



Worldview (Part 5) – One Among Many

Pastor Deone Drake – June 26, 2016

So as we continue this series, World View in particular, one among many, we're going to end up considering a claim that Jesus Christ makes. But to get you there, I want to start off painting a scenario for you which I think is fanciful, but in many ways corresponds to the reality that a lot of the people that you work with and surround yourself with believe.

So, a bunch of men and women and even young people decide that they are going to climb up a particular mountain. One mountain. But all of them are going to climb up this one mountain but they are all going to choose their own path. The path that they believe is best for them. And so, each person climbs up this mountain using the path that they have chosen. And when they get to the top of the mountain, they all find who they have been looking for. They find God. This is today's preferred religion. There's a term for it, it's called pluralism, that there are many or plural ways to God. We're all headed in the same direction. Many paths to God. We can say that, but please do not say in today's culture that there is only one path to God.

Let me tell you that this particular view, that there are many ways to God is attractive because of the narrative of our culture, and it's attractive for

several reasons. One reason that it is attractive to say that there are many ways to God and not just one is because of our desire for peace, and I partly understand this. If you think of how many people have been subjected to the violence that stems from the exclusive claims of religion ever since time began. It would certainly seem that eliminating any kind of exclusive claims and asserting instead that there are many paths to God seems more attractive and more viable.

But there's another reason why saying there are multiple paths to God and not just one is because it fits our distorted view of tolerance. In our PC world, tolerance is the new god. Tolerance says not only do you and must you accept me for who I am and what I believe, but you do not call into question who I am what I believe, that's intolerant. And you do not push your exclusive claims on me because that's offensive.

But still there's another reason why saying there are multiple ways to God and not just one is attractive. Because saying there is one and only one way to God seems arrogant. And you probably have heard someone say something like this, "Who are you to say? What makes you think you have a corner on the truth?" And if we can just lose that, because it sure seems it's more humble to say no one has a corner on the truth. There is no such thing as religious superiority, it kind of levels the religious playing field.

But still there is another reason why saying there are multiple ways to God and not just one way is and why that's attractive is because of our current definition of truth. Truth is no longer in our culture absolute. It's relative. It sounds like this: I have found this to be true for me, or maybe you've heard

it said this way, let everyone find the path that works for them. And we even hear people who profess Christ say something like this: I have found that Jesus works for me, implying or opening the door to other ways.

I have to be honest, that that kind of view that there are multiple ways to God and not just one, I have some problems with that. One problem is that it trivializes the exclusive claims that the major religions of the world make. One study has said that in today's world there are 2.2 billion Christians, 1.6 billion Muslims, 1.1 billion agnostics or secularists or atheists all falling under one bucket, and 1 billion Hindus. My dear friends, that is 86% of the world's population fall under categories that make exclusive claims, all of them do, about the path up that mountain, and who is at the top of the mountain. All of them do, and to say there are multiple paths up that mountain trivializes, makes insignificant those exclusive claims.

For example, if I'm dealing with the path that I'm going to go up that mountain, the Hindu though that religion perhaps might be the most complex of the four that I've mentioned, the Hindu would say that the path would be called the eight-fold path. The Muslim would say that the path up that mountain is to obey Allah faithfully so that your good outweighs your bad. The secularist would say to get up that mountain if there is a mountain, would be to live any way that you please. The Christian would say there is only one way up that mountain and that is through the man Jesus Christ. So these four religions of the world, 86% of the world's population, would make exclusive claims about the path up that mountain. And who might you find at the top of the mountain is not the same. To the

secularist there is no god at the mountain and even if there were a god at the top of the mountain you can't know for sure that he is. To the Hindu there is one supreme god at the top, but you can't know him or it. To the Christian there is a God at the top and you can know him through His Son, Jesus Christ. And to the Muslim, Allah is at the top, and it is considered blasphemy to say that Allah has a son.

So the idea of trivializing the major and exclusive claims that these world religions make is not the solution or the answer. We are not going to have peace by trivializing these differences. In order to have peace, we have to go back to last week's sermon about how we were created in the image of God and treat each person with dignity and respect.

But there's a second problem with believing that there is not one path and there is not one God, and that is that absolute truth and exclusive claims do exist. To say there is no such thing as absolute truth is philosophically absurd. Let me explain why. For a person to say there is no such thing as absolute truth is in fact a statement of absolute truth. How would a person know there is no such thing as absolute truth unless they know everything? That it is entirely possible that the existence of absolute truth is outside their realm of knowledge. Absolute truth does exist and it does exist in every other part of life. Why would it not exist in the spiritual?

