

Christianity And Hinduism



God (Michelangelo, Sistine chapel)



Indra, (Hindu Temple)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

The Bible begins by introducing:

- ♦ God
- ♦ The creation of the World
- ♦ The creation of Adam and Eve
- ♦ Satan's temptation
- ♦ The moral fall of mankind
- ♦ The subsequent curse that sin brought upon mankind and all creation.

The book of Genesis also reveals God's plan to deliver mankind from sin and death. A special descendant of Adam and Eve would someday arrive and bring salvation. As the centuries passed, God revealed through His prophets who this special descendant would be and what He would do. This man was called the Messiah. According to the Biblical record, this was the original religion.

The prophet Moses penned the Genesis record in about 1600 B.C., but it appears Moses was

drawing from even earlier oral and written records this is (This is extra material to get the previous page to wrap correctly)

drawing from even earlier oral and written records. Historical accounts similar to the Genesis story have been discovered among the ancient writings of the Egyptians, Greeks, Persians and Babylonians. This original faith was very simple. Its tenets included:

- ♦ A belief in one God (monotheism)
- ♦ A recognition of man's sinful condition
- ♦ A belief in God's holiness
- ♦ A Messianic expectation
- ♦ A substitutionary sacrifice to cover sin.

It is remarkable that all ancient religions practiced animal sacrifices. This tradition is likely a holdover from mankind's original parents. After Adam and Eve sinned, God directed them to make a blood sacrifice.

Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock... and the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering. (Genesis 4:4)

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement. (Leviticus 17:11)

The wages of sin is death, but the worshiper of God may offer the life of an animal as a covering or atonement. The later Biblical prophets explained that the animal sacrifices were meant to teach and prepare mankind for the true sacrifice. The Messiah Himself would sacrifice His life on the cross as the payment for mankind's sin. God demanded justice for sin; but out of love for mankind, God would take the punishment for sin upon Himself. This is the basic outline of the original religion.

Mankind's Response

Some of the descendants of Adam and Eve held on to the original Genesis religion, but the vast majority had no interest. The first abandonment came when Cain, the son of Adam and Eve, refused to bring God the proper sacrifice. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord (Genesis 4:16). Within a few centuries the majority of mankind rejected the original truth and descended into ungodliness.

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5)

God judged evil by sending a cataclysmic flood. The righteous man Noah and his family were spared to repopulate the earth. Remnants of the flood story exist in the ancient legends of various cultures. In Hindu writing, a man by the name of Manu is described as a Noah-like figure who is told to build an ark and to store within it different seeds. The waters covered the earth (Mahabharata III. clxxxvi).

Following the great flood (about 2400 B.C.), the descendants of Noah began to repopulate the earth. Within a few centuries the original truth of God was again suppressed and lost. As the story was passed from generation to generation, people introduced their own religious preferences. Rather than desiring the true, sovereign, holy God, mankind reverted to worshiping idols and spirits which were the personification of man's own lusts.

The worship of many gods (polytheism) is rooted in some truth. The Bible teaches that there are powerful demonic forces that control various parts of this world. The ancient people were replacing the worship of God with the worship of these earthly demonic powers, hoping to gain the favor of these demonic forces posing as gods.

The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. (1 Corinthians 10:20)

The Bible teaches that God responded to mankind's abandonment of truth by giving the nations over to their foolishness.

For even though they [the various people groups] knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

(Romans 1:21-23)

...God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways. (Acts 14:15-16)

Although the majority forsook the truth, God still worked to save some. In about 2000 B.C., God called Abraham to be His representative. Through the descendants of Abraham, God would send the prophets, give the Bible, and eventually send Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Even though many of the Jews did not receive the Messiah, God continued His work by sending the message of the Messiah to the Gentile nations. All who are humble of heart and love God can be saved through faith in Jesus Christ.

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man [Jesus] whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:30-31)

Hinduism

The settlers in the Indus Valley are one of the oldest known civilizations, dating back to the third millennium B.C. These settlers would have been close descendants of Noah. The original religion of

these people is lost in obscurity. “Hindu” is the Sanskrit word for river; it originally referred to a region, not a religion. Historians agree that the title “Hinduism” is really the creation of Europeans who classified the indigenous, polytheistic religions of India under one label. Hinduism does not have a single unified theology. The ancient religious writings are not doctrinal creeds; but they are prayers, stories and songs that are subject to various interpretations. The ambiguity of Hinduism means that the worshiper must discern for himself what aspects of Hinduism are the remnants of God’s original truth and what aspects are human error.

