

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 3RD-4TH, 2021 // RESURRECTION WEEKEND

GODS

HUMANITY HAS ALWAYS CREATED GODS

In Gen. 1 and 2 humanity is created, in chap. 3 we commit sin and put a distance between us and God, and by chap. 6 a majority of people had become "wicked" in the sight of God.

- **There are many reasons why people either fabricate other gods or deny that one exists, but the core of it is always self-centeredness.**

4 LARGEST RELIGIONS (-CHRISTIANITY AND ATHEISM)

- **Islam:** Allah is debated to be the same God as the Jews and Christians, but there is a major missing component.
- **Hinduism:** From 33 to 33 million gods
- **Buddhism:** Non-theistic and teaches that the idea of a god distracts from enlightenment
- **Chinese Traditional Religions:** A blend of immortals, ancestors, gods, and Buddhism

THE AMERICAN GOD

The god of our culture is self. Currently the 3rd largest "religion" in the world and the fastest growing in Western society is "nones," which means "none of the above" when it comes to faith.

- **Even within professing Christians, the pursuit of self above all things has taken hold and is growing rapidly.**

JUST ANOTHER PLAGIARIZED GOD?

Many people claim the Christian Savior, Jesus, is simply plagiarized from a long list of myths. Kersey Graves wrote a very historically sloppy book entitled "The World's 16 Crucified Saviors" in 1919 that greatly confused many people.

- **History has never taught another Savior like Jesus. There are some stark differences in the God of the Christians.**

WHAT MAKES THIS GOD DIFFERENT?

THIS ONE CLAIMED TO BE THE ONLY ONE

In virtually every major religion throughout history, there has been a council and hierarchy of gods. The "stumbling block to the Greeks" (1 Cor. 1:23) was that Jesus claimed to be the only God.

- **God had always proclaimed He was the only God (Gen. 1, Ex. 20), but Jesus, God in flesh, said it in person to us.**

JESUS DENOUNCES THE AMERICAN GOD

The God of the Christians directly challenges the god of self (our god). Jesus tells us to "lose our life in order to find it" (Mt. 10:39) and that we are to "deny self" (Mt. 16).

- Jesus tells us to not only put Him above ourselves, but to also think of other people as more important. **We see in Jesus' teachings that He is counter-cultural.**

SALVATION THROUGH HIS WORK NOT OURS

Islam has the 5 pillars that must be achieved to be saved, Buddhism has the Wheel of Dharma in order to be enlightened, Judaism has the Law, but Christianity believes we're saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9).

- Every other religion teaches that we must work and be capable, but **Jesus tells us we're incapable, and His work saves us!**
- Isaiah 53:4-6 (CSB)

THE ONLY SAVIOR TO DIE AND DEFEAT THE GRAVE

Though other myths had told of martyred "saviors," Christianity is the only religion that has a Savior that not only died for His people, but rose from the grave and opened up the door for us to live with Him forever!

- **The belief in a perfect afterlife changes how we function in this broken life. Jesus tells us there is more to our existence!**
- John 11:25-26 (CSB)

A LOVING AND PERSONAL CREATOR GOD

Though "all things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created, (Jn. 1:3)" Jesus is still accessible and personal. We don't have to "get it together" before we communicate with God.

In fact, it is prayer that "gets us together."

- **Not only does God know us, He wants to spend time with us!**

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

...BECAUSE THE WORLD IS FALLING APART.

- Depression has tripled in 2 years (U of Minn.)
- Suicide at all time high (Washington Post)
- 50% of all marriages fail and fewer people are getting married because of it (APA)
- 80% of Americans are in debilitating debt (PewTrusts.org)
- Hate crimes are at all time high (NPR)
- Child and domestic abuse at record highs (NYT)

IS THERE A CORRELATION? (LIFEWAY RESEARCH)

- Only 53% of Americans believe in God
- Only 19-23% of professing Christians go to church once a month
- Only 5% of Christians read the Bible once a month and only 43% of all professing Christians think the Word is infallible.
- Only 24% of Christians have shared their faith 1 time in the last 6 months

IN OTHER WORDS, OUR WAYS ARE FAILING!

Rom. 1:23 says, "Claiming to be wise, they became fools." This is our current situation! The more enlightened and evolved we claim to be, the more we plummet into the abyss!

- **Logically, if something continues to fall apart, one should consider using different means of fixing the problem.** Haven't we fallen hard enough yet?

IT MATTERS BECAUSE I NEED HELP!

The struggles of humanity are also personal struggles for many of us! We all fail, we all struggle with worth, we all desire to be known and valued!

- **The conversation of Jesus matters because we cannot make it on our own.** People will fail us and we will fail ourselves, so we need something more.
- John 14:6 (CSB)

...BECAUSE IF WHAT HE SAID IS TRUE...

If we believe that there is an afterlife, we must also believe that good must be rewarded and evil punished. Who defines good and evil, and what happens if we choose to ignore it? If our standard of good has fallen flat, there must be another standard.

- **If Jesus is truth, we will be rewarded or held accountable for the life we've lived.**

WHY ARE WE HERE?

- Are we here today out of obligation? Do we honestly think that our religious acts or our standard of "good" will make us right with God?
- Did we come looking for a quick fix or silver bullet? Do we really want an intimate relationship with God or just a fast pass to paradise? If so, it is still about us.

WHAT DID WE COME TO FIND?

- Are we asking the bigger questions: What is the truth? Why are we alive? What comes after this life and how do we get there?
- Are we seeking the greater things: true love, peace, an everlasting identity, value, fulfillment, and purpose? Has our past pursuits of these things yielded permanent positive results?

WHAT WILL WE DO NOW?

- Is the American god working for us?
- Will we humble ourselves and acknowledge that we are incapable of saving ourselves?
- Will we choose to "lose our lives" in order to discover what life really is?
- Will we meditate on what we've heard?
- Will we take a step of faith and believe in and act on what Jesus has done for us?