

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND ALL OTHER RELIGIONS?

“Jesus said to him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” John 14:6

Time and again we hear people say: All religions are the same! Why do you insist that yours is the only right one? How can you be so narrow minded, bigoted and intolerant to believe that Jesus is the only way to God?

The New Tolerance

In this decadent and immoral society the main virtue seems to be tolerance. And the worst advice is intolerance. However, what they mean by tolerance is something very different to what tolerance used to mean. Today tolerance has gone beyond what any previous generation would have understood to acceptance and approval of deception and depravity.

Intolerance and Hypocrisy

The New Age tolerance seems to come to a screeching halt when confronted with Biblical Christianity. Any Christian who dares to stand up for basic Biblical beliefs are accused of intolerance! It seems a bit hypocritical of those who claim that all religions are right that there they spend so much time declaring that Christianity is wrong. And they do seem to be very intolerant of Biblical doctrine.

Baha'i Syncretism

The Baha'i Religion has formalised the new age spirit into a religion which incorporates all other religions. The Baha'is claim that all religions are the same and they claim to follow Jesus Christ along with Buddha, Lao-Tzu, Confucius, Mohammad, Zoroaster and whole hosts of other gurus, prophets and holy men.

Research Religions

Yet, to those who claim that all Religions are the same and all religious teachers basically teach the same principles, we need to point out to them what these religions actually do teach.

Contrasts and Contradictions

Islam stands for a strict monotheism. They are adamant that there is only one god. However, Hinduism is polytheistic, recognising at least 330 million gods. How can monotheism and polytheism be the same? Buddhism is pantheistic teaching that everything is god. Confucius recognised no god. How can atheism equal pantheism equal polytheism equal monotheism?

Life Vs Nirvana

Jesus Christ said that He came that we may have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10). However, Hinduism and Buddhism teach that life is a great evil. These religions teach that we should be seeking for the end of all personal life through Nirvana. As a drop of water falls back into the ocean and loses all individuality, so through successive reincarnations and meditation we should seek the sensation of personal consciousness. As Buddhism and Hinduism regard life as miserable (that is something of a self-fulfilling prophecy as paganism always tends to make life quite miserable) their goal is the extinguishing of life. How can Christ's teaching about Spiritual Life, Eternal Life and Abundant Life be the same thing as Nirvana?

Incompatible Ethics

Then there are the issues of ethics. Most religions teach polygamy – that a man may have numerous wives. Christianity has always stood for monogamy: one man married to one woman for life. These two positions are incompatible.

All religions have tolerated, and some religions, such as Islam, have actively propagated slavery. The founder of Islam, Mohammad, actually owned and traded in slaves. In his Sharia Law, Mohammad allowed the raping of captives, the sexual abuse of slaves, hiring out of one's female slaves as prostitutes, the looting of property (as long as he received one fifth of the loot) and other crimes condemned by Biblical law.

A Legacy of Liberty

However, from its inception, Christianity has been steadfastly opposed to slavery, polygamy, and all these other outrages. Jesus Christ revolutionized labour. By taking up the axe, the saw, the hammer and the plain, our Lord endued labour with a new dignity. Christianity undercut slavery by giving dignity to work. By reforming work, Christianity transformed the entire social order.

Our Lord Jesus Christ began His earthly ministry with these words: ***“The Spirit of the Lord is on me ... to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and release to the oppressed”*** Luke 4:18

The Apostle Paul wrote to Philemon that he was to welcome back Onesimus ***“No longer as a slave, but as a dear brother ... as a man and as a brother in the Lord.”*** Philemon 16

Because of these, and other Scriptural commands to love our neighbour, to be a good Samaritan, and to do for others what you would have them do to you, Christians have worked tirelessly to end the slave trade and to set the captives free.

When Jesus was asked what is the greatest Commandment, He taught: ***“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all our soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength ... and you shall love your neighbour as yourself.”*** Mark 12:30-31

When Mohammad was asked what the greatest Commandment was, he answered to recognise that there is no god but Allah and Mohammad is his prophet. When asked what the second greatest commandment would be, Mohammad answered to participate in Jihad!

So the Lord Jesus taught that the second greatest Commandment was to love your neighbour as yourself. Mohammad on the other hand taught his followers taught his followers to kill his neighbours through Jihad.

Fellowship with Demons

The Apostle Paul taught: ***“Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrificed to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.”*** 1 Corinthians 10:20

Idolatry

The Scriptures are clear that God is not pleased with all types of religious activity. The most condemned sin throughout the Scripture is that of idolatry. Most of the religions of the world are steeped in idolatry. ***“Professing to be wise, they became fools and changed the Glory of the Incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds, and four footed animals and creeping things.”*** Romans 1:22-23

Are You a Good Person?

Most religions teach that people are basically good. The Bible is clear that people are basically evil. (***“As it is written: There is none righteousness, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable. There is none who does good, no, not one. ... For all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God.”*** Romans 3:10-23).

