



**CAPITOL[®]
COMMISSION**

Gospel Hope & Spiritual Strength for Government Leaders



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Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

Why Does Jesus (and Christianity) Seem Exclusionary?

In our culture which places high value on making everyone feel they belong, Jesus' words may fall on our ears harshly. But what is the point of this statement? Is it to push others away from His blessings or is there a spiritual truth we had best not miss? And is it consistent with Jesus' character to say He is excluding anyone?

Jesus Christ was like no other man to ever live and walk the earth. He was both fully God and fully man and a pre-existing part of the triune Godhead (Father, Son and Spirit) who 2,000 years ago was made flesh in order to accomplish many things:

- 1) He came to demonstrate how to faithfully obey the Father in a way Adam failed to do in Eden [*Phil 2:5-11, Rom 5:15-17*]
- 2) He came to call us to holiness, a standard of behavior we cannot naturally meet [*Matt 5:48, Rom 8:9-11*]
- 3) He came to fulfill Old Testament prophecies [*Matt 1 & 2*]
- 4) He came to testify to the truth. [*John 18:37*]
- 5) He came to destroy the works of the devil. [*1 John 3:8*]
- 6) Most importantly, He came to be the propitiation (atoning sacrifice) for our sins, the only way to assuage the just wrath of God which separates us from His holiness [*1 John 2:2, Rom 3:21-26*]

Jesus' truth claims about himself can be examined for all of these points, but let us focus on that last one. Jesus' gruesome death on a Roman cross is somewhat well known in our culture and dramatized in many movies, but it is the meaning behind His death which explains His statement. Without that key understanding we may think of Him as merely a victim of injustice or a tragic historical figure with no link to today.

Capitol Commission state ministers are pastor-missionaries who in session teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for all those working in state capitols. The Bible studies are hand distributed to each legislative office and available by email and shared across the Capitol Commission community. This ministry is an extension of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message and help believers mature through Biblical expositional instruction. Prayer is foundational to this ministry, consistent with proper submission to governmental authority (Romans 13:1-7) and obedient to the command to pray for our appointed leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

Our desire is to witness God's work in transforming hearts.

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In the biblical account of John 14, Jesus is celebrating Passover with His disciples in the Upper Room. He will be arrested in just a few hours. Having washed their feet to demonstrate His great humility and to provide a lasting example of serving one another (*John 13:1-20*), He then must temper Peter's brash claim of laying down his life for Christ when in fact Peter will that night deny even knowing Him three times (*John 13:36-38*). These events and the way Jesus is talking is upsetting to this gathering so Jesus comforts them at the beginning of Chapter 14, informing them He is preparing a place and promising His return. Thomas asks where Jesus is going--he wants directions so perhaps they can meet Jesus there.

At this point Jesus voices the text verse, and it is loaded with meaning. He is intentionally identifying Himself as the path, the truth, and life using the divine "I am" which Moses first heard at the burning bush (*Exodus 3:13-14*) and Jesus had previously applied to Himself in *John 8:58*. This is also the 6th of seven "I am ..." declarations in the gospel of John. In all of these, Jesus makes distinct points which are only applicable to Him and His role both in salvation and in His kingship.

How do you read this verse? If Jesus is who He claims to be, then it is easy to accept. But if doubts exist as to whether He was real and is divine, then it may sound farfetched. The key to understanding the context is to appreciate that we all fall short of the glory and holiness of God (*Romans 3:23*) so there is a great separation between God and man. We are unable to exist in God's glorious presence without help. Jesus came on a rescue mission to seek and save that which was lost—us! This is where His sacrificial death on the cross comes in. The wages of sin is death (*Romans 6:23a*) in order to satisfy God's perfect justice. But the sacrifices across centuries in the Jewish temple could not satisfy that justice so Jesus had to become human to be the Passover Lamb. Just as in the Exodus account, when God sees the blood of the Lamb on the doorpost, the angel of death "passes over" and the firstborn live. He is that gift and the giver of eternal life (*Romans 6:23b*).

Then, if true, only by His death can we ever approach God and He is indeed the Way and no one may come to God in any other. Although popular to wish that "all roads lead to heaven", the road that bypasses the cross is actually a dead end. Put another way, if you could save yourself then Jesus' awful death would have been unnecessary and He suffered for no reason.

After Jesus' death and resurrection, Peter is forgiven and reinstated at the end of John's gospel. Then we see a different man preaching before the ruling Jewish council, the very men responsible for Jesus' arrest and execution. Acts 4 records Peter's excellent pronouncement that "Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead...has become the cornerstone". *Acts 4:12* closes his speech with these words: "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Emphasis mine)

This is the good news. And it is extended to all mankind, not just to that Jewish community but to all. It is thus exclusionary by means but not in the offer, the invitation is for you to give you the truth that leads to life.

I am available to discuss any biblical topic but especially to ensure all who read this understand that Jesus Christ is distinctively important to the entire world. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Colossae: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of **all** creation. For by him **all** things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—**all** things were created through him and for him. And he is before **all** things, and in him **all** things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that **in everything** he might be preeminent." -- Colossians 3:15-18 (ESV)

A key facet empowering our ministry is prayer, but not just prayer for the preacher. 1 Timothy 2:1-4 commands Christians to obediently pray for our leaders. A tool for America's churches to help consistently pray for you, our elected leaders, is available to all via:

www.Pray1Tim2.org - You can sign up for daily email reminders, courtesy of Capitol Commission