For example, tell the policeman this afternoon that in your world absolute truth does not exist and that's why you were going 65 in a 30. See how he responds to your definition of truth. Or tell your doctor that in your world you are going to refuse to take your medicine and change your diet

because a blood pressure reading of 240/150 in your world is not a medical problem. Or math. Why when I speak so I always have to bring up math. There's some kind of grudge inside, I'm not sure. But I used to teach high school math. Tell me there's no such thing as absolute truth in math. So if the problem, and I'll make it easy for you, 4 plus 5 equals, the answer is 9 and if you put down anything else other than 9 I'm marking it wrong. If you put down 7 or 8 or Y or smiley face or whatever number you identify with yourself today, I am marking it wrong every time.

Listen, truth is intolerant of error. We know that there is absolute truth. Knowing that there is absolute truth is what causes us to be morally outraged over evil. Let me ask you. Do you really want to live in a world where a man can go into a nightclub and kill 49 and injure many more because that's his definition of truth? We don't want to live in that kind of world and here's the bigger question. Do we live in that kind of world or do we live in a world where murder and adultery and lying and stealing are always wrong and they are always wrong because there is a God at the top of the mountain who says that murder and adultery and lying and stealing are always wrong.

You see, we know that there are certain things that are always wrong. We know deep down inside that there is such a thing as absolute truth and exclusive claims. And so we need to be honest. Saying truth is relative or saying truth is what's true for me is a cop-out. It's a mask hiding the real issue, we don't want to be accountable to the one true God at the top of the mountain.

The psalmist said it this way: "The fool has said in his heart, there is no God at the top of the mountain. And why do they say that? "They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good." So what's the psalmist saying? To say there is no God at the mountain, to say there's no such thing as absolute truth is nothing more than a mask to cover up "I don't want to be accountable for what I do to the God at the top of the mountain".

But there's still another problem with saying there's a multiple ways to God up that mountain. It assumes that the God at the top of the mountain has not spoken into this issue. Because my friends, he has. Someone has said it this way. "To make the apparently humble and mediating claim let's all get along, that all ways of worshiping the divine are equally valid, you're implicitly making the bold claim to know that God hasn't spoken on these things and doesn't care." And how would you know that? "Or maybe it's that He's spoken to you and declared that all the other religions who claim that he does care (like Christianity and Judaism and Islam and so on), they're confused on that point." And what revelation do you have to back that up? That the God at the top of the mountain has not spoken about truth and not made exclusive claims, because that's exactly what Christianity says.

Using what we have learned so far in our series with Pastor Jerry, shaping the things that he has said to fit my analogy of climbing up the mountain, here's what he has taught us. He has taught us first of all that there is one God at the top of the mountain, not a bunch, not a lot. There is one God. That's how Christianity speaks into it. There is one God at the top of the

mountain. Secondly, that God is the God of the Bible. The way that God has been revealed in our Holy Word is who He is as best as He has revealed and as best as we can understand.

But now for this morning there is a third statement that I want to bring up, and it's this. Jesus Christ makes an exclusive claim about the path up that mountain. Jesus Christ makes an exclusive claim about the path up that mountain. I'm sure most of you know exactly where I'm going. As I mentioned at the beginning, Jesus makes an incredible claim. In fact, it is an exclusive claim as we will see. John 14:6. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me." When you place the definite article in front of way, truth and life you're making the exclusive claim. Jesus is saying, I am the way, I am the only way, I am the truth, I am the only truth, I am the life, I am the only life, and here's the clincher, no one can come up to the Father who is at the top of the mountain except through me. He's making two exclusive claims here. I am the only way to God, and no one can come to God except through me.

So let me ask you this question. What kind of statement is that? If I were to say there is only one way, one legitimate way off this platform when I'm done, well you can clearly see that there are seven different ways. So maybe for Jesus to say "I am the only way", maybe He's mistaken, because there are clearly other ways. Or I could also say, well there is a preferred way, when I am done I like going through that door. And maybe Pastor Jerry when he's done speaking he likes going through a different, but the preferred way is for me to go out that door, and maybe that's what Jesus meant. The preferred way of getting up that mountain is to come through

me. Or maybe I could say, I think the best way to get off this platform is through that door, and Pastor Jerry could stand up here and say you know what, I don't really think that's the best way, Deone show to me, prove to me why that's the best way. And maybe that's what Jesus was saying. I'm the best way. There are other ways up that mountain, but I'm the best way. Choose me, cause I'm the best way. Or, I could do this. I could start putting a block in front of each of these ways except for that one so that I'd be saying, you see, there really is only one way to get off this platform.

