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The Christ and the Gospel; Matt 16:21-23  
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Introduction – Christians have often been maligned and criticized for being so arrogant, hateful, and narrow-minded as to believe that adherence to the Christian faith is the only means of redemption. It is said that Christianity is far too exclusive and dismissive of other religions. Other religions have sacred books, honored figures, and sincere followers just like Christianity. Even those who do not adhere to any specific religious system are often found to be caring, good people. Christians have to really be arrogant or ignorant or both to believe your religion is the only true religion.

It's arguments just like that one that have caused many college students to walk away from the faith. It was ok to talk about how unique and special Jesus is in SS when you were ten. You were in a classroom of people who also thought Jesus was special. You were surrounded by people in the church who believed Jesus was uniquely the Savior. The stories were fascinating and the pictures were cute. But in the real world, talking to the educated, and meeting so many people from so many backgrounds, well it just doesn't seem feasible any more to keep holding to a religious system that denies the spiritual truth of every other belief system. People of other faiths, like Islam, live good lives and pray all the time. I can't possibly believe they are going to hell. The Christian church is therefore wrong and has been for 2000 years.

Instead of denying Scripture from an attack argument, the believer goes to Scripture to understand why is it that the Christian faith is the only means of eternal salvation, the only way one can be reconciled to God? Why do I believe what I believe if it seems by unbelievers to be such a hostile, hateful, bigoted, narrow-minded faith? Why would Jesus declare in John 14 that He was the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except by Him? What sets the Christian gospel apart from every other belief system?

- I. There is Only One Gospel (v21)
  - a. There is only one gospel because there is only one Christ.

- i. “He” must go to Jerusalem – He must suffer many things – He must be killed – He must be raised on the third day – Why must it be Him? Because He alone, is The Christ. Cf. v16.
- b. There is only one gospel because there is only one sacrifice for sin.
  - i. It had to be Him, and He had to go. Why is it that He MUST go to Jerusalem and MUST suffer and be killed? Why is it that Christ MUST give His life?
  - ii. Because only the sinless Son of the living God can be the perfect, final sacrifice for our sin. Someone may give their life in order to save your earthly life. Soldiers often give themselves to save their fellow soldiers. But only one could give His life to save you eternally, and He did!
  - iii. Christ, who knew no sin, took our sin upon Himself on the cross, and paid for our sin by His death, because the wages of sin is death. He died for us, and He, and only He, could die for us in that saving way.
  - iv. 2 Cor 5:21 – “For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”
- c. There is only one gospel because only One was raised for you.
  - i. The Resurrection of Christ demonstrated that He defeated death, hell, and the grave. Death could not keep Him or hold Him because death only has a claim on sinners!
  - ii. The Resurrection of Christ demonstrated that the Father was pleased and satisfied with His payment for our sin.
  - iii. No one has walked out of the grave like Christ walked out of the grave. Yes, others were raised in the OT and in the NT on the authority of the Word and will of God. Christ was raised because He is the Word of God. It was His will that He be raised. He prophesied with specificity His own resurrection. His resurrection was for us, just like His death.
  - iv. Romans 4:22-25
- d. There is only one gospel because there is only one Christ, and only Christ could die for you, and He did. And only Christ could be raised for you, and He was.

- II. The One and Only Gospel Depends on the Person and Work of Christ (v22)
- a. Peter is struggling with coming to grips with the gospel. He wants the second coming promises of Jesus without the first coming suffering of Jesus. Peter is pushing back against the only means of our salvation. Peter is pushing back on God's plan for our salvation. Peter has forgotten that this has always been God's plan to save His people because this is the only way to save God's people.
    - i. Isaiah 53:5 – But he was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed.
  - b. If you lose the Person of Christ in the gospel, you lose the gospel. And if you lose the work of Christ in the gospel, you lose the gospel. Without the Person of Christ, you don't have the Work of Christ. Without the Work of Christ, you don't have the gospel. You have to maintain both the Person and the Work to have the gospel, the only gospel.
  - c. The Mormon and the Jehovah Witness faiths deny the full deity of Christ, that's why their gospel is false. Muslims deny the work of Christ, that's why their gospel is false.
  - d. Peter understood the Person of Christ, v16, but he was struggling to grasp the Work of Christ, v22.
  - e. Concerning the Person of Christ – He is 100% God and 100% man.
    - i. John 1:1,14 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.
  - f. Concerning the Work of Christ – In His death Christ was our substitutionary, propitiatory, atonement.
    - i. Substitution meaning He took our place by dying for us. Eph 5:2 "Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."
    - ii. Propitiatory meaning that as sinners we stand under the judgment and wrath of God against our sin. We were guilty and condemned but Christ stood in our place and bore the wrath of God against our sin. Rom 3:25 "God put Christ forward as a propitiation by His blood"

- iii. Atonement meaning the sacrificial death of Christ removes our sin by paying for it and cleansing it, reconciling us then to the Father. Col 2:14 says that Christ “cancelled the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside by nailing it to the cross.”
- g. The Gospel is only the Gospel because of both the Person and Work of Christ.

### III. The Things of Man are at Odds with the Things of God (v23)

- a. That’s why Jesus’ rebuke of Peter was so stern. Get behind me Satan! Any twisting or tweaking or denying of the gospel is the work of Satan. It is satanic. In one moment Jesus blesses Peter, and in the next moment Jesus rebukes Peter because nothing is more hellish than to distort the one and only gospel! God’s gospel. The gospel of Christ! Any hindrance to that message or the proclamation of that message is nothing short of the work of Satan.
- b. Satan would have you believe in anything other than the gospel and Christ would call on you to believe the one and only gospel. One of them is lying!
- c. Notice how the “things of man” in this verse is an outworking of Satan. The “things of man” are the way we think and feel and believe about God and sin and Christ and mankind and salvation apart from God’s truth. There must be other ways. God is not the god of the Bible. My life is my own. The Bible is just another book. Christianity is a hateful, bigoted, outdated, patriarchal, arrogant, narrow-minded collection of religious folk tales.
- d. What is the “things of God”? Concerning the gospel, the things of God are Isaiah 53:6 – All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. The NT puts the “things of God” this way – For God (singular, there’s only one) so loved the world (sinful, rebellious mankind), that he gave His only Son (sent Christ to die for our sin) that whoever believes in Him (Christianity is both inclusive and exclusive – whoever, believes in Him) should not perish (you don’t have to perish) but have eternal life.

Conclusion – the real question is not why do you believe there is only one way to be saved. The real question is, given that we are all sinners and have turned away from God, why is there any salvation at all? The gospel is good news. There is salvation, and it is found in Christ!