

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

What's the Difference Buddhism

What Every Christian Should Know

- It is the world's fourth-largest religion, with over 520 million followers (Buddhists) who comprise seven percent of the global population.
- **Hawaii** has the largest Buddhist population by percentage, amounting to 8% of the state's population. California follows Hawaii with 2%. In Rockland County, the percentage drops to less than .2 %.
- Some (Relatively) well-known Buddhists in America today include Cesar Milan (dog whisperer), Tiger Woods, and Richard Gere. According to Pews Research, 3,860,000 Buddhists are living in America today making up less than 1 percent of the total population.

History

- Siddhartha (Siddharta means "one who has achieved his aim) Gautama, later known as the Buddha, was born in Lumbini (modern-day Nepal) around the 6th century BCE, into a royal family.
- There were a couple of miraculous stories regarding his birth, such as he emerged from his mother's side without causing her any pain, and another that said at birth he took seven steps and announced he would be the "chief of the world".
- Prophecy said he would be a great king if he stood home, but a savior of mankind if he stood home. His early life was characterized by luxury and privilege, shielded from the harsh realities of the world. His father wanted him to be a great king, so he lived an extremely sheltered life in the palace.
- Siddhartha expressed to his father that he wanted to see the world, and during a rare trip out of the palace he saw the "four passing sights", an old man, a sick person, a corpse, and a wandering ascetic. Those images were so impressed upon him that he left his wife, the palace, and his life of luxury and future role as leader of the people to seek "truth".
- He realized that neither the extremes of hedonism nor mortification of the flesh would lead to enlightenment. He determined that a better path to achieving the state of nirvana – a state of liberation from suffering – was to pursue the "Middle Way".
- One night, at age 35, he was in deep meditation beneath a large tree when he began to experience spiritual breakthroughs. Finally, he learned that he had progressed beyond the "spiritual defilements" of craving, desire, hatred, hunger, thirst, exhaustion, fear, doubt, and delusions. "With this experience, he became a Buddha, someone who has 'awakened'.

- A Buddha is someone who has understood the causes of suffering and has ‘blown them out,’ meaning that he no longer suffers from the ignorance and desire that feed the fire of death and rebirth”
- He spent the rest of his life sharing what he had learned. He was no longer Siddhartha Gautama but the **Buddha, or enlightened one**. He wandered around northeast India for decades, teaching all who would listen, and died at the **age of 80**. He left no successor, believing that the Dharma (his teachings), plus the Vinaya (his code of rules for monks and nuns) would be adequate guides.

Basic Beliefs Of Buddhism

1) The Four Noble Truths:

- Dukkha (Suffering): Life is characterized by suffering, dissatisfaction, and unsatisfactoriness.
- Samudaya (Cause of Suffering): The cause of suffering is craving and attachment, rooted in ignorance (ignorance of the true nature of reality).
- Nirodha (Cessation of Suffering): Suffering can be ended by eliminating craving and attachment.
- Magga (Path to the Cessation of Suffering): The Eightfold Path is the way to end suffering and attain enlightenment.

2) The Eightfold Path:

- Right View: Understanding the Four Noble Truths and the nature of reality.
- Right Intention: Developing a sincere commitment to the path and cultivating ethical intentions.
- Right Speech: Speaking truthfully, kindly, and avoiding harmful speech.
- Right Action: Engaging in ethical and compassionate conduct.
- Right Livelihood: Choosing a livelihood that is ethical and does not harm others.
- Right Effort: Cultivating positive qualities and overcoming negative ones.
- Right Mindfulness: Developing awareness of thoughts, feelings, and actions.
- Right Concentration: Cultivating focused and meditative mental states.

3) Impermanence (Anicca):

- All phenomena, including life and its experiences, are impermanent. Nothing is permanent or unchanging.

4) No-Self (Anatta):

- The doctrine of anatta teaches that there is no permanent, unchanging self or soul. The self is a constantly changing, interconnected process. The five aggregates are Form (Rupa), Feeling (Vedana), Perception (Sanna), Mental Formations (Sankhara) and Consciousness (vijnana). Buddha believed that these aggregates, caused one to stay attached to the world and that these aggregates did not create

the greater whole called the Self, but rather they were just parts of nothing more and nothing less of one's existence. In essence, one does not have a permanent identity but ones that can shift and change like the flow of a river.

5) **Dependent Origination (Paticca Samuppada):**

- Explains the interdependence of all phenomena and how suffering arises due to the interconnected chain of causes and conditions.

6) **Karma:**

- Actions have consequences, and individuals are responsible for their intentional actions. Positive actions lead to positive consequences, and negative actions lead to negative consequences.

7) **Nirvana:**

- The ultimate goal of Buddhism is Nirvana, a state of liberation from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (samsara). Nirvana is characterized by the cessation of suffering and the end of craving and attachment.

8) **Compassion (Karuna) and Loving-Kindness (Metta):**

- Cultivating compassion and loving-kindness towards all beings is central to Buddhist practice.

