

GOD – PART 1

QUESTIONS

- 1. Define/Describe God as you understand.**
- 2. Thinking back, how did you learn about God? From your parents? From reading?**
- 3. In the sermon, I talk about how different religions understand God? What is your opinion of these views? Any that you agree with? Any that you strongly agree with?**

Hinduism and its beliefs

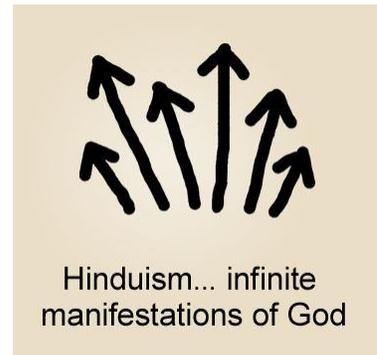
Most Hindus worship one Being of ultimate oneness (Brahman) through infinite representations of gods and goddesses. These various deities become incarnate within idols, temples, gurus, rivers, animals, etc.

Hindus believe their position in this present life was determined by their actions in a previous life. Hinduism therefore provides a possible explanation for suffering and evil in this life. If a person's behavior before was evil, they might justifiably experience tremendous hardships in this life.

Pain, disease, poverty or a disaster like a flood is deserved by that person because of their own evil actions, usually from a previous lifetime.

A Hindu's goal is to become free from the law of karma...to be free from continuous reincarnations. Only the soul matters which will one day be free of the cycle of rebirths and be at rest.

Hinduism lets a person choose how to work toward spiritual perfection. There are three possible ways to end this cycle of karma: 1. Be lovingly devoted to any of the Hindu deities; 2. Grow in knowledge through meditation of Brahman (oneness)...to realize that circumstances in life are not real, that selfhood is an illusion and only Brahman is real; 3. Be dedicated to various religious ceremonies and rites.



New Age Spirituality and its beliefs

New Age Spirituality promotes the development of the person's own power or divinity. When referring to deity, a follower of this type of spirituality is not talking about a transcendent, personal God who created the universe, but is referring to a higher consciousness within themselves. A person pursuing spiritual development would see themselves as deity, the cosmos, the universe. In fact, everything that the person sees, hears, feels or imagines is to be considered divine.



Highly eclectic, New Age Spirituality is a collection of ancient spiritual traditions, taught by a vast array of speakers, books and seminars. It acknowledges many gods and goddesses, as in Hinduism. The Earth is viewed as the source of all spirituality, and has its own intelligence, emotions and deity. But superseding all is self. Self is the originator, controller and power over all. There is no reality outside of what the person determines.

New Age teaches eastern mysticism and spiritual, metaphysical and psychic techniques, such as breathing exercises, chanting, drumming, meditating...to develop an altered consciousness and one's own divinity.

Anything negative a person experiences (failures, sadness, anger, selfishness, hurt) is considered an illusion. Believing themselves to be completely sovereign over their life, nothing about their life is wrong, negative or painful. Eventually, a person develops spiritually to the degree that there is no objective, external reality. A person, becoming a god, creates their own reality.

Buddhism and its beliefs

Buddhists do not worship any gods or God. People outside of Buddhism often think that Buddhists worship the Buddha. However, the Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama) never claimed to be divine, but rather he is viewed by Buddhists as having attained what they are also striving to attain, which is spiritual enlightenment and, with it, freedom from the continuous cycle of life and death.

Most Buddhists believe a person has countless rebirths, which inevitably include suffering. A Buddhist seeks to end these rebirths. Buddhists believe it is a person's cravings, aversion and delusion that cause these rebirths. Therefore, the goal of a Buddhist is to purify one's heart and to let go of all yearnings toward sensual desires and the attachment to oneself.

Buddhists follow a list of religious principles and adhere to personal restraint, fasting and very dedicated meditation. When a Buddhist meditates it is not the same as praying or focusing on a god, it is more of a self-discipline. Through practiced meditation, a person may reach Nirvana -- "the blowing out" of the flame of desire.

