

Hinduism or Christianity?

By Jeremy Sweets

Hinduism is one of the oldest world religions, originating in India as early as 2500 B.C. Today, it has 900 million adherents, mostly in India and surrounding Asian countries. Hinduism encompasses a wide diversity of beliefs, but there are some common doctrines among its believers. Their sacred scriptures are voluminous, consisting largely of the Vedas, which means truth or wisdom. Hinduism teaches that people are divided into different social groups, or castes. Karma, the effects of a person's actions, determines the future condition of that individual in reincarnation, the continual cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Good karma may result in life in a better caste, and bad karma may result in a lower caste. Consider some differences between Hinduism and Christianity.

Universal Religion

Both Christianity and Hinduism claim to be universal religions, but there is a major difference in how that claim is to be understood. Hinduism tolerates drastically divergent beliefs, with adherents including polytheists, pantheists and atheists. Christianity, on the other hand, teaches a central doctrine of salvation in Christ, and it is open to all who are willing to devote their lives to Him (Matt. 11:28-30; 28:18-20). The tolerance of Hinduism allows for conflicting claims.

God

In Hinduism, the Supreme Being is Brahman, a philosophical concept of an impersonal but spiritual reality. Christianity speaks of a definable and personal God, who reigns supreme over the universe and all that is in it. The God of Christianity is a God of love, who personally cares for all people (1 Jn. 4:8). He desires fellowship with all people, going so far as to sacrifice His only Son for the salvation of mankind (Jn. 3:16; Heb. 2:9).

Man

Hinduism teaches that man is the manifestation of the impersonal Brahman. He is a spirit that is part of the cycle of reincarnation and possesses no individual self-worth. Christianity teaches that man was personally created by God and that he bears the express image of God (Gen. 1:27). Despite God's clear superiority, He looked down on man and bestowed him with great favor (Ps. 8:3-8).

Salvation

Hinduism has no concept of sin. Instead, wrong behavior is simply a result of ignorance. Salvation is achieved by very few and it results in a break from the cycle of reincarnation. It can be achieved through works, knowledge or devotion. Christianity teaches that sin is a violation of the commandments of God, and it results in a break in fellowship with our Lord. We can not earn our salvation, but we must rely upon Jesus Christ, who gave his life on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins (Eph. 2:8-10). Through Jesus, all who are willing can be saved (Eph. 1:7). Ultimately, the righteous have eternal life in heaven with God (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

Christianity and Hinduism are mutually exclusive, meaning that one or neither may be correct, but they can not both be true. Examine the evidence and make a decision about Hinduism and Christianity. Your decision will have a profound impact on the way that you live your life. It is the most important decision that you will ever make.