

Bible Special 06-05-30b

Let's resume our study now, taking a look at the religions of the world that assume they are in competition with Christianity or offer themselves as alternatives to faith in God through Christ. We looked at Buddhism. I had a question about the three different kinds of Buddhism, and you'll have this when you get your folders here before long, but Mahayana is the derivative of Buddhism that starts with the idea that you can sit there and meditate, but you're not helping anybody.

So you ought to do something a little more humanitarian. And so they decided that there are lots of Buddhas and lots of bodhisattvas, heroes of the faith, who reach the point of nirvana, but they didn't enter it because they wanted to wait for the rest of mankind. You know, I've meditated my way up.

I see the gate of nirvana, but hey, what's the point of going in by myself? I'm such a big-hearted guy. Let me turn around and try to drag all of humanity up to nirvana with me. And so they are the beneficent, self-denying, sort of a Buddha-like Buddhist that has a heart for their fellow man.

This is Mahayana Buddhism. You also have the Theravada, which is T-H-E-R-E-V-A-D-A, the Theravada, which places emphasis on the individual monk who develops his self-control and meditates, and meditates himself right out of his little grasping, corrupt, carnal self. This gets rid of all of his little perverse longings.

And these are the ones that get deeply into meditation. By the way, keep an eye on meditation. What does a Christian meditate on? We meditate on God's Word, right? Our Psalm 1 memory verse.

Now, really, meditate in its original sense had the idea of concentration on a thing. We concentrate on the Word of God. It has content.

This is like studying any subject. If you're interested in ham radio, you read up on it, you learn about ham radio. If you're interested in computers, you scan for information, you keep up.

If you're interested in politics, if you're interested in history, if you're interested in animals, if you're interested in cars, or motorcycles, or chia pets, or whatever it might be, you go out there and find information, and you concentrate on it. And you have an influx of information that you synthesize, and you compare, and you collate, and you categorize, and you systematize, and you prioritize, and you weigh, and you draw conclusions. And this is an active, engaged process.

You're gripping firmly the neck of reality when you do that kind of thing in a particular subject area. Meditation of the Buddhist type, and some other religions, is a disconnection from reality. And that kind of meditation is dangerous because, and there's a great book by the way that Dave Hunt helped bring to press, it's called *Escape Into the Light*.

And it is the story of a man who, in his meditative attempts to rise above the mundane, contacted the demon world, and started having demons pull up a chair and have chats with him, and fill his head with a lot of satanic nonsense. And it took the work of God's Holy Spirit, convicting him of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He began to realize that he was talking to genuine, dark forces of evil, and he rejected that, and he was looking for something else.

And God came, and he got saved. And he got saved, he started looking for God before he ever saw a Bible, before he ever heard the Gospel. He rejected the evil, and he said, there's got to be something better than this.

And he basically just cried out, and he said, God, if you're out there, help me. And God sent the truth to him. And now he's a Christian, and he's an evangelist.

And he started out as a very committed priest of darkness, meditating. So meditation, in its serious forms and in its deep forms, can open your mind up to spiritual forces that you don't want to be contacting. Well, Buddhists are urged to follow the five precepts, kind of a half of the Ten Commandments.

Don't lie, don't kill, don't commit adultery, don't do drugs and alcohol, and don't bear false witness. They follow sort of moderate asceticism. Do you know what asceticism is? An ascetic, A-S-C-E-T-I-C, that's self-denial.

If you're living an ascetic life, you're saying, well, no air conditioning, I'll only change my clothes once a month. And so you just deny yourself. You sit like Gandhi by the side of the road and just starve and wait for others to take care of you, you just deny earthly pleasures and so on.

So a lot of the Buddhists try to live a moderate form of asceticism. By the way, you find that the Amish and some of the people of that kind, the Luddites and the, what were the ones that were up there in Claremont, they weren't Amish, they were Mennonites. And when they eschew modern conveniences and they say, we're going to ride around in our black buggy with the big orange triangle on the back and a horse drawn, that's a form of asceticism.

