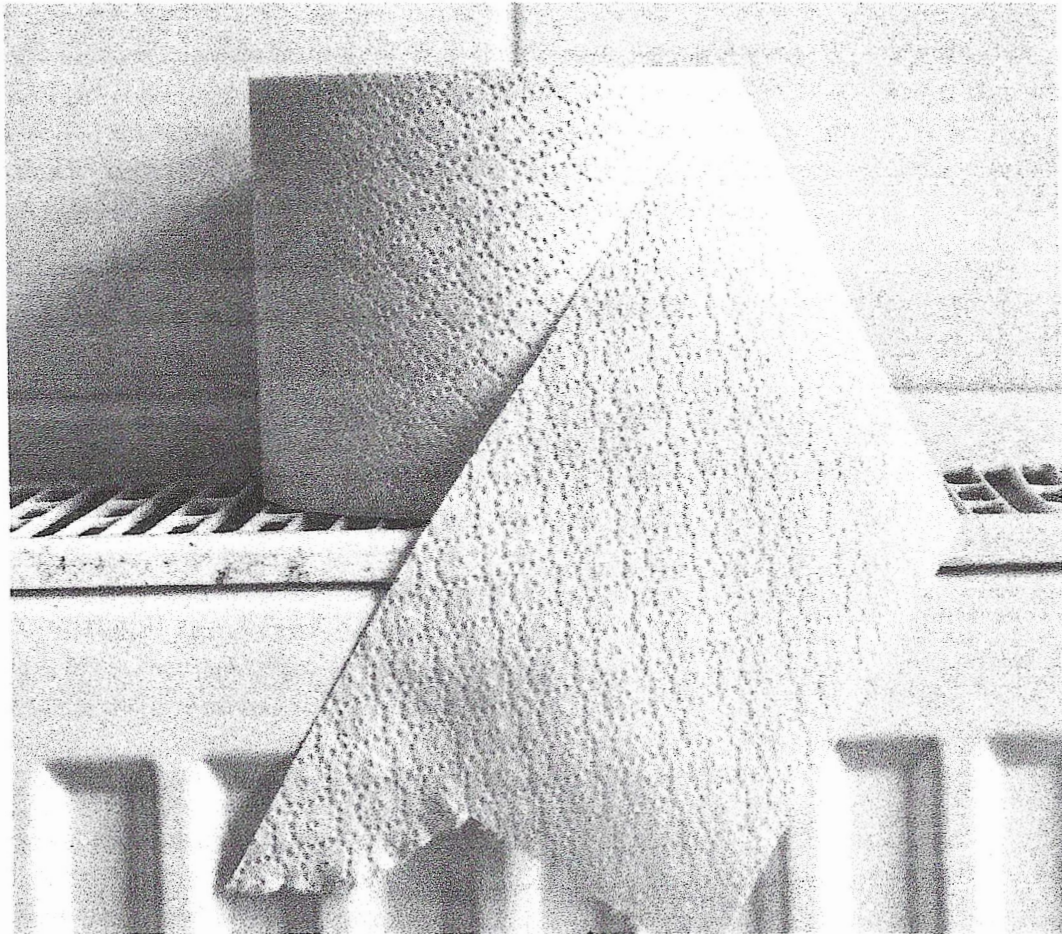


12 N Bible Study- May 10, 2023

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Aren't All Religions the Same?



QUESTION 1:

***When have you regretted trying to cut corners
with a cheap knock-off brand?***

THE POINT

A vast difference exists between faith in Jesus and all other beliefs.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

"Jumping on the bandwagon" is a regular habit for a lot of people. When a product begins to grow in sales or popularity, others want to jump in and profit from it too. One popular reality TV show in the 90s led to an army of production companies releasing their own. When one type of food becomes trendy—like spicy hot chicken—it seems like everybody in food services jumps on the bandwagon to sell their own version of the treat. Unfortunately, however, not everyone holds to the same standards that made the original so popular.

