

Is Jesus the Only Way to Salvation?
Central Christian Church Position Paper



The position of Central Christian Church on any issue, including this one, is rooted in our understanding of the Bible. God's Word tells us that God loves us and wants all people to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). However, the Bible tells us that not everyone will be saved (Matthew 7:21) and that salvation is only promised to those who follow Christ (John 14:6).

We know there is a place of eternal punishment for those who rebel against God (Matthew 25:46), a place where each person is judged fairly in accordance with what he or she has done (Luke 12:47-48). When questions are left unanswered, the Bible leads us to trust in a God who is both perfectly loving (1 John 4:8) and perfectly just (2 Thessalonians 1:6). But Scripture clearly teaches that we are all sinners (Romans 3:23), and that only through the atoning death of Jesus Christ do we receive the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life (John 3:16; 14:6).

Below is an article written by Bob Russell, former senior minister of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, KY. In this article Mr. Russell explains well what the Bible says regarding Jesus being the only way to salvation. Difficult questions may arise when this topic is discussed, like what happens to a person who never hears about Jesus, and what exactly happens to those who are lost. The Bible does not clearly answer some of those questions.

Bob Russell, in the August 5, 2003 issue of *Lookout Magazine*, writes the following in "Do All Roads Lead to Heaven?":

"The second-best-selling author in the world (behind John Grisham) is Paulo Coelho. His books have sold more than 18 million copies - more than a million in the United States. His fans include Madonna, Julia Roberts, and former president Bill Clinton. In his books Coelho proposes an amalgamation of world religions. "I believe that each and every religion, when chosen with sincerity, leads to the same God", he concludes. This syncretism (saying there is some good in all religions so let's combine the best of them) is becoming the popular approach to religion in this age of tolerance.

Many people believe there are different ways to get to heaven. Like various roads up a mountain, they all lead to the peak. (Never mind that most religions outside of Christianity don't even include beliefs about heaven at all! They don't want to go to heaven, but people try to send them there anyway!) According to a George Barna poll, 44% of Americans say that all people experience the same outcome after they die regardless of their religious beliefs. About 63% of Americans contend that if a person is good enough, they will earn their way to heaven. A third of "born again" Christians accept this notion!

But what did Jesus say? Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" (Luke 13:23). Notice Jesus' sobering response.

First, Jesus indicated THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO BE SAVED. "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door..." (Luke 13:24a). Jesus said the door is narrow. There aren't many ways to get to heaven - there's only one. It's not by living a good life or believing in a Supreme Being, but by believing in Jesus Christ as God's Son and trusting his death on the cross to save you. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). To tell people there is only one way to get somewhere is not intolerant if it's the truth; instead, it helps them eliminate the possibility of going the wrong way!

Secondly, Jesus said ONLY FEW WILL BE SAVED. "...many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to" (Luke 13:24b). It's not just the Hitlers, Mansons, Jezebels, and Judas Iscariots who will be lost. According to Jesus, the majority are not going to make it to heaven (Matthew 7:13-14).

Jesus also implied that once the opportunity to be saved is over, THERE WILL BE NO SECOND CHANCE. "Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from'" (Luke 13:25). Just as God shut the door to Noah's ark and no one could enter once the rains began, you won't have a second chance after you die or after Christ returns. Hebrews 9:27 says that man "is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment."

Jesus warned that SOME WHO HAVE A SURFACE ACQUAINTANCE WITH HIM WOULD BE LOST. "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'" (Luke 13:26-27). Not everyone who calls himself a Christian and goes to church will be saved. Salvation is promised to those who trust Jesus and seek to follow his commands (Matthew 7:21).

Finally, Jesus forewarned us that AN AGONIZING ETERNITY SEPARATED FROM GOD AWAITS THE LOST. "There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out" (Luke 13:28).

Let's say you're a passenger on the Titanic. You feel the ship's collision with the iceberg, and you go up on deck to see what the problem is. You hear one man say, "The ship has hit an iceberg. We're going to sink in a matter of hours. We must get as many people off the ship and into lifeboats as possible."

Another man says, "There will be other ships coming. We have plenty of time to transfer to other boats. Lifeboats are dangerous. Let's wait."

Another says, "Let's get a crew and go down to patch the hole. We can save it ourselves."

Which of those voices would you believe? What would you do about it? Since the first few lifeboats have plenty of room, your answer will determine the destiny of you and your family.

Then suppose you discover that the man who said the boat is going to sink within hours is the man who designed the boat and he has surveyed the damage. The other three are just passengers. Now which of the three will you listen to? If you have wisdom, you'll listen to the designer of the boat. Even though his message sounds negative, his honesty will save you. Keep in mind that Jesus Christ is the one who designed this world. He's the only one who came back from the grave and said, "I've surveyed the damage down there, and here's how you can be saved." All other voices you hear are mortal human beings. To whom will you listen?"