In modern Hindu thought, there are three leading gods: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. However, in the earliest Hindu writings Varuna was the most prominent god. The *Rigveda*, which is a random collection of praise hymns to the gods dating from around 1700-1100 B.C., describes Varuna as “the Creator, the One, the Great God over all the other gods.” He displays some of the same characteristics as the personal, moral, creator God described in Genesis.

Before God revealed His title, “Jehovah,” to Moses, God was called by the nations, “The Lord of Heaven and Earth” or “The Most High God.” (Genesis 14:18-22; Daniel 3:26)

A *Rigveda* prayer to Varuna

I do not wish, King Varuna, to go down to the home of clay. Be gracious, mighty lord, and spare. Whatever wrong we men commit against the race of heavenly ones, O Varuna, whatever law of thine we here have broken through thoughtlessness, for that transgression do not punish us, O god. (Rigveda VII.lxxxix.1-3).

In later writings, the chief God, or the “Lord of Heaven,” is called Indra. According the writings, it was he who “made firm the shaking earth, who brought to rest the mountains when they were

disturbed, who measured out the wide atmosphere, who fixed the heaven (Rigveda II.xii.2).”

Over the centuries multiple gods were added so that today Hinduism identifies thousands of gods. However, this was not the original faith. Max Müller, the most renowned scholar on ancient Indian Sanskrit, stated that the historical record shows that monotheism preceded polytheism in India.

You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me.
(Exodus 20:3-5)

Why Believe the Gospel of Christ?

* For the people of India, Christianity is not a new religion as much as it is a return to the original faith of the founders. The Bible reintroduces to the people of India the original plan of God.

* There are many teachings in Hindu writings that coincide with God’s moral law because the law of God is universally written on man’s conscience. All religions contain an element of God’s truth; otherwise, they would have no appeal. Believing in Christ does not mean the complete abandonment of one’s heritage or culture.

* Is Christianity a Western, Anglo-Saxon religion? Not at all! Christianity has transcended all cultures because Jesus Christ came into this world to meet mankind’s universal need of forgiveness and reconciliation with God. God’s original promise to Abraham, the father of Jews, was that “*in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed* (Genesis 12:3).” Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world.

* You may hear the slogan, “all religions are the same.” However, the message of Christ is unlike every other world religion. The common theme of every world religion is that salvation is attained through self-righteous moral efforts. Only Christianity teaches no man is good enough to achieve heaven. God must make the sacrifice for us; God must do the saving. Salvation is not granted through self-righteous works, but through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This message rings true for those who understand their own sin and helplessness.

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.
(Romans 3:28)

* Aren’t many Christians hypocritical and phony? Yes, but these are not true Christians. Many of those who identify with the Christian title have never experienced genuine conversion. There are whole sects and denominations that profess Christianity but teach an unbiblical form of Christianity. Do not be deceived by impostors. Look for Biblical, historic Christianity.

* There are always those people who will perpetuate the religious, economic, or social mistakes of their culture rather than investigate truth for themselves. Ultimately it comes down to the choice between loyalty to God or loyalty to man. For example, if the British Isles had never accepted Christianity, the English people would still be Druids worshiping trees and fictitious spirits, and even worse, practicing human sacrifice and gross immoralities. Even now as the Western world is abandoning Christianity for secular atheism, there is a descent into moral and intellectual darkness. As Jesus taught, embracing truth makes a difference!

So Jesus said to them, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have

the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.” (John 12:35-36)

* Don’t expect Christianity to be popular in a world that is given over to evil and self-will. Jesus taught that the salvation of God would be accepted by a few.

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.
(Matthew 7:13-14)

* Those who come to believe in Jesus Christ do so because after hearing the message of Christ, they sense that it is not just good, but it is true. There is no other way to explain conversion.

But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.
(John 10:26-27)

He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.
(John 8:47)

This brochure is only a brief introduction to Christianity. There is much more to investigate and learn; may God give you the grace to seek and find the truth.

For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.
(1 Thessalonians 1:9-10)

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