

John 14:1-6

Is it indeed true that Yeshua (Jesus) of Nazareth, says that He alone is the only means to the Father? What about all of the people on Earth, especially Jewish people, who died and never acknowledged Him?

Readers of the Gospels should be astute enough to know how that there will be those, who never specifically recognized Yeshua of Nazareth as the Redeemer, who will be present in the future Kingdom of God. Yeshua Himself made it clear that righteous figures like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matthew 8:11; Luke 13:28), will all be in the Kingdom (cf. Hebrews 11). It is often concluded that having lived in the time prior to the First Coming of the Messiah, that their trust in the One God and faith in His future promise of a Deliverer (i.e., Genesis 3:16), has been applied to their being reckoned as eternally His own.

The major question, to be sure, more involves those who have lived on the opposite site of the First Coming of the Messiah. If people fail to specifically recognize Yeshua of Nazareth as Lord, Savior, and Messiah—are they eternally condemned? Many well-meaning and sincere Bible readers, over the centuries, have actually had a problem with this conclusion. Yeshua the Messiah specifically declared in John 14:1-6,

“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also. And you know the way where I am going.’ Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?’ Yeshua said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:1-6, NASU).

The main statement, often spoken at funerals today, involves Yeshua’s assertion of how “I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2), with the *topos* in view likely a position or station of authority in the future Kingdom. More weighty is Yeshua’s imperative word, **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”** (John 14:6, NRSV). This is most often read as a statement that no human being can come to the Father, except by a person consciously acknowledging Yeshua as his or her personal Savior. Alternatively, though, some have approached John 14:6 from the perspective that no human being is able to come to the Father except through the saving work of Yeshua, and/or the effects of the saving work of Yeshua.

In a great deal of contemporary theological evaluation, three vantage points of having to weigh the statement of John 14:6 (among others) are usually found. **Universalism** argues for the eventual salvation and redemption of all persons (and entities?) in Creation, regardless of any active or passive participation in the good news or gospel. **Exclusivism** argues that direct acknowledgement of the good news or gospel, and the work of Yeshua, is required to receive forgiveness of sins and salvation. **Inclusivism** is an approach which often sees direct participation in the good news or gospel, and work of Yeshua, as being required for salvation—but also often concludes that God is

merciful toward His human creations, particularly those of other religions, who are sincere, who may never have heard the good news, and/or may have misunderstood the good news or were presented with the message poorly.

Reflective of an inclusivist view of salvation is Adam Hamilton, as noted in his 2014 book *Making Sense of the Bible*:

“It is possible...for God to give the gift of salvation to those who have sought to love and serve God even if they had never heard the gospel or had not fully understood or accepted it. He can give it to people who had heard the gospel but for whom it did not make sense, or who heard it presented poorly, or who were raised in another faith and simply could not imagine that the faith their parents had taught them was not true. This view is clear that Christ is the Savior of the world. But his salvation is given by God as God chooses.”¹

Concurrent with this, there are some in today’s Messianic Judaism who adhere to a concept known as **Unrecognized Mediation**. Essentially, the Jewish people throughout history have rejected a false, Christian version of the Messiah, which would require them to give up their Jewish heritage and being Israel. By Jewish people rejecting a Gentile Christian version of “Jesus,” and by affirming their Jewish heritage and HaShem’s promises with Israel, Torah faithful Jews have, perhaps, unknowingly benefitted from the mediation of the Jewish Messiah Yeshua in Heaven. Hence, many Jewish people throughout history will indeed find themselves eternally redeemed by the salvation activity of the Messiah. It cannot go without saying that Unrecognized Mediation is a problematic theological idea in many parts of today’s Messianic Judaism as well—particularly among those who have been strongly involved with Jewish outreach and evangelism—and has been condemned by a number of prominent Messianic Jewish leaders.²

We should affirm that Yeshua’s statement, “I am the way, the truth, and the life! No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6, TLV), is one of exclusivism, and that eternal salvation only comes through a conscious recognition of Him as Lord and Messiah. This should stir us to not only constantly pray for the salvation of the lost, but for our being active participants in evangelism and discipleship.

It is fair, however, that we also conclude how ultimately **only God knows who enters into God’s Kingdom**. There are many people, who have seemingly made some sort of confession of faith in Yeshua (Jesus), yet who are not spiritually regenerated and will be excluded from the Kingdom. There are likewise many people who make peace with their Creator in the final moments of their lives, and whose true heart condition can only be known by Him who knows all things. *Such persons could, surprisingly, be actually welcomed into His Kingdom*. And to be sure, there are people who curse God and His Messiah in the final moments of their lives, who we can safely assume will be excluded from His presence.³

¹ Adam Hamilton, *Making Sense of the Bible* (New York: HarperOne, 2014), 251.

² Consult Michael Wolf and Larry Feldman. (2009). *Unrecognized Mediation: A False Hope*. *International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues*. Available online via <<http://iamcs.org>>.

³ For a further discussion, consult the excursus, “Is Salvation Only Available for those who Profess Faith in Yeshua?”, appearing in the commentary *Romans for the Practical Messianic* by J.K. McKee.