And the question is when Jesus says in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one can come to the Father except through me", what kind of statement is he making? He's making this statement. I am the only path up to the mountain where the God of the Bible is. I am the only way to that God. He's making an exclusive claim, and the only option is this: The claim is either true, or the claim is false. It cannot be both.

I keep on reminding you of your school days, maybe you'd like to forget them. I'll take you back to your first year of college when you took a philosophy course. And when you took a philosophy course, you learned about the law of contradiction. It's real easy, don't worry, don't panic, and don't shut me out. Here it is: The Law of contradiction says contradicting statements cannot both be true in the same sense at the same time. That means if I'm using the same definition for both sentences, they both can't be true if they're contradicting at the same time. Simple. This is what we learned in philosophy. "A is B" and "A is not B" are mutually exclusive. Therefore these two statements cannot be true in the same sense at the same time. I'll give you an easy one. I'm a real nice guy this morning. Here

it is. The sky is blue and the sky is not blue. If I'm defining sky in both sentences the same way, and I'm defining blue in both sentences the same way, they cannot both be true at the same time. One of them must be false.

So, when I look at the statement that Jesus makes it sounds like this: I am the only way to God. That's what he says in John 14:6. If I negate that it sounds like this: I am not the only way to God. And here's the deal. Both of them cannot be true at the same time. And so here's where we stand. Jesus Christ is the only way to God or he is not. It can't be anything else. There's no third choice. He is either the only way to God or He's not. I cannot deny what he said. This is what he said. I can't deny it. I can say I refuse to believe it, but I can't deny that he said it. What I am left with, what we are left with, what every person who has ever lived is left with is this, whether or not I am going to hang the eternal destiny of my soul on His claim to be the only way to God.

Let me tell you this morning why I think you should. And when I say that I'm imploring, I'm pleading with you. I'm not forcing this down your throat, I'm not arguing with you. I'm imploring, that means I'm going to tell you some reasons why I believe it is best to consider the claim that Jesus Christ is the only way to God it true. Because people make claims all the time.

Muhammad Ali who just died a couple of weeks ago made the claim that he was the greatest boxer of all time. Some, most, maybe all would agree with that statement. But he also did something unusual. He backed it up with a lot of wins in the boxing ring.

Jesus Christ makes an incredible statement, "I am the only way to God". I would like to suggest to you this morning that he backs it up. Here's the first. He made claims that only God could make. He made claims that only God could make. Again, I'm asking you to have the intellectual integrity to examine the data with an open mind. Jesus said things, listen, Jesus said things while He was on this earth that are so outrageous that he was either plum crazy or he was God.

For example, that he existed before his human birth. That he existed before his human birth. Do you know anyone other than someone who believes in reincarnation, and that's not what Jesus meant that would say something like this? But he does. He's having a conversation with the Pharisees in John chapter 8 and it sounds like this: "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day, he saw it and was glad. "You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!" "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

Quite an unusual statement, right? He, by their own admission doesn't even look like He's fifty, we know that he's probably somewhere in his young thirties. And he's claiming that he predates Abraham who was born in the 23rd century BC. He's claiming something very unusual. That he existed before his human birth. John the Baptist backs it up with a statement that you've just got to say "what"? Here it is. "This is the one", he's talking, John the Baptist is, "that I meant when I said, 'A man who

comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' Now just stop and think about that for a minute. A man who comes after me is before me. A man who comes after me is before me.

I was born on my brother Dave's first birthday. Best birthday present he ever got. Right? If David said, if David said Deone comes after me, but he really should be preferred before me, above me, because he was before me. He came after me, but he really is before me. Who says something like this? God does. The one who existed before his human birth. He claims that he existed before his human birth.

Secondly, he claims that he was sinless. Now leaders of the major religions of the world, their leaders perhaps by their belief have achieved perfection. But Jesus Christ, while on earth, claimed that he was sinless. Same conversation, same context, he asks a question, and he doesn't ask his adoring fans like some of you are of Austin - that was interesting. He doesn't ask his loyal disciples. He asks the cruelest of all enemies. Here it is: "Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?"