In their hearts think, this self-denial makes me holy. And that's asceticism, that's a form of asceticism. Some people would literally take whips, they call it flagellation, where they take a whip and they would say, oh, I'm unworthy, I'm unworthy, and they would just whip themselves.

This has got to be one of the stupidest things man ever invented. Because, yes, you're a sinner and yes, you're in big trouble, but whipping yourself is just silly, it doesn't do any good, you're just making matters worse. And you see, they would just whip themselves and break the skin and bleed and they would say, oh, you know, God has to be impressed with me now.

That's asceticism, in fact, that's worse, that's like, what's the name for that? Where you hurt yourself on purpose. Masochistic, that's what it is. Buddhists, when you talk about worship in Buddhism, they don't really pray, there's nobody to pray to, although some of the Buddhists

think that, they all recognize that Buddha was a man and he, you know, Siddhartha and so on, but he kind of, he died, but some of them think he's sort of, his spirit lives on.

The man is dead, but his spirit lives on, but they don't really pray to Buddha. If you ever see a Buddhist in front of a statue, they're just meditating, they're saying, no, I don't want that statue, no, no, they're just meditating, they're using it as an excuse to think deep Buddhist thoughts, but they're not, they don't really worship anything because there's nothing to worship. Now, let me find the other side of my tricky thing here.

Buddhism is a derivative religion, sort of like Christianity, secular people say, well, Christianity is an offshoot of Judaism or it's a product, it's an outgrowth of the monotheistic faith of the Jews in the Old Testament, which is true. It's actually in line with Old Testament faith in God and modern Judaism is an offshoot. From our point of view, when you look at the continuity of the Old Testament and the New Testament, it is the secular Judaism and the rabbinic Judaism that doesn't recognize Christ that is the sad offshoot of what is a continuous revelation of God from Genesis through Revelation.

But of course, the Jews would say the opposite. Oh, no, we're the true faith and you're the offshoot. And we've already covered some of the reasons why we know that's not the case.

But Buddhism similarly started out from Hinduism, which we'll talk about in a moment. Hinduism has been around since six or seven hundred B.C. And in the sixth century B.C., this fellow named Gautama, G-A-U-T-A-M-A, he was a Hindu and they were just godless philosophers, Hindu philosophers. He was the enlightened one.

Gautama became the Buddha and Buddha means the enlightened one. He got a flash. And you'll find that a lot of these religions and a lot of these cults, somebody gets a big flash from the sky and they've got the scoop.

They've got the big noise. If it's Joseph Smith with the Book of Mormon, if it's Mohammed with his Gabriel filling his head with stuff, or if it's Gautama, Buddha, they suddenly get this illuminating flash. Now this goes, what are our points of Orthodox Christianity again? Number one is person work of Christ.

Number two is fallen hopeless condition of man. Number three is truth and reliability of the scripture. So when you find the truth coming in some other form, that violates number three, doesn't it? It's not scripture.

By the way, what separates scripture as writing? And this is review. We've talked about this the last couple of times we met. What's unique about scripture in terms of comparing it to Hindu literature or Buddhist literature or Muslim literature? What's unique? What's unique about the messengers who brought that message? They were authenticated in their day by supernatural works of God.

Now you can't prove anything with that because people say that's just made up. But the people

at the time, the Israelites never questioned what Moses brought down from Sinai. You know why? He was the world's first human nightlight.

He glowed in the dark. He came down from Sinai. His face was shining like a lamp.

They couldn't even look at him. They said, Moses, put a bag over your head. We can't look at you.

And Moses had to walk around with a bag on his head until that glory would fade because he had been up there. And the Israelites said, you know, he's up there talking to God and we don't want to go anywhere near that place. Look at him.

He's luminescent. When the prophets of God like Ezekiel or Elijah or Samuel and these other prophets, when they would bring the word of God, there were supernatural signs. Samuel predicted the future, predicted the future for Eli about his sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

The works that surrounded the Old Testament prophets authenticated their message and they were supernatural. This is why people say, well, you know, you've got a Bible full of miracles. How come no miracles are happening today? God's the same yesterday, today and forever.

