

Bible Special 06-05-30a

This is Tuesday, the 30th of May, 2006. We continue tonight our study, looking at the book itself, the book we know as the Bible and our faith, the Christian faith, that is founded and based upon it. Let's take a moment as we begin to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God's Holy Spirit so that the facts that we learn and the scriptures that we look at tonight will be meaningful to our souls.

Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful that you are a God of truth and that through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, because of his work on the cross, we are made free by that truth. We pray that as we look at your word, as we look at our faith, as we look at the Lord Jesus Christ and his uniqueness and his deity and his humanity, and we see the attacks that have been made upon those simple truths that we will find ourselves strengthened and renewed and encouraged and motivated to pursue our faith in the time that remains to us in this life. We ask it in Jesus name.

Amen. We've, I think, and I hope you think that we've had a pretty good review of what the Bible is and how it came into our hands. Men prophesied in Old Testament days.

Men were carried along by God, the Holy Spirit. And when they wrote accounts down, God superintended in such a way that exactly what God wanted to say was expressed in writing, still reflecting the personality and the vocabulary and the time and the character of the writer. We have seen this in book after book.

We've seen Moses as he writes down the histories and edits from materials that he had access to while he was in the palace of Egypt. And later on from Mount Sinai and the history of taking the people all the way to the very edge of the promised land. And he wrote down Exodus, Leviticus numbers and Deuteronomy having completed Genesis.

Then you have the book of Joshua, and then you begin to have the historical books and the poetic books and the prophetic books of the Old Testament. And each of those books expresses not only God's complete and connected thought with regard to those subjects, but also reflect something of the man who wrote it. Same thing in the New Testament.

You have the gospel accounts. You have the letters of Paul. You have the letters of John and you have the letters of Peter and James and Jude.

And all of these books reflect the truth of God, the word of God, the inspired communication from God expressed through the personality and the craftsmanship of those writers. Well, it is unique. It is unlike anything, not only in the way it came to be, but in the content that it expresses.

And what we're going to do tonight is take a brief look at Christianity contrasted with the world's religions. And we're amazingly going to attempt to do that in only half an hour. And when we come back from the break, if we have successfully circumnavigated Judaism,

Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, et cetera, then we'll take a look at some of the things that claim to be Christianity and are not what we call loosely cults.

But let's begin by taking a look at if we're going to look at what is not Christianity, we have to have some sort of a reference point. What is Christianity? And I have some reference materials here, which will soon be in your hands. They're not here yet, but I have ordered for you a copy of these pamphlets that I have here.

I'm not a big pamphlet guy. I think in the history of our church, we've never had a pamphlet, but these are good. I've had them for 20 odd years and they still make them.

They're that good. They're still in print. And I've got a couple of bundles of these coming.

So hopefully Sunday ish, I'll be able to take each of these documents I have in my precious right hand and pass them along to you. They're called the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error 1 and 2. They came out back in the eighties, but they're a great summary of Christianity compared to, first of all, world religions. Actually, second of all world religions is number two.

And then pseudo stuff is in number one. And I will be referring to a few things. I'm not going to cover all of it because you'll have it and you can read it.

I'm also going to be referring to a great summary in a book by Fritz, I don't know how to say his last name. R-I-D-E-N-O-U-R. Ridenour or Ridenour, R-I-D-E-N-O-U-R.

This again is a book that came out in the seventies or actually it was copyright 67. It was revised in 79, which was a good year. But this has a great summary of some of the same things we're talking about.

And I'm just going to pick a few salient items out of this. But I suggest this is the first thing to try to really remember from our lesson tonight. You as a believer in the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error 1, the Lord Jesus Christ need to know what your faith is and you need to know what these other faiths are.

You need to know the difference. The name of this book by Ridenour, what's the difference? So what's the difference? And it's a great, it's a thin thing. This has only got 140 pages, but if a Mormon comes knocking at your door, if a Jehovah's Witness comes knocking at your door, if you find yourself in conversation with a Buddhist or a Hindu or a Muslim or a Jew of the Judaism variety, who's not a Christian, you ought to know the difference.