Who in the world would have the audacity to say something like that? I'll try it for a minute, o.k.? I've got a few friends in the audience. Maybe not as many as I think I do, but I have a few friends. So here it is: Which of you can convince me that I've ever done anything wrong? Go. That didn't take long. You should have heard what my wife said. That didn't take long. Who says this kind of thing?

In fact, I'd like to suggest to you, if you are willing to consider the claims of Christ with an open mind, here is a stumbling block for the skeptic and

critic of Jesus: the purity of Jesus. You look into the eyes of every soul that you ever met and you recognize there are things in that person that they would like no one ever to find out. Not Jesus. He claimed that he was sinless, and his life backs it up.

Third thing: that he was God. Jesus said he was God. Same context, same conversation. We've already looked at this verse. But in John 8:58, he's having this conversation and he says, "Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was born, I am!" This is not a statement of someone who doesn't know proper grammar - like before Abraham was I was. He says before Abraham was, I am. What he is doing is lifting off the pages of Scripture, Exodus 3, when Moses was at the burning bush: who should I say has sent me? Tell them I am has sent you. And Jesus uses the same name for himself. I am the Jehovah that appeared to Moses at the burning bush. You have to recognize the context in which he says this. The Jews, every single morning, would open up their windows, face the temple in Jerusalem, and say these words: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is ... And now I'm looking at someone who appears and is human who is claiming to be the God that I have been worshipping all my life. The same context - they would not pronounce the name that Jesus just used for fear that they would mispronounce it. And Jesus says, I am God.

So I think we should believe the claims of Jesus because he made claims that only God could make. But also, secondly, he did things only God could do. He did things only God could do. If God showed up, the One at the top of the mountain, showed up in the world in which we lived, what would you expect? Only God can take five loaves of bread, give one away, and have six.

Only God can walk on water. Only God can calm a storm. Only God can give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf. Only God can know the thoughts of men. Only God can forgive sin. Only God can raise the dead. He did things that only God could do.

And speaking of raising the dead - here's the third thing: He rose from the dead. Jesus rose from the dead. What's really interesting is that at least twice (because we have it in Scripture) - twice the enemies of Christ asked him for a validation for what he was doing to prove that he was sent from God, and in both circumstances he gives the exact same sign. Show us, give us a sign that will validate that you have been sent from God. Here it is, first of all in Matthew: Some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you." He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! None will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." He's predicting his resurrection. He does the same thing when he throws the money changers out of the temple in John 2: What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this? How do we know that you've been sent from God? Destroy this temple - my body - and I will raise it up in three days. Both times he says this is how you will know that my claim, for example to be the only way up to God is valid, is true. I'll get up from the grave, and I'll do it in three days.

Now, some people will say, you know we really should get along with all the religions of the world, because there really aren't that many differences. Here is one difference: the leader of every world religion has

one thing in common. That leader is still in the grave. Jesus Christ is not in the grave. And if I'm going to deal in intellectual integrity with the claims of Christ, I have to consider the empty tomb.

Gary Habermas is considered an expert in the field of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was actually my professor (when I was in seminary) of philosophy. He said this: using the same criteria to evaluate historical events (that means I'm not showing partiality towards any event), but if I use the same criteria to evaluate the resurrection of Jesus Christ versus any other historical event, he says this: there is more evidence that Jesus Christ rose from the dead than there is that George Washington was President of the United States. And no one questions whether or not George Washington was President of the United States.

So he rose from the dead. And those three things - he did things that only God could do, he said things that only God could say, he rose from the dead - leaves us with a question again towards your intellectual integrity. If Jesus is not who He says He is, then who is He? If He is not who He says He is, then who is He? Please, please do not say I think he was a great moral teacher. And the reason I say that is because great moral teachers do not lie about their identity and then tell everybody around them to tell the truth. If Jesus Christ is not who he says he is, then he lied about his identity and he either did it because he was crazy or because he was a liar. But please do not call him a great moral teacher if he is not who he says he is.

No one has ever said this better than C.S. Lewis. "I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say

about Jesus: that I'm ready to accept him as a great moral teacher, but I am not ready to accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who would say the kinds of things that Jesus would say would either be a lunatic on the level of someone who says he is a poached egg or he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great moral teacher. He did not leave that option open to us. He did not intend to."

So he makes the exclusive claim - I am the only way to God. And what I have tried to convince you of this morning is that that claim is either true or it is false. If it is false, then dismiss him and do something else with your Sunday mornings and your life. If it is true, you can believe him or you can reject him, but if it is true, there is no third option. There is no other path. There is no other way to God. He is either the way or he is no way.