How come God did miracles yesterday? He's not doing them today. What's the purpose of miracles? It authenticates the messenger. The message is complete, no new messengers, no new miracles.

Did Joseph Smith ever work a miracle? No, he did not. Did Buddha ever work a miracle? No, he did not. Did any of these other messengers, Mohammed, any of these other guys work a miracle? Raise somebody from the dead, call down fire from heaven and take the top off of a mountain, part a giant body of water, walk on top of said body of water? No.

God authenticates the messengers with supernatural signs and people who are eyewitnesses and are contemporary observers. Did you ever notice in the Bible, they make all kinds of accusations about Jesus. They say you're in league with Satan, you're blasphemer, you're a winebibber, you're this, you're that, the other.

There's not a single accusation in the Bible that says you're not really raising the dead. You're not really healing the blind. You're not really making lame people walk.

Nobody made that accusation. You know why? Because he absolutely was. In Acts, when Peter makes the first speech on the day of Pentecost, he says, you remember the Christ that was here not too long ago? And you remember all those works that he did, these things which you all have seen? Peter just says, you all know what I'm talking about.

And nobody says, no, we don't, because they all did, eyewitnesses at the time. Now, unless God is going to keep people alive and you've got a 2,000 year old man sitting in a cave over there in Israel, and we say, hey, 2,000 year old man, did you see Jesus do the miracles? He says, yes, I

did. That's ridiculous, right? So why should somebody expect today that any higher standard of proof than what we already have? Contemporary witnesses acknowledged that these supernatural things happened with Jesus and with the apostles.

That's why the Gospels and the book of Acts and the letters of Paul were treated as scripture and not thrown out like all of the other bogus writings in those days. Because people said, I don't know where this gospel of Thomas came from, but this gospel of Luke, Luke is a companion of the apostle Paul. And Paul says, Luke is good to go.

So what Luke writes, that's good enough for me. And here's the apostle Paul healing people. And here's the apostle Paul giving this message from God.

So whenever you hear about the Buddha and he had this big flash of light, ask yourself, did God authenticate the Buddha? Did the Buddha raise somebody from the dead? Did the Buddha heal the blind? Did the Buddha straighten out a withered limb? Did the Buddha tell a lame man, I don't have any money to give you, but what I do have, here it is, stand up and walk. And there he goes. God authenticates the messenger.

That's how we know our scriptures are unique. And we trust the eyewitnesses at the time. Well, Buddhism was okay at the time, 600 BC, but it has changed a lot because it didn't have an authoritative writing.

Buddha didn't sit down and write the book of Buddha. You can't go down to the store and say, give me the book of Buddha and they hand you this big fat tome from 600 BC. It didn't happen.

Buddha said some stuff and people were impressed, but Buddhism has evolved and has gotten further and further from Hinduism and has developed a lot of stuff over the centuries. But eventually, it became a missionary religion and Buddhists tried to make other Buddhists because the more Buddhists there are, the more monks get paid. So the Mahayanas, they're the ones that developed the cosmology and they said there are all of these little bitty Buddhas floating around in addition to the big Buddha.

One big Buddha, lots of little Buddhas. They had a pantheon of semi-deities. This is the kind of Buddhism that you find in the Far East, in China, in Korea, in Japan.

The Buddhists that you find over there, they think there's all kinds of different wattages of luminaries in their little pantheon. You've got your 40-watt Buddhas and your 60-watt, your 100-watt, your 500-watt deities, so to speak. The Theravadas that I mentioned earlier, this is more of the self-denial road.

They're the more Spartan, oh, let me walk on a bed of hot coals and lay on nails and not eat for a week and try to meditate myself out of my misery. And you get these people in Sri Lanka. Lots of Sri Lankans in Lebanon, by the way.

They're the put-upon dregs of the earth that do all the labor nobody else wants to do in the

Middle East. But the Burmese and in Southeast Asia, down there around Vietnam and Cambodia and Thailand, the Buddhists down in Thailand, they are of the Theravada bit. And there's offshoots of them here in the West as well.

