If All Religions Are Basically the Same?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 October 2025

Preacher: Bob Akroyd

[0:00] Derek, how long have we known each other? When did you first start coming to Beclu age three? Four maybe? Yes, Derek and I go back a long way. When I first started going to Beclu, I wasn't a Christian. I then became a Christian, having read the Bible, coming to hear more about Jesus.

And tonight I'm really excited to speak on this topic because the question that I was asked might be easily asked and easily answered. Are all religions pretty much the same? Now if you were to take a world religions class or buy a book on world religions, you would definitely get chapters or lectures on the big five.
Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism. Any course in world religions would capture those five. You might have eight. You might include Jainism, Sikhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism.
Again, the list becomes a bit more confusing because some of these are more, strictly speaking, world philosophies rather than world religions. But you get the idea. You could have a course and week one you look at Hinduism, practice, belief, etc.
You could look at Islam and you could look at Christianity. And Christianity is one of many subjects. But I'd like to suggest this, that Christianity is not a world religion.
[1:29] That all the other world religions are the same, but Christianity isn't one of them. I remember very early when I was teaching at Edinburgh Theological Seminary, we had a guest speaker.

He said this, world religions and world philosophies tend to identify the major problems as those things that are outside of us.
That's where the problems are, outside. Whereas the solution to those problems largely is within us. The speaker went on to say, Christianity is completely different.
Christianity says the main problems of this world are within us, whereas the solution must be outside of us.
So if you want me to answer the question, are all religions basically the same? I would say yes. Because all world religions at their heart are human effort, human action, human determination.
[2:36] What must I do for God? Now you could look at that from a Hinduism point of view or an Islam point of view, Judaism, Buddhism, etc. Whereas Christianity is not that.

Tim Keller makes this distinction between Christianity and religion. Religion is those things that you are meant to do, those things that you are not meant to do, those rites or rituals that you are meant to take part in, as if by some combination of what you do and what you don't do, some combination of personal and public, that with that combination you will achieve enough.
You will earn enough merit or whatever it might be. But Christianity is not about that. Christianity is not what you can do for God.
Christianity is not what we must do for God. But Christianity at its foundation is this. This is a redemptive faith. This is not what we do for God.
This is what God does for us. And that distinguishes Christianity from every world religion, every world philosophy, which tends to place the emphasis on you or me.
[3:52] But you see, our shoulders are not wrong. We cannot carry that weight. We cannot bear that burden. We cannot achieve those demands, whatever the demands are.

Because you might say that the ethics of various religions and philosophies are roughly the same. Roughly. There's going to be emphasis upon being a good neighbor, being a good husband if you're married, good wife, good parents, etc.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-09 10:12:31

So there's a lot of shared ethics. But what happens when you aren't a good husband or a good wife? What happens when you're not a good parent or a good child?
What happens when you get it wrong? I don't know about you, but that's my category. I get it wrong and I continue to get it wrong. 32 years along the line of being a Christian.
I find it difficult to keep the law of God. I know it better. And I often read in Romans 7 that the good that I wish to do, that is what I don't do.
[4:55] And the bad, that which I wish to avoid, those are the things that I so often do. Now, world religion will tell you, try harder. Do better. Stop doing the bad.

Start doing the good. But there's no strength. There's no power. There's no capacity. There's no ability. We encounter on the pages of the book of Acts this remarkable miracle.
A man who was lame never walked. Now, in that age, if you can't walk, you can't work. If you can't work, you can't earn money. So the only way that you can support yourself is through begging.
And that's exactly what this man did. He was placed at a good pitch. There's a lot of coming and going. Peter and John encounter him, and he's hopeful.
He's hopeful he's going to get something from them. And he does. But he doesn't get what he was expecting because they say, look, we don't have silver and we don't have gold.
[5:55] So this sounds like a very disappointing start to a conversation. But what I have, I give you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.