So, what do we as followers of Jesus do with this? I asked you one question - if Jesus is who he says he is, then who is he? If he's not, then who is he? They're trying to finish my message a little bit before I do, I guess. Here it is: if Jesus is who he says he is, then who should we be? Who should we be?

I need you to understand my heart. I did not preach this message so that you'd have a pile of arguments to go to that unbeliever and shove it down their throat. The world does not need arrogant Christians. I gave this message so that you and I would not be conceited but that we'd be

convinced. And once we are convinced, we understand exactly what our role and responsibility is in this information and with this truth. It's this: If Jesus is who he says he is, then he is the supernatural Son of God. And if he is the supernatural Son of God, then Paul has something to say to each one of us who have confessed and embraced him. It's found in Colossians 1:27. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. If you have embraced Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord then he resides in you.

So this supernatural Son of God lives inside of you. Let me ask you a question - do you think that should make a difference in the way you live? Do you think that should make a difference in the way I live? I think it will. Your mind and the Holy Spirit may take you in different directions. My mind immediately goes back to the fruit of the Spirit. If a supernatural God dwells within me, then the best way for me to demonstrate the exclusive claims of Christ is not to win an argument but demonstrate a changed life, so that the world sees love in a world of incredible hate. The world sees joy in a world of sorrow. The world sees peace where all around us is conflict. The world sees long-suffering patience in a world gone mad because it's so impatient and intolerant. The world begins to see the fruit of the Spirit in me - self control in a world where there is no control and everyone is out of control. Do you see?

I think I would say it this way if I were to capture this: If Jesus is who He says He is, then we should be people who let the supernatural Jesus reveal himself through our lives. That's what I really want you to get out of this. If

Jesus is who He says He is, then we ought to be people who let the supernatural Jesus reveal himself through our lives.

Now, if this message was nothing more than theory for me, how hopeless would that be? How tragic would that be if all I was giving is what I'm supposed to say to you - if this wasn't real to me. But it is! Forty years ago this week - I even hate to say that number - but forty years ago this week I graduated from high school. I wished I could say I was a child prodigy and graduated when I was four but that isn't true. So I graduated from high school forty years ago this week and just a little bit after, like a week after, my best friend that I grew up with and his family and I, we went on a vacation. We had an incredible, crazy time. All clean fun, but we had a great time. And I remember coming home from this great vacation and feeling this incredible sense of emptiness inside - unbelievable, profound emptiness. And I couldn't shake it and I couldn't run from it. I had absolutely no direction in my life, no idea what I was going to do next, no idea where I was going in my life - no hope, no purpose. But I knew what I had to do. And on July 17, 1976 I knelt by my bedside and I gave my life to Christ. That was a Saturday. I checked. The very next day I went to the pastor of the little church that I grew up in and told the pastor what I had done - that I had given my life to Christ.

So what in the world would I say to you about this Jesus that I have been talking about all morning? If I were to characterize what it means to follow him and serve him for forty years, I'd probably say words that are very similar to the words that Ravi Zacharias have used. It sounds like this: "I came to Him because I did not know which way to turn. I have remained

with Him because there is no other way I wish to turn. I came to Him longing for something I did not have. I remained with Him because I have something I will not trade. I came to Him as a stranger. I remain with Him in the most intimate of friendships. I came to Him unsure about the future. I remain with Him certain about my destiny."

You see, the thing for all of us is this: If we are really going to be used by God to draw other people to Christ, we have to understand something. People who need Jesus will be drawn by people who want Jesus - that you and I would live a life in such a way that we would attract others to Jesus Christ because they see him in us. I think it would be perfectly appropriate for us to declare in song our allegiance to Jesus, that all we want is him and then I'll come back and finish.

I say this humbly, not arrogantly, but confidently. Someday every single person who has ever lived is going to stand before one person, and that one person is the Lord Jesus Christ, and all I want is him. Amen. Amen. And I know that when we say that, all I want is him, that answers his prayer - for people who want nothing else but him. And if you and I will go out into this world, not with an argument - with a confidence that we stand before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. People who need Jesus will be drawn by people who want Jesus. And maybe you've never stepped over that line. Maybe something in those five wonderful people who walked through the waters of baptism will instill and encourage your heart to say today is the day I need to make a decision for Christ. In the Fireside Room there are pastors, prayer partners - they'd love to help you. But let's make a

commitment all of us to go out and demonstrate to the world that all we want is Jesus. God bless you. Have a wonderful day.