There is no god in Buddhism. And Buddhism doesn't try to explain where man and where creation came from, and they don't try to explain what happens after you die necessarily. It's all about this life.

You just got to get by in this life. That's the big idea. The Zen Buddhism is basically, you may have heard of this book, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* that a guy wrote.

I'm trying to find his name. Anyway, that's sort of a modern popularized form of Buddhism. Well, what is the problem? Buddhism does not recognize that man has a fundamental sin problem.

It just says man has a fundamental misery problem. And you got to enlighten yourself. You got to achieve wisdom and higher states of consciousness to get out of your misery.

And you're just miserable because you want stuff. Quit wanting stuff and your problems are solved. It's kind of a thou shalt not covet by meditation.

That's Buddhism in a nutshell. There is no god. There is no Christ.

There is no redemption because there is no sin. So what is the power that transforms the corrupt human soul in Buddhism? Distraction. I just distract myself from my problem.

I'll think about something else. There's a sense in which Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* is kind of a Buddhist. I'll think about that tomorrow.

I'm going to push that out of my mind. I think about something. I'm going to think happy thoughts.

Norman Vincent Peale, the power of positive thinking. Dale Carnegie, how to win friends and influence people. Think positive.

You got to good vibes. Put out good vibes. All of this has its hooks and its roots in Buddhism.

Think good thoughts. Everything will get better. That's Buddhism.

Let's talk about Hinduism, which is the sort of fermenting ground from which Buddhism sprang. Fourth century BC, a guy named, well, you have Indian traditions. You have lots of these same traditions that brought forth Buddhism are floating around in India.

And it doesn't really matter if you want to believe in God as a Hindu, that's fine. If you want to believe in many gods, it's fine. If you want to believe in no gods, it's fine.

If you want to believe in many gods, that's fine. You see a parallel with Buddhism there. You

have a lot of Hindus who believe in a complete continuity between your inmost self and God who is out there.

You're part of the great oneness of the universe. You're one with the universe. You're one with God.

God is one with you. You're a Hindu. Everything is connected.

We're all part of the big glowing nebulous unknown God. There are some varieties of it. Orthodox Hindus can either be atheists or pious worshippers.

They can either be self-sacrificing, self-negating aesthetics, like some of the Buddhists are. Or they can be men of the world, indulging in the earthly pleasures. It's just a... You can be a Hindu and just do almost anything you want.

It's all one. We're all... It's all part of the big pie in the sky. There is the Sikhs, the S-I-K-H.

You've heard of the Sikhs? It's a branch of Hinduism. And they try to hook together Hinduism and Islam. They want to be Hindu-Moslems or Moslems or something.

I don't know what you call a combination of a Moslem and a Hindu. I think Moslems is probably good. They want to be a Moslem.

Those are the Sikhs. It's never been a missionary religion. They never tried to proselytize and get other people to join.

Until just this last hundred years or so. So, Hindus, if you want to worship gods, you can take your pick. There's a bunch of them.

Chief among the gods is Shiva, S-H-I-V-A. A fierce figure who is both a creator and a destroyer. Kind of the sort of the Calvinist god in a sense.

Creates and destroys. And also, what you strive for when you meditate, you say, well, you know, I'd really like to get up to the Shiva level of of having a creative side and an eliminating side. Eliminate the bad, create the good.

Tip everything over to the positive side. Vishnu is another one. Vishnu has been incarnated many times through history to bring the message of deliverance to man.

So, Vishnu is like a perpetual Jesus that just keeps coming back. It's like a bad penny or something. Vishnu shows up, gives the message, then he disappears.

Then a couple hundred years later, here's Vishnu back again with the same stuff. And he just kind of comes and goes like karma chameleon. He comes and goes.

That's what boy George was singing about, Vishnu. Vishnu's incarnations are called, now pay attention, you know what, when Vishnu shows up, you know what they call it? An avatar. Did

you ever hear of an avatar in the computer world? Avatar is your little representative picture or your little representative body.