Types of Buddhism

- **Theravada Buddhism.** Also called Southern Buddhism, it began in the 3rd century B.C. as Buddhist missionaries left India for Sri Lanka. In the Pali language the word "Theravada" means "the Doctrine of the Elders" or the "Ancient Doctrine." The Theravada school bases its practices and doctrines exclusively on the Pali canon. Theravada Buddhism now dominates all the Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia except Vietnam.
- **Mahayana Buddhism.** The word means "Great Vehicle." It emerged as a reform movement in the Indian Buddhist community around the beginning of the Common Era and eventually spread to China, Tibet, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Mahayana texts claim to be the teaching of the Buddha himself, delivered to a special assembly of bodhisattvas, or "future Buddhas," from which other Buddhist practitioners were excluded. A bodhisattva does not attempt to go straight to nirvana but returns to this world to help others along the path.
 - A) **Zen Buddhism**, a branch of Mahayana Buddhism that has become widely known in the West. There are no sacred scriptures. The teachings of Buddhism are transmitted from mind to mind and do not need to be explained in words. Zen developed 1,000 years after the death of the Buddha. **"Look within, you are the Buddha," it teaches, stressing finding your own way through self-effort.**
- **Vajrayana (Tantra) Buddhism.** The word means "Diamond Vehicle." This form of Buddhism shares the basic concepts of Mahayana, and is thought by some to be a

part of Mahayana, but also includes a vast array of spiritual techniques designed to enhance the Buddhist practice. Two major sub schools are Tibetan Buddhism and Shingon Buddhism. By harnessing certain psycho-physical energy, the practitioner may achieve Buddhahood in one lifetime.

Purpose

The Buddha taught that the sum of these five parts does not make up a greater whole called the **Self**. All that exists are the parts. The Buddha wanted to remove the notion of the **Self** because he believed the idea of the **Self is the root of all suffering**. Since there is no soul or You, there is no reincarnation. Buddha instead taught rebirth. Rebirth does not involve getting a new body for an old soul (as in Hinduism).

Comparing Christianity and Buddhism

What the Bible says about God:

There is one true and living God, who exists as three distinct, co-equal, co-eternal persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Deut. 6:4; John 20:28; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 13:13; 1 Peter 1:2). God is personal and is to be the only object of worship (Ex. 20:2-3; Isa. 43:10, 44:6; Matt. 4:10).

What Buddhism says about God:

Buddhists do not worship a God who created and sustains the world. Theravada Buddhism considers the concept of God irrelevant; it is basically atheistic. Mahayana Buddhism worships the Buddha as a god, along with other gods. Other forms of Buddhism add shamanism and elements of the occult.

What the Bible says about Jesus:

He is the virgin-born Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:35). He is the eternal God, the Creator, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit (John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-20; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-13). Jesus died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3), rose physically from the dead (Matt. 12:38-40; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:4-8; 1 Peter 1:18-21) and is coming back physically and visibly one day (Matt. 24:29-31; John 14:3; Titus 2:13; Rev. 19:11-16).

What Buddhism says about Jesus:

Jesus was a great religious teacher who may have achieved enlightenment. Even so, he was one among many and therefore not unique.

What the Bible says about salvation:

Christ's death at Calvary completely paid our sin debt so that salvation comes by grace alone through faith in the person and work of Jesus (John 3:16, 5:24; Rom. 4:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

What Buddhism says about salvation:

The goal of life is to achieve *nirvana*, or the cessation of suffering.

What the Bible says about the Bible:

The Bible is the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God, and is His sole written authority for all people (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

What Buddhism says about the Bible:

The authoritative writings for Buddhists are the *Sutras* and the *Tripitaka* (The Three Baskets). The Bible contains good teaching but is not authoritative.

Comparing Christianity and Buddhism

What the Bible says about man:

God created man in His image – with a human spirit, personality and will. A person's life begins at conception and is everlasting, but not eternal; that is, our lives have no end, but they did have a distinct beginning (Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 139:13-16).

What Buddhism says about man:

Buddhists embrace the concept of *anatta* (no self). In traditional Buddhism, "no self" means there is no permanent identity to continue from one moment to the next. The human personality is made up of five *skanda* (parts), which are only momentary, but they group together to give the illusion of permanence, like the flow of a river or the flame of a candle.

What the Bible says about sin:

Sin is a violation of God's perfect and holy standards. All humans are sinners (Rom. 3:10) and are under the curse of sin – spiritual and physical death (Gen. 2:17, 3:17-19; Rom. 3:23). Only faith in Christ and His work on our behalf frees us from sin and its consequences (John 3:16, 5:24; Eph. 2:8-9).

What Buddhism says about sin:

There is no such thing as sin against a supreme being. The human condition is suffering, caused by attachment to things and the cravings / desires accompanying the attachment.

What the Bible says about death and the afterlife:

Physical and spiritual deaths come upon all people as a consequence of their sin (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:1). A person becomes spiritually alive when he or she is "born again" by the Spirit of God (John 3:3-6; Eph. 2:4-5). At physical death, our souls and spirits separate from our bodies [which go into the grave to await resurrection and final judgment] and enter an everlasting state of blessedness [for those born again] or torment [for those who die in their sins] (Luke 16:19-31; 2 Cor. 5:8).

Hell is a place of everlasting conscious existence, where the unbeliever is forever separated from God (Matt. 25:46; Luke 16:19-31; Rev. 14:9-11, 20:10). As for Heaven, all believers have God's promise of a home in Heaven, will go there instantly upon physical death, and will return with Christ from Heaven to earth one day (Luke 16:19-31; John 14:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:8; Rev. 19:14).

What Buddhism says about death and the afterlife:

Buddhists believe the cycle of death and rebirth, known as *samsara*, has been going on since time without beginning. Their goal is to end this cycle by attaining *nirvana*, a state of being that is realized through eliminating desire. *Nirvana* comes at two moments: at awakening or enlightenment, and at *parinirvana*, when the fire of personality finally flickers out (final death).

The path to *nirvana* is divided into eight categories of disciplines that are meant to avoid bad *karma* that leads to difficult and dangerous forms of rebirth.

There is no heaven or hell as understood by Christians.