam, never claimed to be anything more than a prophet. Neither Moses of the Old Testament, nor Confucius of the Orient ever claimed anything beyond their humanity. That's what sets Jesus apart.

◆ **1. Some Claims of Christ:**

◆ **A.** Jesus didn't merely tell people he would show them the way, although he did that. Jesus didn't merely say he would teach us God's way, although he did that too, and those ways work. Jesus was not a prophet who merely told people how to find happiness, or how to get to God. You see, Jesus actually told people that he was the Way, that he was God himself! Just so you know I'm not making this up, let's scan John's Gospel.

◆ *"Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God." John 5:17, 18, NIV.*

◆ *"You are not yet fifty years old," the Jews said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!" "I tell you the truth," Jesus*

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answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" John 8:57, 58, NIV. (cf Exodus 3:12)

◆**B.** Now these explicit statements might not catch your attention as they surely would have caught a Jewish person's attention. Our talk shows that we are all part of God, Mother Willow Tree is part of God, the river spirit is God. Respect Mother Nature for "God" is within her. Pantheism, the belief that all things are part of a unified power we call God is nothing new to the world, but out of question in a Jewish culture that believed God was not part of created reality. So when Jesus said things like "I am not of this world" they knew exactly what he was saying.

◆**C.** Furthermore, Jesus did things and acted in ways that were the prerogative of God alone: he forgave sins! A lame man was brought to him and the first thing he says is "Your sins are forgiven." But that's not why they brought him to Jesus! (Matthew 9) When a woman of ill repute came to Jesus and anointed his feet with perfume Jesus didn't say "Thanks". He said, "Your sins are forgiven." (Luke 7) Now let's think this over, shall we?

◆If you dent my car door in the Walmart parking lot, with your stupid grocery cart, that you should have put in the corral, which they make for those purposes, after I just bought the dumb thing!... -well it might seem appropriate for *me* to forgive *your* offenses made against *me*. But I have no business walking over and forgiving you when you have

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done it to someone else's car. It's not an offense against me, now is it? So when Jesus forgives people their sinfulness, he is acting as though he is the chief offended party, in other words, as though he is in fact God himself.

◆**D.** Alright, just to make sure we have no doubt about this Christian teaching lets examine what Jesus' followers thought about him. Paul wrote,

◆"For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit." Ephesians 2:18, NIV.

◆Peter said, and Luke recorded it...

◆"*Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*" Acts 4:12, NIV.

◆The Book of Hebrews puts it:

◆"Therefore, brothers...we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body," Hebrews 10:19, 20, NIV.

◆So what have we been trying to establish here? Just this, that Jesus is not like the founders of any other religion. That Jesus did not leave us open to merely appreciating him as an insightful figure in his day. That Jesus is not a consultant that you text, or pull off the shelf, or pour out of a can when you need some wisdom. Jesus is not an encyclopedia of solutions for getting rid of stains. He's what the "I Am" sayings have been showing us all

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along during this season of Lent: that he is our Owner with a capital O, and our Leader or light in the darkness, and our Sustainer giving us the bread of Life, and our sole source of any true protection (Good Shepherd).

◆2. Some Complaints about Christ

◆Here's the thing about this claim of Jesus. It wasn't popular then and it isn't popular now. In our day, we are so frantically excited about freedom that we have decided all distinctions and judgements are off the table. Very few believe there is such thing as absolute truth, certainly not true religion –that is up to you. We don't want to tell our children who is God, but find it admirable to let them decide for themselves. In fact, world society is becoming afraid to tell our children whether they are male or female, which is an unchangeable, biological fact! So you can imagine what people think when Christians come along and say that Jesus is God. My hope here is to give us some thoughtful answers to the complaint that Jesus claims to be God. What do we say to folks who wonder about it when we share our faith?

