

### **Life of Pi...or Pluralism? By Thailer Jimerson**

Have you seen the movie or read the book 'The Life of Pi'? The movie took home 4 academy awards this year, the most for the night, and it's being praised for its theme, message and visual effects among other things.

The movie, in a nutshell, is a parable on universalism or pluralism in religion. The story centers on a character named 'Pi' and one learns quickly the moral of the story due to the character's infatuation and belief in all conflicting religions at once (Hinduism, Islam and Christianity).

At the end of the movie, the film's punch line is revealed, in so many words, that all religions are parallel yet different stories about the same God – YOU just have to choose which is the better story. In other words, the film seeks to promote the popular idea that all different religious paths lead up the same mountain, to the same god. It's religious pluralism.

Is every religion equally valid?

Though the popular stance on issues of religion is to be all-inclusive (no one is excluded from the same party) – the thrust of American culture is pluralistic in thinking, and it all comes from a good place (from wanting to promote love and peace and acceptance) – my question this morning is: Is it right? Is it correct? Is this what the Bible teaches? Is this what God wants YOU to believe about him? That every religion is equally valid?

If we want to know what the Bible says, what the God of the Bible wants us to know: then we'll inevitably come to the conclusion that not all gods are equal; not every religion is equally valid.

Now let me appeal to you just for a moment, if I may – you might discard everything I'm about to say because you're telling yourself, "I know that there can't be just one religion, there just can't be" – and therefore nothing I say can persuade you otherwise.

But the belief that you have, the belief that you're running over and over again in your head takes just as much faith for you to believe than does what the Bible says. Think about it for a moment: You have no viable evidence why there can't be just one religion. You have to take that step by faith.

Now, hear me out regarding what the Bible claims for itself: God made it very clear how important it was for his followers to know that he alone was God by placing this command as the first

commandment of the ten: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery – You shall have no other gods besides me” (Ex.20:2, 3). The people of that time worshiped many gods, but the LORD made it clear: “I am the only one.” And the man Joshua made it abundantly clear to the people of Israel that they had a choice to make (along with all of us this day), he said: “Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh.24:14, 15).

We have to make this choice and I hope that if you lean more in the way of religious pluralism, you’ll make the choice to commit to the Lord. You see, the truth is, we might jump to that claim that “every religion is equally valid” because it sounds good, but I don’t think we’ve thought it out thoroughly to its logical end. Here’s what I mean: If you make the statement that every religion is equally valid (despite the MANY differences and contradictions between them), that could only be true if: 1) There is no God or 2) There is a God who doesn’t care what your doctrinal beliefs are. And if you notice, that is a very particular god. That is god you have created yourself, a god ‘who doesn’t care what your doctrinal beliefs are.’ It’s a god that you’re staking your whole life on – it takes some faith to follow that particular god.

Now I ask, what then is the difference between you and me? The whole reason why we propagate this god who is indifferent to doctrinal purity, in order to say that every religion is valid is to promote peace and acceptance and to keep down ‘narrow-minded’ Christians. Many are offended by Christianity because of the particular God Christians promote. But in truth, you have a particular god-this indifferent god- that you’re pushing and so do I – so what’s the difference? You see, with respect, it’s an inconsistent concept.

Jesus Christ, the son of God who came to earth to die for your sins, to die in your place so that God could forgive all your wrong doing and accept you in love to have fellowship with him for eternity – that Jesus said this: “I am THE way, THE truth, and THE life – no one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn.14:6).

Jesus claims exclusivity in religion.

He claims a single way, a single path.

He is not simply A way, he is THE way.

The only way to God above.

If your God does not look like Jesus, we're not worshiping the same God. But I beg that you would. Jesus also said, "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture" (Jn.10:9). The apostle Paul wrote, in 1Tim.2:5, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all..." The apostle John wrote to make things clearer, 1Jn.2:23, "No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also" and:

"And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1Jn.5:20, 21).