Why are you a Christian and not a Buddhist? Why are you a Christian and not a Muslim? Muslims seem to be taking over the world. They've already come to dominate more than 42 countries around the globe, Europe, the Middle East, Africa. They're down in Indonesia and the Far East.

Muslims are making as many converts or more than Christianity in the world today. And just as

a point of reference, when I was in Lebanon, there were two religions vying for the heart and soul of the country. One was Maronite Christianity, which is sort of a variation of Eastern Orthodox, which is itself sort of a weird kind of Catholicism.

So the Maronite Christians were one faction and the Muslims were the other. And you had both Sunni and Shia Muslims in Lebanon, hence the conflict. You had the Christian militia and you had the Muslim militias and they were at odds with one another.

I was there working with the Lebanese army, which also contained a lot of Maronite Christians. And they were decrying the fact that Christians believe in family planning, not anything illegal or untoward, but they are careful. They try to live within their means.

They try to limit the number of children that they have by natural means so that they don't overburden themselves. The Muslims, on the other hand, believe in having as many children as possible, irregardless of economic standing or anything else. And they by sheer force of numbers have taken over the country of Lebanon because the birth rate for Muslims is like three times what it is for Christians.

And so they've simply outpopulated them. And this is sort of a microcosm of what's happening around the world. Muslims are not only actively proselytizing and evangelizing for Islam, but they are also multiplying because in their faith it's the more the merrier.

So it's important to know what you're encountering in the world. It's not impressive. It doesn't reflect well on us as Christians and as representatives of Jesus Christ to be ignorant of the world and the other competing religions.

So what I want to do tonight is just give you a few of the essential differences, but you should get, as a believer, you should know at least get a book so you can look it up and know a few of the basic ideas in each of these religions and have them at your fingertips so that if you get in a conversation with someone and they say, well, my religion's as good as yours, you'll know why not. And heaven help us, if any of you all convert to some bizarre religion, I am just going to be devastated because you should know better. You should know why God's truth is in Christianity and it is reasonably clear to the nonpartisan observer.

Obviously nobody can prove things in the spiritual realm, but there are very good reasonable pieces of evidence for understanding why Christianity is in fact not only a way to eternal life, but the only way to eternal life. This is one of the major criticisms of course is that while Jesus says he's the only way and that's so exclusivist, that's so bigoted and prejudiced and unkind and unfair. The Jews, I've heard this argument made, you know, the Jews don't run around saying, well, our way is the only way.

It's just you narrow minded, dogmatic Christians that think your way is the only way and everybody else is headed for hell. You're just so mean and you're so hard hearted and cruel like we just got together as a committee and made it all up and said, well, let's have a religion

where everybody else goes to hell. We didn't make this up.

Well, let's begin. What are the essentials of Christianity? We have a term that we call orthodox. Orthodoxy is a term that you can probably figure out just by thinking about the word.

Orthos, what does an orthodontist do? How many of y'all have now or have had metal in your mouth? What did all of those braces do in your mouth? I know you have. What? You didn't raise your hand, Matt. What does all that metal in your mouth do? Straightens the teeth.

Orthos means straight. So orthodox, doxy has to do with, it's from the same root as doctrine. So it's straight doctrine, the straight scoop.

Orthodox, you're on the straight line, straight road, it's plum, it's square, it's horizontally, vertically, XYZ axis, all perfectly aligned. That's orthodox. Orthodox Christianity.

That's what we want to define. I'm going to give you one verse, and this is Fritz Ridenour does the same thing, but I would give you the same verse whether I read his book or not. And it's from 1 Corinthians chapter 15, 1 Corinthians 15, 3 and 4. Listen carefully.

Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. He was buried. He was raised again the third day, according to the scriptures.