Buddhism provides something that is true of most major religions: disciplines, values and directives that a person may want to live by.

Islam and its beliefs

Muslims believe there is the one almighty God, named Allah, who is infinitely superior to and transcendent from humankind. Allah is viewed as the creator of the universe and the source of all good and all evil. Everything that happens is Allah's will. He is a powerful and strict judge, who will be merciful toward followers depending on the sufficiency of their life's good works and religious devotion. A follower's relationship with Allah is as a servant to Allah.

Though a Muslim honors several prophets, Muhammad is considered the last prophet, and his words and lifestyle are that person's authority. To be a Muslim, one must follow five religious duties: 1. Repeat a creed about Allah and Muhammad; 2. Recite certain prayers in Arabic five times a day; 3. Give to the needy; 4. One month each year, fast from food, drink, sex and smoking from sunrise to sunset; 5.



Buddhism... believes
no god or gods exist



Islam... devoted to one
transcendent God

Pilgrimage once in one's lifetime to worship at a shrine in Mecca. At death -- based on one's faithfulness to these duties -- a Muslim hopes to enter Paradise. If not, they will be eternally punished in hell.

For many people, Islam matches their expectations about religion and deity. Islam teaches that there is one supreme deity, who is worshiped through good deeds and disciplined religious rituals. After death, a person is rewarded or punished according to their religious devotion. Muslims believe that giving up one's life for Allah is a sure way of entering Paradise.

God in Judaism has been conceived in a variety of ways. Traditionally, Judaism holds that Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the national god of the Israelites, delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, and gave them the Law of Moses at Mount Sinai as described in the Torah. Jews traditionally believe in a monotheistic conception of God (God is only one), which is both transcendent (wholly independent of, and removed from, the material universe) and immanent (involved in the material universe).

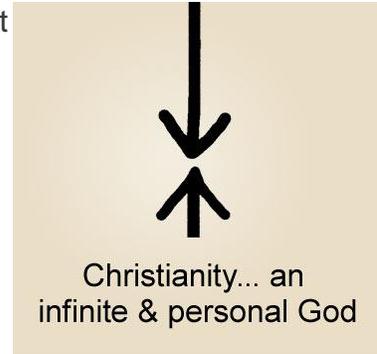
God in Jewish Religion

God is conceived as unique and perfect, free from all faults, deficiencies, and defects, and further held to be omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, and completely infinite in all of his attributes, who has no partner or equal, being the sole creator of everything in existence. In Judaism, God is never portrayed in any image. The Torah specifically forbade ascribing partners to share his singular sovereignty, as he is considered to be the absolute one without a second, indivisible, and incomparable being, who is similar to nothing and nothing is comparable to him. Thus, God is unlike anything in or of the world as to be beyond all forms of human thought and expression. The names of God used most often in the Hebrew Bible are the Tetragrammaton (Hebrew: יהוה, romanized: YHWH) and Elohim. Other names of God in traditional Judaism include El-Elyon, El Shaddai, and Shekhinah.

Christianity and its beliefs

Christians believe in one eternal God who is creator of all that is. He is viewed as a loving God who offers everyone a personal relationship with himself now in this life.

In his life on Earth, Jesus Christ did not identify himself as a prophet pointing to God or as a teacher of enlightenment. Rather, Jesus claimed to be God in human form. He performed miracles, forgave people of their sin and said that anyone who believed in him would have eternal life.



Followers of Jesus regard the Bible as God's written message to humankind. In addition to being a historical record of Jesus' life and miracles, the Bible reveals his personality, his love and truth, and how one can know and relate to God, as you could a friend.

Christians believe that all people sin, including themselves. They see Jesus as their Savior, as the Messiah who was prophesied by all the prophets of the Old Testament, in the Bible. They believe that Jesus Christ, out of love for us, paid for the sin of all of humanity by dying on a cross. Three days later, he rose from the dead as he promised, proving his deity.