

## Only One True Religion?

EMC Wednesday Night Bible Study - 6-22-16

### Tentative summer roadmap:

- 6/29 - DJ Willy P.
- 7/6 - Only One True Religion, part 2
- 7/13 - Christian tolerance
- 7/20-27 - The Clues of God - evidence that God exists
- 8/3 - Science and miracles
- 8/10-24 - The Problem of Evil (flex time)
- 8/31 - Summary
- 9/7 - Acts

### The Problem of Exclusivity

The new tolerance = all values, all beliefs, all lifestyles, all truth claims are \_\_\_\_\_.

Postmodern ways to deal with problem of exclusivity:

- All major religions are equally valid and basically teach the same thing.
- Each religion is part of spiritual truth, but none can see the whole truth.
- Religious belief is too culturally and historically conditioned to be (objective) 'truth'
- Which all lead to the same general assertion: It is arrogant to insist your religion is right and to convert others to it.

### Surveying the Scene

2 categories for world religion:

- Pan("\_\_\_\_\_")/poly("\_\_\_\_\_")theism - impersonal, rooted in \_\_\_\_\_, "continuity" (**draw diagram**)
  - All things are an unbroken whole, with the divine as part of the whole.
  - The "divine" is everything you see.
    - Hinduism, New Age, etc.
    - The Force
  - Nature \_\_\_\_\_ the divine
    - ANE Greek, Roman, Egyptian cultures
    - American Indian, animism, etc.
- Mono("\_\_\_\_\_")theism - personal, rooted in \_\_\_\_\_, "discontinuity"
  - Judaism, Islam, Christianity
  - Transcendence = ontological distinction
  - To confuse God with nature = idolatry

A few implications of pan/polytheism:

- Evil = necessary part of the divine/human world (Yin/yang)
- No objective/knowable truth or morality - relativism
- There is no "beyond"
- History, like nature, is repetitive - no meaningful origin or destiny/purpose
- Does not square with the facts of the observable universe - cause/effect, beginnings

### Christianity: Monotheism with a Difference

All 3 world religions that trace their origins to Abraham are definitively monotheistic

- Judaism (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:5; cf. 43:10; 44:8; 45:6, 14, 18, 21; et al.)

- Islam
  - Greatest sin is to affirm there is another god besides Allah (Qur'an 2.163, 165, 167)
  - Allah has no son (2:116, 19:35, 19:90-93, 112:3)
- Christianity
  - In the same tradition as Moses (John 5:46)
  - God is one and should be loved with singular and exclusive devotion (Mark 12:29-30)
  - Paul - I Cor 8:4-6

The difference: \_\_\_\_\_

- One vs. oneness
- Stumbling block (I Pet. 2:8; cf. Rom. 9:32-33)
- At the heart of it all: \_\_\_\_\_. Examples from John:
  - The Healing at Bethesda - John 5:1-18
    - V. 9 - on the Sabbath + V. 17 - "my father" = V. 18 - "Kill!"
    - Jesus' response - John 5:19-47
      - V. 19 - does nothing "by himself"
      - V. 20 - only does what he sees the Father doing
      - Vv. 21, 26 - Father has shared life with the Son
      - Vv. 22, 27 - Father has given authority to the Son
      - Vv. 33, 36 - JtB identified Jesus as the one for whom Israel looked
      - Vv. 46-47 - Moses and the prophets foretold his coming
      - Vv. 39-40, 45 - the Scriptures testify to Jesus
  - Jesus Healing the Blind Man - John 9
    - Sabbath healing. Accusation of blasphemy. Followed by discourse in ch. 10:
      - The door, Good Shepherd, gives eternal life.
      - "I and the Father are one." v. 30. Stone him! (v. 33)
      - Vv. 37-38 - Everything Jesus said and did was to point to his \_\_\_\_\_ with the Father.
  - Upper Room discourse (chs. 13-17)
    - He and the Father are one
    - To see/know Jesus means to see/know the Father
    - To receive/reject Jesus is to receive/reject the Father
  - Prologue (1:1-18):
    - Paraphrasing \_\_\_\_\_ 1
      - What is implicit becomes \_\_\_\_\_
      - Gen 1:3 - "And God said" - *Elohim* (pl.) *wayyo'mer* (s.)
      - John - the Word is the eternal \_\_\_\_\_ of God
- NT development
  - Col. 1:15 - "He is the image of the invisible God."
  - Hebrews 1:1-3
  - Revelation 5:6; 22:1-5

### Summary

- All world religions can be divided into 2 major divisions: poly/pantheism & monotheism
- All 3 monotheistic religions affirm: 1 God, else blasphemy
- Jesus is the difference: Within God's oneness there is a distinction of persons
  - His claims are exclusive (John 14:6)