

Differences

Between

Buddhism &

Christianity

By Patsy Oda

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Biography of the Founders

Buddhism

Siddhartha Gautama was born a rich Hindu prince in India in 563 B.C.

At his birth, a soothsayer predicted that he would become either a great religious leader or a great king. Determined that his son would become a great king, Siddhartha's father kept him inside the palace walls and raised him in luxury, away from life's sufferings.

Siddhartha was 29 years old before he saw anyone who was sick, elderly, or dead. The impact of seeing human suffering caused him to abandon his wife, son and his sheltered life in the palace, to search for the reason why people suffer.

For six years, he studied under gurus and subjected himself to extreme disciplines. Finally through meditation, Siddhartha's mind was *awakened* to the "true nature of reality." Thus, he became *Shakyamuni BUDDHA, the Enlightened One*.

For the rest of his life, he taught people how to attain enlightenment. He died at age 80, as a result of food poisoning.

Christianity

Jesus Christ was born to poor Jewish parents in a stable in Bethlehem in 4 B.C.

Centuries before Jesus was born, prophets of God *accurately* foretold hundreds of specific facts about his miraculous birth, life, ministry, death on the cross, and resurrection.

An angel told a virgin that she would give birth to the Son of God and that she was to name him *Jesus*, which means *Savior*.

Jesus grew up in Nazareth, experiencing the challenges and sufferings of common people. In his youth, he amazed the scribes with his wisdom. As an adult, he was a carpenter. At about age 30, he began preaching about the Kingdom of God and Heaven.

Three years later, Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross for claiming to be God's Son, sent from Heaven to save mankind from the penalties of their SINS (*offenses against God*).

After he died, he was buried in a tomb. Three days later he rose from the dead, as he said he would. His ascension back to Heaven took place before hundreds of witnesses. Jesus' life is the most documented life in the history of mankind.

Buddhism

The teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha were committed to memory and passed down orally for about 500 years, before they were put into print.

The most authentic record of Buddha's teachings is in the *Tripitaka Pali Canon*. It contains his sermons, his higher teachings on the nature of mental and physical existence, and disciplines for his monks.

Buddha rejected the authoritative divine scriptures and religious rituals of Hinduism. He never claimed that he or his teachings were of divine origin. His followers were not made accountable to him or to his teachings.

As Buddhism spread to other nations, it underwent many changes. Buddha's teachings were given various interpretations. Volumes of new writings were added to the Buddhist Canon. Foreign religious rituals and customs were blended into Buddhist tradition.

Today "Buddha" is understood in many different *forms* and *concepts*.

Christianity

The Bible claims to be the Word of God. In it, GOD introduces Himself as the Creator and reveals His love for his created human beings. The Old Testament contains detailed prophecies about God's Savior who will come to earth to save mankind from their sins. The New Testament reveals God's only Son Jesus as the fulfillment of all those prophecies.

Although ordinary men put the Bible into print, God claims that He divinely inspired every word they wrote. He also claims that His words are "alive" and able to "speak to hearts" and guide people through life's difficult situations and decisions.

God calls His book "The Word of Truth." In it, He reveals His *unchanging, absolute Truths* that will help mankind detect what is *false*.

God strictly forbids changing or adding to His written Truth. However, many cults have added their misleading texts to the Bible and have led multitudes away from God. Their writings are condemned by God, and He holds them accountable for altering the Truth that gives mankind Eternal Life in Heaven.

Buddhism

Buddha's enlightened mind was awakened to ULTIMATE REALITY, and he saw how and why things are the way they are.

He saw that everything in the universe *always existed*. Everything has been revolving in a constant state of IMPERMANENCE from the "beginningless past."

Humans and *sentient* beings with perception have always existed in REINCARNATION. *Reincarnation* is the endless cycle of birth, death and rebirth into another body.

The natural LAW of KARMA (*Law of Cause and Effect*) controls the universe.

People are karmic beings that generate good and bad KARMA (*actions*). After death, the Law of Karma reincarnates their *mind* into their next body to be rewarded or punished for the accumulated Karma of their past lives.

The inequalities and sufferings in life are primarily the negative *effects caused* by the bad Karma of a person's present and previous lives.

Christianity

Jesus said that *ultimate reality* is found in the one true GOD, Who *always existed* in three Persons--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus claimed to be GOD the Son—co-equal and “one” with GOD the Father and GOD the Holy Spirit in the creation of everything in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.

Jesus said that he came to earth, born in a human body, to “show” mankind what the invisible GOD is like.

While on earth, Jesus did hundreds of miracles that demonstrated his authority over sickness, death, demons, and nature. He healed the sick, raised the dead, cast out demons, stopped storms, and walked on water.

Most importantly, Jesus demonstrated God’s unconditional love for mankind. He sacrificed his life on the cross to make the way for mankind to know God personally. By his death, Jesus paid for the sins that blocked humans from experiencing the ultimate reality of a wonderful friendship with a Holy God.

Purpose of Human Life

Buddhism

Buddha believed that human life has no purpose, no soul, and no self.