When you play a video game and it's a first person shooter and you put on a skin and you walk around and you're a crewman from something or you've got a shape and a form, that's in the computer world, that's called an avatar. Well, that comes from Hinduism. Every time Vishnu shows up, it's an avatar.

It's a representation of the real Vishnu. He's just putting on a shape. He's putting on a skin.

Loading up his weapons and getting his characteristics and he's going to jump into the game for a while. Shoot a few things and jump out. That's Vishnu.

Now, Vishnu's incarnations are called avatars. One of those avatars is Rama, a benevolent king. Another one is Krishna.

Did you ever hear of Krishna? Hare Hare Krishna. Howdy, howdy, Krishna. You're back.

I see there's another avatar of Vishnu and it's Krishna. They say, howdy, Krishna. That's what the Hindus say.

Krishna is actually impetuous, violent and erotic. This is sort of the emotional part of the expression of the Hindu pantheon of deities. He's the emotional one.

He's like Bacchus, the god of wine or one of these other sort of unpredictable types. The gods are sometimes amoral, amoral, unmoral. And they're not limited because they're not human.

They can do stuff just like the Greek gods were. The big overarching Zeus of Hinduism is Brahman. Have you ever heard of a Brahma bull? They call him Brahma, but Oklahoma got me a Brahma bull.

Well, Brahma or Brahman, B-R-A-H-M-A-N, that's the one supreme... He's the Zeus. He's the Jupiter. He's the big cheese at the top of their little Mount Olympus of deities.

And all of these other gods are kind of descendants or offsprings or manifestations or whatever. It's all kind of nebulous. But Brahman is... Some Hindus think of him the way we think of God the Father.

And they think of him as a personal god. And so if a Hindu worships any kind of a god, it's probably Brahman or some manifestation or avatar of Brahman. They think he's loving and desires the salvation of all men.

Now, more often though, Hindus think he's supreme and impersonal above all creation, untouched by human hands or human sight. So he's the pseudo God the Father, Brahman. The material universe is not created by Brahman.

It's just sort of an unconscious emanation. It's just Brahman thinking. So it's beginningless.

A lot of them think it's endless. And it's an unreal illusion because it's just Brahman's imagination. So if he falls asleep, why do we all wink out? I guess we would blow out and go to nirvana or something.

Because it's not here. Man has to play his part. He's compelled to play a part in a gigantic illusion.

And it's a worrisome universe. Each human soul is beginningless and has gone through a series of reincarnations. This is where you get your karma.

If you screw up, then you come back as a lower form of life. If you do well, you come back as a higher form of life. And eventually, when you meditate yourself to a high enough place, you don't have to keep getting reincarnated.

You graduate from incarnation school. And you're through with that. And you can join the luminaries up in the pantheon.

In the meantime, life is painful, full of distress. And earthly pleasures are just momentary little morphine shots that get you away from the pain for a few minutes. And then you're back to the pain.

And what you've got to try to do is spiral up and get out of this swamp and join the celestial Brahma-filled avatar generating Hindu pantheon. So, the human soul wants to get up there and be with Brahman, who has no part of this, as it says here, has no part of this sari universe. Okay, Buddhism and Hinduism.

Now, why are those important? That is essentially, those or some form of them cover a huge chunk of the world. All of Asia, the Far East is either Buddhist or Hindu. And have been since before Jesus came.

So, a huge number of your Oriental peoples are of that persuasion. And it arose in India, in that area of the world. So, that's one big stripe.

Now, we're kind of starting at the international date line and moving our way west. So, we've started out with Hinduism and Buddhism. Next time, we're going to take a look at Islam and Judaism, which are your Middle Eastern and your African.

And now, 40-odd countries in Europe and so on are largely Muslim. And then, we'll finish up with Roman Catholicism. And that'll complete our overview of these world religions.

And that way, you will know when you're talking about Christianity with somebody else, where you stand and where they stand. And you'll be informed. Well, let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you that you have revealed the truth to us. You've given us your Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. And to help us discern truth from error.

We pray that we will reflect that truth like lights in a dark place. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.