

Was Jesus' Extremism Justified?

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”⁽¹⁾

“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.”⁽²⁾

“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”⁽³⁾

These statements qualify as extremist. Jesus offers us no alternative to doing things his way. Was his extremism justified?

Additionally, Jesus' followers walked in his footsteps by presenting Christ as the only possible way to eternal life. “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”⁽⁴⁾ “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”⁽⁵⁾

Why did Jesus and his followers feel justified in demanding our complete obedience to Christ's teaching?

Jesus Understood Humanity's Hopelessness

The first humans started out great! They shared Creator's sinlessness, immortality, joy and ability to make right decisions. Like God, they imagined, planned, and carried out their ideas. Additionally, they lived in a non-threatening environment that encouraged fellowship with their Maker and fascination with the works of his hands. Every good and perfect gift awaited Adam and Eve and their offspring.

These two humans were not mere creatures of instinct. They were like their Creator—intelligent. Regrettably, Adam and Eve misused their ability to make decisions and choices. They allowed Satan's suggestions to infiltrate their minds with rebellion against God's laws, directives, and commands. When they acted on these anti-God ideas death, decay and rebellion against the Lord swept over them and the universe God placed under their control. Furthermore, there was no possible escape from the consequences of rejecting God. “Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men...”⁽⁶⁾

Humanity could not cure the problem it caused. All of us inherited the sinful nature of the first Adam. Good works failed to lift us out of our hopeless plight. Nevertheless, our loving Creator refused to abandon us to our helplessness!

Jesus Understood the Only Way Out of Humanity's Hopelessness

God designed laws to maintain creation. The law of gravity keeps everything in place. His laws bring about success for his handiwork. Therefore, God shares laws and commands that benefit us. Disobedience to these commands brings ruin.

Since "all of have sinned" ⁽⁷⁾ there was no way humanity could escape its enslavement to decay and death. In spite of this, our Creator understood how to bring us back into hopefulness.

First, God needed a genuine human who didn't inherit Adam's sinfulness. This requirement excluded all of us whose ancestry reaches back to the first man. On the other hand, God's ingenious mind brought a sinless human into the world through the virgin birth. He "was without sin." ⁽⁸⁾ because "in him was no sin." ⁽⁹⁾

Second, God needed a man completely victorious over every enticement and temptation to sin. Only Jesus satisfied this requirement since he was "tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin." ⁽¹⁰⁾ In fact, Jesus experienced temptations more often and more severe than the accumulated enticements all humans have encountered. But he remained faithful to God in every detail.

Extreme love motivated the eternal Christ, Creator of heaven and earth, to become a genuine human exposed to innumerable attacks on his sinlessness.

Jesus Understood the Extreme Cost for Rescuing Humanity

The Trinity created mankind knowing that humans could volunteer to rebel against God. Furthermore, they understood the cost of rescuing humanity from the consequences of rebellion.

In an instant smaller than we can imagine, the universal, eternal Christ relinquished all his rights and privileges. He became a two-cell human in Mary. The Maker of both the infinite and the infinitesimal was reduced to depending on the life of his mother. He went through gestation, the rigors of birth and faced the difficulties and hardships of life on earth.

Jesus did not experience ordinary attacks from Satan. The evil one desperately tried extraordinary measures to overcome Jesus' inbred sinlessness. The devil wants to rule planet earth and humanity, therefore he could not afford for Jesus to remain sinless. The tempter mounted a severe war on Jesus. Satan was certainly an extremist, because he knew he would lose everything if Jesus died without sin.

Jesus paid an incomprehensible price to deliver us from enslavement to Satan and sin. In view of this, his seemingly extreme demands for our obedience matched the cost of our freedom.

Footnotes:

1. John 14:6
2. Mathew 12:30
3. Matthew 10:37
4. Acts 4:12
5. Timothy 2:5
6. Romans 5:12
7. Romans 3:23
8. Hebrews 4:15
9. 1 John 3:5
10. Hebrews 4:15