In “conventional” thinking, the mind creates *illusions* of “self” and “soul.” But in Ultimate Reality, self and soul do not exist.

Enlightenment awakened Buddha to the Ultimate Reality that everything is EMPTY and VOID of inherent existence. Ultimately, everyone and everything is like a drop of water in the ocean--with no identity or purpose of its own.

Humans are meaningless karmic beings, caught in an endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth into their next impermanent body. The Law of Karma *automatically* moves their mind into their next body, where they will *automatically* incur the effects of their accumulated past and present Karma actions.

Buddha taught people how to transcend karmic bondage and enter the Ultimate Reality of EMPTINESS.

Christianity

Jesus believed that God created humans for the supreme purpose of knowing Him and being in relationship with Him. Mankind's greatest joy is to be loved by God and to love Him in return.

Human beings alone were created with a SPIRIT (*heart*) like God's, so they could enjoy heart-to-heart relationship with Him.

God gave each spirit its own individual SOUL (*mind, emotions, will*) to allow them the freedom to think, feel, choose and love. Each individual was created with their own unique DNA, fingerprints and identity. They were born with God-given talents and desires that would direct them to fulfill God-given dreams for their lives.

But everything depends on having God as their inner *Source of divine Life, Power, Wisdom and Goodness*. Jesus said that each person must depend on him, as a branch must depend on the vine, for life and fruitfulness.

Buddhism

Buddha believed that humans live in an abstract, *metaphysical* universe. Moral good and evil are not part of metaphysics.

This metaphysical universe is ruled by the impersonal Law of Karma which deals with a person's *actions*. Karma actions are primarily considered “good or bad” as they relate to helping or hindering one's efforts toward attaining enlightenment.

Buddha believed that the chief cause of “bad” Karma is IGNORANCE—not knowing the truth about things as they really are.

Not knowing that life is an IMPERMANENT, EMPTY *illusion*, people ignorantly DESIRE things they cannot hold or keep. Even ATTACHMENTS to “good things,” like life and family, cause bad Karma and suffering.

Buddha taught that people must get rid of their desires and attachments to all impermanent things, in order to get rid of suffering.

Christianity

Jesus said that “good and evil” relate to the *heart* which belongs to either God or Satan.

SATAN (*the devil*) was once a created angel in heaven. But, in rebellion and pride, he tried to promote himself as “God” and was cast out.

Satan is the “Father of Lies,” who seeks to destroy God’s beloved human creation. With *supernatural deceptions*, he leads people and nations into sin, error, depravity and destruction.

Deceived by Satan, Adam and Eve, God’s first created man and woman, decided they didn’t need God and *chose* to go their independent way, following Satan. This *choice* is the SIN of “treason” against God, which eternally joined human hearts to God’s enemy, Satan.

SIN caused human hearts to acquire *Satan’s evil nature* and become unable to *naturally be good*. People may have good *outward actions*, but the *inner attitudes* of their hearts are resistant to God and His Word of Truth.

Freedom from Bondage

Buddhism

Buddha gave his TEACHINGS to liberate minds from their ignorance of the true nature of life. His most famous teachings are the *Four Noble Truths* and the *Eightfold Path*.

The Four Noble Truths

1. Life is suffering.
2. The cause of suffering is desire and attachment to impermanent things.
3. The end of suffering is attainable.
4. The path to end suffering is through gradual self-improvement.

The Eightfold Path provides practical guidelines for self-improvement: Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

Through meditation and following Buddha's teachings, people can create *good Karma* and avoid creating *bad Karma*. It may take hundreds of lifetimes, but people can attain *Nirvana* and no longer be subject to rebirths and suffering.

Christianity

Jesus gave his LIFE to free mankind from their bondage to sin, Satan, and Hell.

God had created Hell for Satan and his angels (demons) who attempted to raise themselves above God's rule in Heaven. But every human being on earth also joined in Satan's arrogant rebellion against God. They, too, left God, and became a "god" unto themselves.

When mankind joined Satan, they acquired Satan's evil sin nature and also his ultimate fate of perishing in Hell.

However, God was unwilling to let His human creation be eternally tormented in Hell. In love, He decided to sacrifice His only begotten Son Jesus to supernaturally rescue mankind. God laid the sins of all mankind on the heart of His sinless Son and had him judged, condemned, and crucified on the cross *on behalf of every man, woman, and child.*

Jesus' shed blood and death divinely paid the full cost to free mankind from sins, Satan and Hell; and he offers this freedom to all who receive him as personal Savior. But mankind still has the *freedom to choose* whether to receive Jesus as Savior, or not.

Source of Power

Buddhism

At his death, Buddha admonished his followers to depend only on self-effort to attain enlightenment. He said SELF POWER alone will save them from reincarnation.

After Buddha died, his followers used *their own power* to spread his teachings. Their different interpretations of Buddha's teachings developed into a diversity of Buddhist sects. One sect requires *no self-effort or self power*.

This sect was established upon a *mythical being* called *Amida Buddha*. He lived billions of years ago and vowed to save everyone from reincarnation by AMIDA's POWER alone. The only requirements were to recite Amida's name and to entrust their *mind* to his compassionate vow.