It's not what Peter can do. It's not what John can do. It's not what they can do as a combined team. But it's the name of Jesus that is powerful. Now, the word supernatural is somewhat unhelpful.
But it is accurate in the sense that the Christian faith is supernatural. It is above our ability to understand. It's above our ability to replicate.
You see, the Bible itself, we believe that God speaks in the Bible, that he speaks through the Bible, that he is a communicating God who has recorded for us these events, these miracles, these sermons for our benefit and blessing.
And not only is the Bible the word of God, but the Bible does the work of God. When the word goes out, it accomplishes God's purpose. I don't know how he does it, but he does.
[7:01] So this morning I was speaking to 19 guys in one of the services, nine in another. I was in Polworth and there was a larger crowd there. And at each of these occasions, the Bible was read.

I have no idea what the impact will be. But the Bible tells me that it's impossible that nothing will happen. When God's word goes forth, something occurs because he promises to accompany his word with his presence and with his power.
So the name of Jesus is powerful. And the name of Jesus is not just a descriptor. Like my name is Robert John Aykroyd. That's my first name, my middle name, my last name.
The name, when we speak about the name of God or the name of Jesus, includes everything. Not just how we address him. Not just how we identify him. But the name includes the nature, the character, the power, the authority, the majesty, the glory.
So when the name of Jesus is invoked, watch out. Because you are invoking him. What he has done. Who he is. And this is that distinction between religion, what we can do for God, and Christianity, what God has done for us.
[8:17] I used that word earlier, redemption. Redemption is the payment of a price. Those of us that are a bit older here will remember that you used to get soda or juice in thick glass bottles.

Iron brew, red cola, whatever the cost was. Let's say 69 pence. You would have to give an extra 20p. And that was a deposit. And when you finished the bottle, you took the bottle back to the vendor.
I mean, for young people, it sounds so ancient. But you would take the bottle back. And the vendor, the shopkeeper, would give you 20p back because you're returning the bottle. He's redeeming the bottle.
He's paying something to get it back. The Christian faith is God redeeming a people. A people that are so numerous you can't count them. And a people that are so diverse that they're from every tribe, tongue, and nation.
They're from the north and the south and the east and the west. And in this room, we are illustration of that fact. We come from different places. We have different cultures. We might have different first languages.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-09 10:12:31

[9:17] But we have been brought together by God. So God has paid a price. Jesus Christ has lived. He's died. He's risen again.

And then when Peter and John, you would think that this great miracle done in the name of Jesus would have earned them great accolades, earned them great praise and plaudits.
No. They're arrested. And why are they arrested? Because they are proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. When I first became a Christian, I was struck by the Bible and by the sermons I was hearing and by the conversations that I had with Christians that we constantly came back to Jesus.
We came back to who this Jesus is. We came back to what Jesus did. We came back to his life. We came back to his death. We came back to his resurrection.
It almost seemed repetitious, constantly returning to him. They were proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. And it landed Peter and John in jail.
[10:27] And the high priests, they were in a quandary. What are we going to do here? We've had a great miracle. Nobody can deny the miracle. The lame man, the paralyzed man is walking. And how can we deal with this problem?

Because not only is the lame man walking, but we've got a couple of guys here who are claiming that it's because of Jesus Christ that this man walks. When Peter and John were asked to explain themselves, rulers and elders of the people in chapter 4, verse 8, if we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple or a blamed man and are asked how he was healed, then know this.
You and all the people of Israel, it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.
He, Jesus, is the stone you builders rejected who has become the capstone. The rulers, the authorities said we don't need Jesus.
He's surplus to requirements. I don't know if you've ever made something like a flat pack Ikea bookcase. So often my experience has been when I complete the assembly, there are parts left over.
[11:46] And they probably shouldn't be left over. They should be somewhere in the bookshelf. Somewhere in the cabinet. And probably because they're not there, the cabinet has become a bit less stable because of their absence.

But you see, Jesus is described here as the cornerstone or the capstone. The stone that is essential to the integrity or stability of a building. And the builder said, we don't need that stone. We don't need that one. When in fact, without Jesus, nothing will stand. Nothing will be stable. He is the capstone. And then Peter goes on to say, salvation is found in no one else.
The Bible is unflinching in its presentation of the gospel. Salvation is found in no one else. There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.
Islam doesn't do it. Judaism doesn't do it. Judaism brings us to Jesus, but doesn't bring us up to Jesus, but doesn't bring us to Jesus. Buddhism doesn't do it.
[12:54] Hinduism doesn't do it. Jainism doesn't do it. Sikhism doesn't do it. Taoism, Shintoism, Confucianism. It doesn't do it. There is only one name.

