

## All Roads... Does It Matter Which God I Believe In?

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Are all the gods of the different religions just different ways of thinking about the same being? We often hear that as long as one sincerely worships *a god*, it doesn't matter which one. Many with good intentions of tolerance and inclusion tell us we should consider all religions' deities equal and acceptable.

In one sense, the name we call God doesn't matter. Some people may use the Hebrew name *Yahweh* while others pronounce it *Jehovah* or call Him *Lord* or *God*. The Greek name for God is *Theos*, the root used in several languages such as the Spanish *Dios*. These are all referring to the same being—the God of the Bible.

However, is it different when a name for God refers to a different being with a totally different history, relationship, and communication? For example, when a Muslim speaks of the supreme being he worships, is his *Allah* just another name for Yahweh? Some would say yes, since they are both thought of as the supreme spiritual being who interacts with humans.

There is a teaching in some modern churches that applies to God an attribute called "wider mercy." This means that His mercy is so loving and unlimited that He will accept any who believe in some higher power. Essentially, sincerity is all that matters, and all who believe in *something* will become a child of God. This is quite attractive within today's "tolerant" and "inclusive" philosophies. We can all join hands in our own unique worship of a being that we define in any image we prefer. We can "cancel" the judgmental biblical God who sends unbelievers to eternal punishment.

However, none of this is consistent with a straightforward reading of Scripture...

I am the Lord. There is no other! (Isaiah 45:5)

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

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. (Acts 4:12)

When Paul spoke with the Greek philosophers on Mars Hill he said:

For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. (Acts 17:23)

These men *sincerely* worshipped their gods and even made allowances for any unknown god they may have overlooked. Yet Paul was compelled to inform them of the gospel message of the one God. The men of Athens were *unsaved* unless they believed in the true God.

Today's "fake" gods are no different than those in the minds of Greek philosophers. Regardless of the sincerity of followers, belief in them will not lead to eternal life. And ultimately, it doesn't matter whether their following is in the dozens or billions. One road leads to the biblical God, and He is Jesus. He alone has paid our sin debt. He alone has the power to save.

And therein is the good news! Jesus invites *all* to come to eternal life through Him...

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

Believers shouldn't be embarrassed by the exclusivity of the gospel. Rather, we should be encouraged even more to take the message to the billions who follow gods with no power to save. God's mercy is indeed wide. Jesus's sacrifice was enough for all!

### **God among other gods...**

- The Muslim's Allah is defined in a completely different context compared with the God of the Bible. The Islamic belief denies that Allah is a trinity. There is no Son, therefore, no cross, resurrection, or payment for our sin. Islam demands that a person earn their way to "heaven" by giving service to Allah.
- Hindu and Buddhist "gods" are mere "forces" and not personal. Their New Age ideas of sin and redemption are nothing like biblical truths. Like every other human-made religion, they require people *do* things for salvation rather than accept what has already been *done*.
- Animism is alive and well throughout the world, from tribal idols to the native American "spirit in the sky." Some ideas may *seem* to be based on the biblical God, but if they do not confess Jesus as the Son of God and atonement for sin, they fall short of the true gospel.
- And sadly, some alleged "Christian" gods are not the one True God of the Bible. When we refuse to accept the Word of God, we make a new god "in our own image." Many in churches today may be worshipping idols created to meet their own goals and cover sins their own way.