That's 1 Corinthians 15, 3 and 4. Those two verses, those statements define orthodox Christianity. Listen carefully now, because there are three major points that you can make out of those statements. It's one sentence.

Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. He was buried and was raised on the third day according to the scriptures. There are three major points you can make out of that.

First of all, Jesus Christ, His person and His work. The name Christ, Christos in Greek, Mashiach in Hebrew, means the Anointed One. And the Bible defines the Mashiach, the Christ, the Anointed One, as the Son of God.

In ancient Near Eastern thinking, the son of something or someone is that thing. If you're a son of Belial, you're just like Belial. If you're the son of God, you're just like God.

So, these three major... If somebody says, well, so what do you think Christianity is anyway? What's the heart and the center of it? Well, what does the name tell you? What does Christian mean? What if I say Martian? What does Martian mean? Of or pertaining to Mars, right? So what does Christian mean? Of or pertaining to Christ. Christianity is all about Christ. Now, why is this important? I'm being a master of the obvious, aren't I? Why is it important? Anybody who starts talking to you about religion and goes off on some weird tangent, what about the heathen? What about the Chinamen that lived 4,000 years ago? I don't believe that there's a hell.

I don't think there were any miracles. I don't think God created the earth in six days. They get off on all these different tangents.

What is Christianity? If you want to talk about Christianity, what are you talking about? Christ. That's numero uno. That's number one.

The major point of Orthodox Christianity is Christ. Who is he and what did he do? That's why we're in 1 Corinthians 15. Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures.

So Orthodox Christianity addresses itself to the person and work of Christ, first and foremost. Secondly, what is the nature of man? What is humanity? What are people like? Christ died for what? For our benefit. Christ died for our wonderful future.

Christ died for our blessing. What does it say? Christ died for our sins. This is the nature of man.

The nature of man is he is a sinner. He is in a lost and hopeless condition. He's fallen.

He's corrupt. He's got a problem he cannot solve on his own. Now that says a lot because there are many religions who say, oh, man can solve his problems on his own.

Many philosophies, many social programs are founded on the assumption that man can solve his own problems, which are rooted and grounded in sin. And the Bible says you can't solve them. They're unsolvable.

It's like a blind man trying to cure his own blindness by hitting himself in the head with a hammer and hoping that the jolt will awaken his dead optic nerves or something, put eyes where there are no eyes in the socket. It's just not possible. We cannot retrieve our innocence the way Adam was originally created.

We cannot. There's a song, Stephen Stills used to sing this song about sticking daisies in the end of the rifles. It was an anti-Vietnam War song.

He said, we've got to get back to the garden. Sorry, Steve, you can't get back to the garden. Not on human steam, not on human strength will never happen.

So Orthodox Christianity, point one, what is it? I want to hear you say the person and work of Christ. Point one, Orthodox Christianity, what is it? The person and work of Christ. You are an Orthodox Christian.

You believe in the person and in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Point two is the lost and hopeless condition of man. So when I say point one, you're going to say the person and work of Christ.

When I say point two, you're going to say the lost and hopeless condition of man. Okay. There's only three parts.

So everybody's going to pay. This is going to be like a hundred percent. Nobody can even set the curve on this.

So Orthodox Christianity, what is point two? Lost and hopeless condition of man. Now, first Corinthians 15, three and four. I'm going to read it to you again.

Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. He was buried. He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures.

You've got Christ in there. You've got our sins, mankind. What's the other thing prominently mentioned in that sentence? The scriptures.

Point three of Orthodox Christianity is the truth and reliability of the Bible. The truth and reliability of the Bible. Each of our Orthodox Christianity points has two features, doesn't it? What is number one? The person and say it out loud now.

This is class participation night. What is the first point of Orthodox Christianity? Person and work of Jesus Christ. What is the second point of Orthodox Christianity? Man's lost and hopeless condition.

And what is the third? The truth and reliability of the scriptures. Okay. That defines Christianity.