Beware of Religious Deception

Jesus warned us of false prophets (Matthew 7:15), false teachers and false shepherds (Matthew 23). ***“Take heed that no one deceives you.”*** Matthew 24:4

In the book of Revelation we are told that at the end God will send an Angel to bind satan ***“So that he should deceive the nations no more ...”*** Revelation 20:3. Plainly satan is deceiving nations today. We are involved in a colossal conflict, a world war of world views:

Atheism verses Theism

Polytheism verses Monotheism

Communism verses Christianity

Sharia Law verses God’s Law

Polygamy verses Monogamy

Slavery verses Freedom

Abortion verses Pro-Life

Pornography verses Morality

Homosexuality verses Family Values

Disease verses Death

Lies verses Truths

Poison verses Purity

Death verses Life.

Religions are man trying to reach up to God.

Christ is God reaching down to man.

Religions come from man.

Christianity comes from God.

Religions say: Try!

Christ says: Trust!

Freedom of Conscience

We, as protestant believers believe in freedom of conscious, freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of worship. The Protestant Reformation gave birth to the very concept of religious toleration. However by tolerating the practice of other religions we are not saying that they are equally valid or true. That modern, New Age concept of tolerance is not what the word has historically meant.

Facing Reality

What is the difference between the Christian God and the gods of other religions?

Well first and foremost the God of the Bible is real. The others are not. God exists. The others are figments of the imagination and demonic deceptions.

Sin

However, the differences between Christianity and all other religions is more that the way we look at everything and everyone, reality and responsibility, salvation and discipleship.

Is much more than the truth about God, man, eternity and salvation. It is even more than life, both life here and now, and life in the hereafter. The chief and most critical difference between Christianity and other religions is our understanding of the Holiness of God and the seriousness of sin.

Atonement

What is absolutely unique about Christianity, among all the religions of the world, is its central doctrine of a once for all, never to be repeated, unique substitutionary atonement. Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. His sacrificial death on the cross made atonement for our sins and made possible the redemption of His people. Other religions either have a lower view of God's Holiness or a lower view of the seriousness of mans' sin, or both. Only Christianity maintains the balance of God's perfect Holiness and merciful love.

Justice

The crucial question is how can a Holy God reconcile sinful and depraved people and still maintain His justice? Only someone who was sinless could be an atoning sacrifice and only God Himself, coming as a man, could be that perfect sacrifice.

The Life of Christ

Other religions are based on the teachings of their founders. Christianity, however, is based on its founder's life. At the core of the Apostles Creed is Christ. *"Our Lord Jesus Christ, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, he died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from there He shall come to Judge the living and the dead."*

The Festival of the Church

That is why the great festivals of the Christian faith are Christmas, Good Friday, Easter and Ascension Day. Christmas celebrates the incarnation of God in human flesh, Emmanuel God with Us, Good Friday, the atoning death of the summit God for the sins of the world. Easter the victory of Christ over death, hell and the grave through the resurrection. ***"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. An eye of the keys of Hades and of death"*** Revelation 1:18

Above All Authorities

The Ascension proclaimed the lordship of Christ over all human institutions and authorities. Christ ***"Has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand - with Angels, authorities and powers in submission to Him"*** 1 Peter 3:22 ***"All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to Me, therefore go and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. ..."*** Matthew 28:18-20 ***"For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet."*** 1 Corinthians 15:25 ***"Therefore, since we have a great High Priest who has gone through the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the Faith we profess."*** Hebrews 4:14

At the Name of Jesus

“Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow in Heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:9-11

The Uniqueness of Christ

Jesus Christ didn't claim to know the way, He is the Way. Jesus didn't just teach the truth, He is the Truth. He does not just have life, He is the Life.

Mohammad didn't live a sinless life. He owned slaves, he traded in slaves, he kidnapped people, had hundreds of Jewish men dig their own graves and massacred them in front of their families. Their wives and their children were then sold into slavery. Mohammad attacked merchant caravans, looted property, kidnapped people and held them for ransom.

Confucius didn't die for the sins of the world. He didn't even believe in sin.

Buddha didn't rise from the dead.

Only Jesus Christ lived a perfect life, died an atoning death and rose from the dead. Confucius, Buddha, Mohammad, and all the rest, died, are buried and have never been heard from since. However the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is a unique historical fact.

All humanity is drowning in an ocean of sin. The religions of the world are throwing out swimming manuals and seeking to give some instructions on how to swim to the drowning. However, Jesus Christ is the lifesaver who has plunged into the ocean to rescue the perishing at the expense of His own life.

“Nor is there Salvation in any other, for there is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave Himself at a ransom to all to be testified in due time.” 1 Timothy 2:5-6

Is Jesus Christ your Lord and Saviour?

Or will He be your eternal judge?

The question isn't will you bow to Christ, but when will you bow to Christ?

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those in Heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:9-11

The first time He came as the Lamb of God He takes away the sins of the world. The second time, when He comes again, He will not come as a Saviour, but as a judge, as the King of kings and Lord of lords, a conqueror, the eternal judge.

We either bow to Him today in the day of Grace when Salvation is freely available, or we will be forced to bow to Him on the Day of Judgement, when the door of grace will be firmly closed, when all hope of forgiveness is extinguished. We either bow to Christ as Saviour and Lord now or we will bow to Him as our judge in condemnation on the Day of Judgement.

Is Jesus your Saviour or your Judge?

Jesus Christ is the Way the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Him.

Dr. Peter Hammond
Livingstone Fellowship
P. O. Box 74 Newlands 7725
Cape Town South Africa
Tel: 021-689-4480
Fax: 021-685-5884
Email: mission@frontline.org.za
Web: www.livingstonefellowship.co.za