When it comes to establishing a relationship with God (or going to heaven), many people contend one way is as good as another. Religious leaders will also rise up touting their way is better—or easier. Let me just call these what they are: cheap knock-offs—attempts to mimic the real thing that fall far short.

Buying a low-quality, knock-off box of cereal can be disappointing to your taste buds, but buying into an inferior, false substitute for a real relationship with God is eternally deadly.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

ISAIAH 44:6-8

⁶ This is what the LORD, the King of Israel and its Redeemer, the LORD of Armies, says: I am the first and I am the last. There is no God but me. ⁷ Who, like me, can announce the future? Let him say so and make a case before me, since I have established an ancient people. Let these gods declare the coming things, and what will take place. ⁸ Do not be startled or afraid. Have I not told you and declared it long ago? You are my witnesses! Is there any God but me? There is no other Rock; I do not know any.

It's a familiar scene in the courtroom. A defendant is on the stand and the lawyer asks, "Were you at such-and-such location on the day in question?"

The defendant answers, "I most certainly was not there." Multiple witnesses are called who can corroborate the defendant's whereabouts. Their testimony is important because of the law of non-contradiction. Two contradictory claims cannot both be true at the same time. The defendant was either there or he wasn't. Truth is, by nature, exclusive.

The same logic applies to religion. Don't all religions lead to God? Aren't all religions the same? Anyone who makes this claim betrays their own lack of knowledge of world religions

because the varied religions do not make the same claims or have the same goals. In Isaiah 44:6-8, God applied the same law of non-contradiction in one of the clearest divine autobiographical statements in the whole Bible: "I am the first and I am the last. There is no God but me" (v. 6). God then challenged any "god" to step forward and do what He can do: "announce the future" and "declare the coming things" (v. 7). Yahweh then asked, "Is there any God but me?" (v. 8). The answer is resounding silence. No one is like God.

QUESTION 2:

What does God reveal about Himself in these verses?

THE POINT

In light of the truth that there is only one God, Yahweh, and there is no other, God Himself told us through the prophet Isaiah: "Do not be startled or afraid" (v. 8). When we walk with Yahweh, He Himself is our place of safety, protection, and stability. "There is no other Rock." How comforting to know that

the One true God is someone we can run to. He is personal, knowable, and finds joy in establishing us with His protection. With the knowledge and comfort of God's unique presence also comes a responsibility. "You are my witnesses!"

ISAIAH 44:9-11

⁹ All who make idols are nothing, and what they treasure benefits no one. Their witnesses do not see or know anything, so they will be put to shame. ¹⁰ Who makes a god or casts a metal image that benefits no one? ¹¹ Look, all its worshipers will be put to shame, and the craftsmen are humans. They all will assemble and stand; they all will be startled and put to shame.

We cannot be witnesses of God as the One true God without dealing with the fallacy of all other gods. Clearly, God takes it seriously when we worship anything or anyone but Him. Let us not forget the first two commandments: "Do not have other gods besides me. Do not make an idol for yourself" (Ex. 20:3-4).

QUESTION 3:

Where do you see idolatry present in today's culture?

In an effort to get in shape, my wife, Audrey, and I enlisted the help of a trainer. He's a good trainer who also happens to be Muslim. My wife and I always pray together before we

begin the workout, and on one occasion, the trainer wanted to join us. He said, "We all pray to the same God. All religions are essentially the same. Let's pray together."

How would you respond if someone said that the God of the Bible and the god of Islam are the same? A lot of people believe that about all gods, but they would be surprised to know that religions are not inclusive. They all make exclusive claims, and we find fundamental differences between them.

Consider the contrast of claims between Christianity and Islam, for example.

► Key words and doctrines found in Scripture never appear in the Koran; words such as atonement, covenant, redemption, and regeneration are absent.

MAY 10

True Friends

When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.

JOB 2:11 (NIV)

JOB'S THREE FRIENDS took time away from their homes to go and comfort him. When someone you love is going through a difficult time, reach out to them, and show up for them. Let them know that you are there for them and that you care.

Heavenly Father, when I am considering sympathizing from afar, lead me to reach out and be present.