Anything else you want to say about Christianity will fall under one of those three headings, either directly or indirectly. That's what makes you a Christian and the Muslim down the street, not or the Buddhist or the Hindu. And in some cases, people who think they're Christians like Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, and in some cases, Catholics.

So that's our benchmark. That's our point of reference. Okay.

Now, anything that I present to you tonight from another religion, you don't have to wait for me to make the point. You can start spinning your mental wheels and say, all right, now, Buddhists believe this. Hindus believe this.

Jews who are not Christians believe this. Which point of my Orthodox Christianity does that violate? Are they not accepting the truth and reliability of the scripture? Are they not acknowledging the lost and hopeless condition of man? Or are they not acknowledging the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ? Every other religion is going to violate one or more of those tenets, often all of them. All right, that's Orthodoxy.

So now let's start with something easy to analyze. I'm going to get my little pamphlet of world religions and I open it up. And right next to the beautiful gold reflecting the glory of God there that represents Christianity, you have the brown of Buddhism.

Now, these pamphlets, which you are going to have in your hands very shortly, address the differences in Christianity and these other religions under several different headings. Salvation and the afterlife. Which of our three points of Orthodoxy would that fall under? Salvation, person and work of Christ, and lost and hopeless condition of man, right? Lost and hopeless condition.

You need salvation. Where does salvation come from? Person and work of Jesus Christ. How do we find it out? Truth and reliable holy scriptures.

Buddhists don't think sin is a problem. Buddhists aren't worried about sin. Buddhists think the big crime for humanity is ignorance.

The two syllable word from Oklahoma, ignorance. I-G-N-E-R-N-C-E, ignorance. That's what they see as the problem with man elevating himself up into the ethereal levels.

The world and yourself, if you're a Buddhist, they don't really exist. This is just a fantasy. It's a construct.

It's actually sort of shades of Gnosticism. The Gnostics don't believe the material world really counts for anything either. But the Buddhists think that the world and you, yourself, it's only because you believe it that it's there.

That's why they meditate. Because if you can get past that belief and say, yeah, I'm not really here. This isn't really happening.

You can achieve that sort of Zen state of meditation where nothing matters because nothing's real. I just made a terrible mistake. I deeply hurt the feelings of my beloved spouse or my beloved parent or my beloved child.

But you know what? I'm going to meditate. It's not real. They're not real.

I'm not real. The world is not real. What I said is not real.

I feel fine. That's how Buddhism works in a nutshell. It's the ultimate act of denial.

Nothing is real. Now, there are different flavors of Buddhism and we're going to talk a little bit about Buddhism first. I can see already we're not going to make it through all of these in the next eight minutes or so.

But we're going to cover these world religions tonight for sure so that you know what they are. Next time you meet a Buddhist, you can say, hi there. Oh, I'm sorry.

You're not really there. The doctrine of Buddhism is summed up in four major points. They're what they call the four noble truths.

Life is basically suffering and dissatisfaction. You haven't elevated your mind and that's why you're suffering and dissatisfied because you believe that all of this stuff is really going on. The reason people suffer is they crave.

They're looking around at material things and they want them. See the car, want the car. See the game, want the game.

See the antique, want the antique. Have I hit your thing yet? See the pet, want the pet. See the

new computer, want the new computer.

See the new clothing style. See the new hairdo. See the new makeup.

Fill in whatever it is that tempts you. Buddhists say, aha, that's your problem. You want stuff.

There's nothing wrong with wanting stuff. Wanting stuff is great. It's if you let that become the defining principle of your thinking.

If you obsess on a thing, if you don't have a perspective, if you don't say, well, that'd be great, but I can't afford it so, and then it drifts out of your mind. So number one, life is basically suffering and dissatisfaction. The origin of that suffering is craving and grasping.

Cessation of suffering is possible through cessation of craving. That's the third noble truth. I've got to get rid of the cravings.