◆**A.** One of the questions raised is, Isn't belief that Jesus is God intolerant and discriminating? In fact it certainly is, as is every other truth in existence. Let's understand that all of life and knowledge requires choices of intolerance and discrimination. Pro-Choice people are intolerant of the Pro-Life position and vs. Police are intolerant of speeders and domestic violence. Doctors are intolerant of the wrong medicine or the wrong amounts!

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Scientists are intolerant of any equation that doesn't work. The question is not really whether someone is intolerant of something, but whether something should or should not be tolerated. I don't tolerate my child's misbehavior but rather give direction and consequences or the child will grow up unruly and impolite. A teacher ought not to tolerate sass from a student. That's simply nonsense.

◆ Furthermore, while tolerating a person who believes something other, or false is a noble gesture, that is not the same thing as tolerating their false belief.

◆ **B.** Another complaint is this: those who believe Jesus' claim to be God are arrogant. Arrogance means that a person thinks more highly of themselves than of others around them. This is not true of Christianity in the least, and if you or I as Christians make it appear to be so, we need to be reprimanded. Christianity is a humble response to Jesus' claim to be God. Christians don't believe that we are any smarter than anyone else. Christians don't even believe that our faith in God is possible without the power of God giving us faith, and drawing us to him in the first place! Furthermore Christianity teaches that everyone of it's followers are hopelessly sinful, wrong, distorted and prone toward evil. We would never be wise enough to have found out about God. And all of this needs the forgiveness of God, paid for, not by anything we've done, but by God's Son Jesus alone!

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◆ *"[God] saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time," 2 Timothy 1:9, NIV.*

◆ Now Christianity would be arrogant if we made it all up, and then said that our way was the right way. But we didn't make it up. We simply believe the historical record. If you have a problem with arrogance, your problem is with Christ, not his followers. He's the one who claims to be God. His followers merely assert that they believe what he said. So point that out when someone tells you it's arrogant to think your faith is true. It's irrational to think anything else.

◆ Christianity would be arrogant if our faith said that only a special few who can perform the right ceremonies, or achieve that right behavior, or have had a certain, special ability/gift can be saved. But Christianity does not say this. Instead it says that no one can be saved by being good enough, or wise enough, or skilled enough.

◆ "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no-one can boast." Ephesians 2:8, 9, NIV.

◆ **3. Some Conclusions about Christ.**

◆ **A.** If Jesus is the Creator God he claimed to be... then it is more important for me to get to know Jesus than it is to get a job!

Listen, we all know having a job is important. You need to pay

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your bills, and buy your groceries. But what good is it to do that if when you die, you have nothing to show for it. It's like spending everything you make and never being able to retire because you didn't invest in the life that's coming!

✦ "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done." Matthew 16:24-27, NIV.

✦ The coronavirus may kill you tomorrow, and then what? Will you spend eternity separated from God and all good, or with God and all that is good? Jesus is your only option, perhaps you want to check him out.

✦ **B.** If Jesus is the Creator God he claimed to be... then getting to know Jesus is the core answer to all my longings. Do you know why we get addicted to alcohol? Because life hurts, and we get lonely, and we long to feel better. Do you know why you're addicted to porn or sex? Because life hurts, and we're frequently lonely even in crowded places, and we long to feel better. Do you know why you can't stop yourself from purchasing every new gadget you come across? Do you know why you just eat and eat and eat even though you tell yourself you shouldn't? Its because

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down deep inside you're like everybody else; your life hurts, and you get lonely, and you long for something better. The love Jesus has for you is the single greatest treasure. We need to learn to accept it, live in it, to experience it.

◆CS Lewis: "God made us, invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on gasoline, and would not function properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on himself. He himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from himself because it is not there. There is no such thing."

◆**Conclusion:** what are you doing to get to know this Jesus?

It's time to do something to protect your spiritual health, as surely as you do something to guard your physical health. It's time to wash our hearts as well as washing our hands. Anyone concerned about the covid-19 pandemic reads everything they can on what to do. I urge you to read everything you can about Jesus. The Book of John is a great place to start.