After death, instead of being reborn into another body, the minds of those who trust in Amida are reborn into Amida's Pure Land. Pure Land is a blissful state of *mind* in which enlightenment and Nirvana are easily attained.

Christianity

Sin caused mankind to become POWERLESS to save themselves from Hell. But God's unchanging love for mankind made a way for them to receive salvation *as a Gift of grace*.

To receive this *Gift*, a person must invite Jesus into their heart as Savior and ask God to forgive their sins. Receiving Jesus as Savior is an act of the *heart* and *will*. The human *mind* cannot understand the invisible, supernatural miracles of God. But the *heart* can *choose* to believe and accept miracles *by faith*.

When a person accepts Jesus *by faith*, the POWER OF GOD instantly “births” the gift of Eternal Life in their heart. This miracle is the experience of being “born of God” or being “born again.”

The heart that is “born of God” begins to sense the divine joy and peace of *God's presence*. God becomes *real* to them. Talking with Him becomes *natural*. Heaven becomes *home*.

To be victorious over sin and Satan on earth, God's “children” must live by the POWER of the HOLY SPIRIT who lives in their heart.

Humanity's Eternal Destination

Buddhism

Buddha taught that people have no *permanent* eternal destination. However, there are many levels of *impermanent heavens and hells*.

After death, the Law of Karma moves the person's mental energy and Karma into their next *impermanent* body.

The realm of their next life is determined by their accumulated Karma from past lives. Their next life is reborn into one of six realms of existence or states of mind:

- (1) gods — carefree, happy
- (2) demi-gods — aggressive, striving
- (3) humans — happiness and suffering
- (4) hungry ghosts — unfulfilled
- (5) animals — guided by basic instincts
- (6) hell beings — in constant torment

Buddha taught that impermanent existences will end, when people attain Nirvana. Nirvana is not a place, but the “extinguishing” of all ignorance, desires, and suffering.

When Nirvana is attained, the mind *permanently* disappears into the Ultimate Reality of Emptiness and Void.

Christianity

Jesus said each person lives and dies *only once* on earth, and then the Judgment. He described Heaven and Hell as real places of eternal destination for humans.

Jesus was judged, condemned, and put to death *on behalf of mankind's sins*, so that no one needs to face the Judgment; and every person can be saved from Hell.

Those who receive Jesus as personal Savior *before they die*, will not face the Judgment or Hell *at all*. They will not even *really* die. Instantly after they breathe their last breath on earth, God takes them “home” to Heaven.

Jesus described Heaven as a glorious place prepared for all those who received Eternal Life from him. There, they will be given a new heavenly body to live in forever.

At last, they will be eternally free from sin, Satan, sickness, pain and death. They will be reunited with family and friends who had received Eternal Life. Best of all, they will enter the ultimate reality of knowing God and enjoying life *as He intended for them from the beginning*.

Summary Questions

Buddhism

What did Buddha say about himself?

Buddha claimed that he was an ordinary human being who had attained enlightenment through self-effort and meditation.

What were Buddha's views on life?

Buddha believed that life is suffering, meaningless, and impermanent. People are karmic beings that always existed and always revolved in reincarnation. Humans have no soul and no self and are void of inherent identity.

What was Buddha's mission in life?

Ignorance holds people in bondage to reincarnation and suffering. Buddha dedicated his life to teaching people how to attain enlightenment and escape from reincarnation and suffering forever.

What is a Buddhist?

A Buddhist is a person who aspires to attain enlightenment by following the teachings of Buddha and practicing rituals, meditations, and self-improvements that will lead to Nirvana.

Christianity

What did Jesus say about himself?

Jesus claimed to be the Son of GOD who came to earth to save mankind from their sins.

What were Jesus' views on life?

Jesus believed that all of life had its origin, source, and purpose in GOD. People were created by God as unique individuals, capable of knowing God in their hearts.

What was Jesus' mission in life?

Mankind's sins cut them off from God and made them slaves to Satan. Jesus came to earth to sacrifice his life to pay for mankind's sins, release them from Satan, and give them a new heart "born of God."

What is a Christian?

A Christian is a person whose heart was "born of God," when they received Jesus as their personal Savior from their sins. They received salvation as a *free gift of God's grace, through faith alone*. Anyone who trusts in their own goodness or "Christian" activities to *earn* their way to God or to Heaven *is not a Christian*.

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Differences Between Buddhism and Christianity

Heaven is Free

Growing Through Prayer

Flying with God

Resting with God

Miracles are Free

About the Author Patsy Oda became a Christian as a child, but was raised in a Buddhist family. Growing up, she was told that all religions ultimately led to the same place, and that Buddhism and Christianity were basically the same. She has observed Buddhists and Christians for 56 years and has researched facts about Buddhism and Christianity for over 40 years. “Differences Between Buddhism and Christianity” was written out of her deep concern that multitudes of sincere people follow their religions *assuming that all religions lead to a good place*. Her autobiography Heart’s Desire contains the account of her childhood decision to follow Jesus.