I could weigh 90 pounds if I just didn't crave food. Got to get rid of the craving. The fourth noble truth, the way to cease craving and attain escape is by being a Buddhist.

Be a Buddhist and escape the crave. Because if you're a Buddhist, then you can follow the noble eightfold path. You got your four noble truths to tell you, you need to be a Buddhist.

And once you are a Buddhist, then you follow the eightfold path. So, how do you get rid of craving and attain escape? Well, and this basically involves meditating yourself into the twilight zone, just meditate yourself. You got to remove yourself from contact with stuff and you won't crave it.

Therefore, everything will be good. Everything will be fine. It's not real anyway.

How do you not crave stuff? It isn't real. That nice, big, red, shiny new car isn't really real. And I'm not really real.

So, why would my unreal self want to drive around in that unreal car? That's just unreal. There are three main schools of Buddhism. The one that people have heard the most of is Zen Buddhism.

But there's a couple of other kinds. There's Mahayana. And monks used to sit around and say, well, I've got to deliver myself from these cravings.

And then they said, well, that's really selfish. You're just sitting there trying to get yourself away from these cravings and the suffering that is attendant with them. You ought to be more humanitarian.

You ought to try to help other people. Instead, you're sitting there trying to lift yourself out of your misery by getting rid of your cravings, by being a Buddhist and following the eightfold path. And so the Mahayanas said, well, the Buddhist monks have got to do more than sit there

and starve and try to get holy.

They need to be helping other people. And so Mahayana kind of became sort of the missionary thing. And they said, well, the Buddha who had all these good ideas about getting away from the craving.

Well, there's many Buddhas. So this is the idea. What they want to do is they want to escape into that actual realm of non-being, and that's called nirvana.

Nirvana, literally in the language of India, means blowing out. They want to get to the big blowout. You blow out the candle.

You puff out a flame. We get candles burning over here. After everybody leaves, Becca is going to come over here and she's going to blow them out.

She's going to puff them out. And that's nirvana. That's what nirvana means in Hindi or whatever the language originally was.

Nothing can be said about life except that it's transcendent. Nirvana, you've just gone, you've transcended reality. Fire is real.

You stick your hand in and it burns. When you puff out the flame, what happened to it? Well, it's ascended to something that's transcendent. Where did the fire go? It went to nirvana.

It blew out. So, yay for Buddhism. Now, they have precepts.

They have some morals that they're supposed to follow. Not supposed to kill, not supposed to steal, not supposed to do bad sexual things, not supposed to gossip and say bad things, and not supposed to do drugs and alcohol. Those are the big five precepts in Buddhism.

And chunk in some money to keep the monks going. Have an offering for the monks. So, that's Buddhism in a nutshell.

Next time you meet a Buddhist, you'll know what they're trying to achieve. You'll know the precepts you're trying to live by. Don't offer a Buddhist a beer.

He's not supposed to drink it. Don't try to get him to join your thieving gang because he's not supposed to steal. Can't kill anybody.

He's not supposed to say wrong things. He's not supposed to lie and they're not supposed to gossip. If you catch a Buddha gossiping, just say, Hey, wait a minute.

Didn't the Buddha say you're not supposed to gossip? And that should shut him right up. The only way Buddhists can help their fellow man is by showing an example of dedication to meditation and self-denial. Got to quit those cravings.

Got to ascend into the nirvana by getting loose from the material world. That's Buddhism in a

nutshell. Now, we're going to pause and take our break, but be thinking during the break.

Now, I've got my Orthodox Christianity with the Lord Jesus Christ, man, and the scriptures. How does Buddhism compare? And when we come back, I'll give you a few suggestions. And I'm not just pitching Christianity and saying boo on Buddhism.

Well, I am sort of, but I'm going to give you some reasons why. Reasonable reasons. An objective person would come and say, Well, here's a manifest difference.

So see if you can figure any of those out before we come back. Let's pause and take our break.