And that name is powerful. That name is personal. And that name is Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Jesus, who is God's Savior. Jehovah saves.
The Lord saves. He is the anointed one. He is the one who has been promised of old. Remember in the Old Testament, there are three categories of people that were anointed. Kings were anointed. Prophets, spokesmen were anointed. And priests were anointed. Now, there are some examples in the Old Testament of one person having two offices. You could sometimes have a priest-king.
But no figure in the Old Testament ever had three offices. Prophet, priest, and king. Jesus is prophet. He is priest. He is king. He speaks the word of God.
[13:52] He offers sacrifice. And he's come to rule and to reign. That's why there's no other name. Because no one else has these credentials. No one else has these qualifications.

And notice that not only is the Christian faith about who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. Notice the power of what Jesus does in us. And this is where you and I come in.
Because in verse 13, when they saw the courage of Peter and John. And realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men. They were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-09 10:12:31

Unschooled, ordinary men. Another way of translating those words. Illiterate simpletons. They weren't trained.
They weren't learned. They weren't studied. They didn't study. They were not particularly bright. They were not particularly able. But their enemies took note that these men had been with Jesus.
[14:57] Just a few weeks earlier, was it not Peter? Who three times denied that he even knew Jesus. And now he's standing up. And he's saying, I'm afraid we cannot help but speak.

We can't help but speak what we have seen. What we have heard. What we have experienced for ourselves. So you see, the Christian faith is supernatural. Because Jesus is supernatural.
He's God and human. He does supernatural things. He forgives sin. He pays the debt that we have accumulated. But he works in us. He changes us from the inside out.
Now I work in a local prison. And there's a lot of good work that's done in the prison. There's addiction work. Helping people who are addicted to drugs or alcohol. There are 12-step programs. Programs, Narcotics Anonymous.
There's Alcoholics Anonymous. There's gambling. All of these different 12-step programs help people. Help people to get off certain addictions.
[15:55] But that only changes the outside. Jesus changes us from the inside out. He changes our heart. He changes our mind. He changed Peter. He changed John.

He changed the lame man who now walks. Because the next piece of testimony, verse 14, But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say.
Something's happening here. Up until the time of Jesus, the end of Jesus' ministry, when you're looking at Acts chapter 1, in Acts chapter 1 we are told that there are 120 people gathered for prayer.
120 is not a lot, but it's a significant number. By the end of Acts chapter 2, that number has risen to 3,000. Acts chapter 3, that number has risen to 5,000.
Something is happening here. Something is happening in the world today. The 21st century is the century where the greatest growth in the Christian church has taken place.
[16:57] In any century. It's also the century in which the greatest number of martyrs for the Christian faith have also been produced. Great growth and great suffering together.

So this faith which we confess, this Jesus whom we trust, does the impossible. He changes people's hearts. He changes people's lives. He changes us from the inside out.
So are all religions the same? Yes, they are. All religions that are man-made efforts to somehow please God, satisfy God's requirements, are basically the same.
Try harder, do better. Christianity is not a religion. Christianity is what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. And it bears no resemblance to Islam.
No resemblance to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism. Because what we profess is Jesus Christ and him crucified. He lived, he died, and he rose again from the dead.
[18:03] And that is the source of my hope. That is the ground of my relationship with God. What Jesus Christ has done for me.

Not what I do for Jesus. Not what I do for God. But what Jesus has done and is doing for me and in me and through me. So all other religions will tell you what you need to do.
Only Christianity tells you what God has done for you in Jesus. He's paid a price to set people free. To give new hope. To give new life.
To give new purpose. And to give new direction. I think it was J.I. Packer who said, Every Christian should say to themselves six things. Say to yourself, I'm a child of God.
God is my father. Jesus Christ is my elder brother. Heaven is my home. Every day is one day closer. And every Christian is my brother and my sister.
[19:08] I don't think any other world religion can come close to imitating those six sayings. Because you and I are now part of a new family. We have a new father in heaven.

We have a new savior who's also our elder brother. And we now have a relationship with each other through Jesus Christ. Christianity is not a world religion. Every other world religion is largely the same.
Christianity is completely different.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-09 10:12:31