

# Comparative Religions: Buddhism



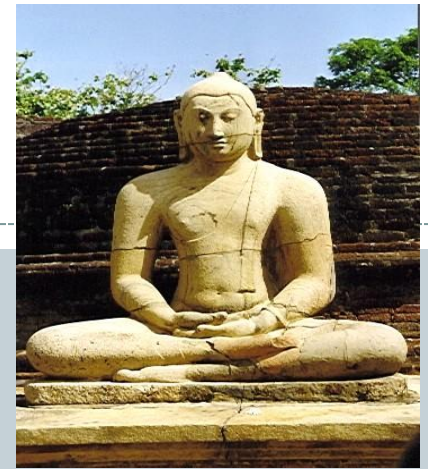
AUBURN ALLIANCE CHURCH  
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# Who is Buddha?



Hotei – representative of contentment within Buddhism

# Foundations of Buddhism



- Born Siddhartha Gautama in 563 B.C.E.
- Raised in great luxury; sheltered
- Experienced “Four Sights”: Age, Sickness, Death & Life seeking Meaning
- Rejected the life of luxury to seek enlightenment and the solution to suffering
- Followed a strict ascetic lifestyle for six years
- Rejected the extremes of Hindu asceticism; claims an awakening at age 35
- “Middle Way” is neither self-indulgence nor self-denial

# How is Buddhism Different?



## Buddhism rejects...

- Authority of the ancient Vedic texts
- The Vedic caste system
- The Vedic and Hindu deities
- The efficacy of Vedic worship and ritual
- The concept of Brahman (Universal Oneness of Creation)
- The concept of Atman (soul)
- The practice of strict asceticism and withdrawal from the world (preferring the “middle way”)
- Vegetarianism as a requirement

# What do Buddhists Believe?



- Rebirth (reincarnation) results from attachments (karma)
- Nirvana is a peaceful, detached state of mind
- Achieving Nirvana means escape from the cycle of rebirth

*Once Gautama Buddha died, after 80 years of life in this world, having achieved Nirvana and teaching multitudes his way of life, he ceased to exist as a distinct being.*

- Buddhism is non-theistic: Buddha is *not* the god of Buddhism – just a revered teacher

# Four Noble Truths



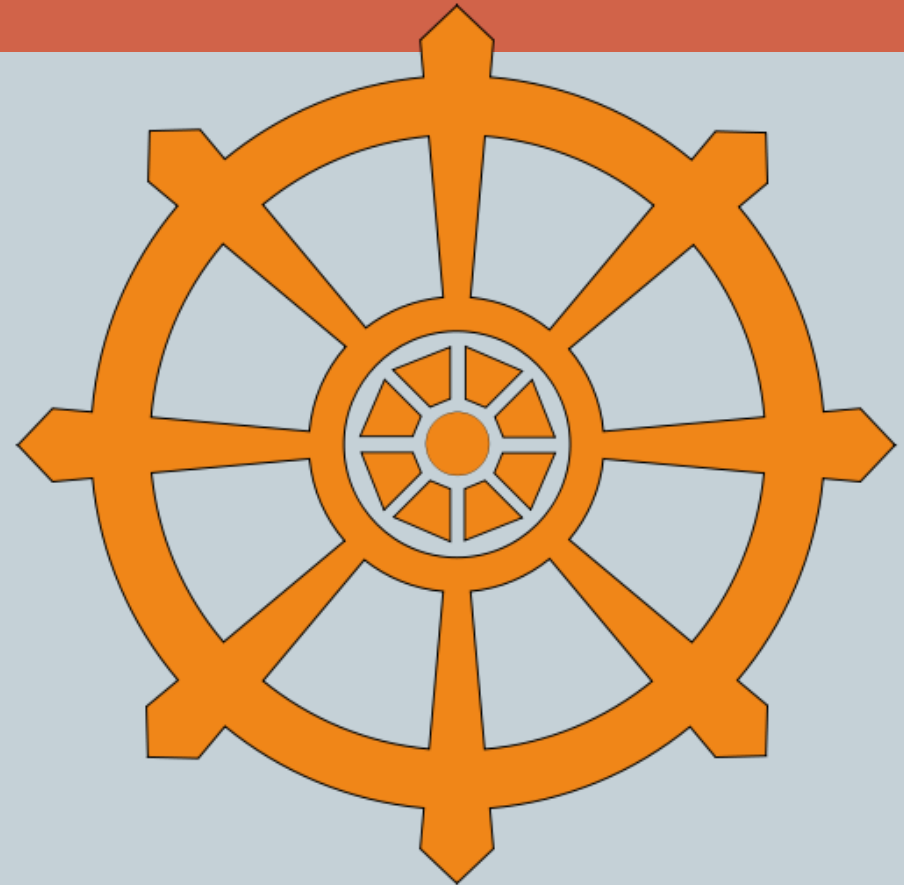
1. Life inevitably involves suffering, is imperfect and unsatisfactory.
2. Suffering originates in our desires.
3. Suffering will cease if all desires cease; the achievement of Nirvana
4. There way to reach Nirvana is found within the Noble Eightfold Path.



# The Noble Eightfold Path

- A. Wisdom
- B. Ethical Conduct
- C. Discipline

1. Right understanding
2. Right thinking
3. Right speech
4. Right action
5. Right livelihood
6. Right effort
7. Right mindfulness
8. Right meditation



The dharma wheel – representative

# Schools of Buddhism - Theravada



## The “Way of the Elders”

- **Oldest school of Buddhism**
- **Found in southern Asia (Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, etc.)**
- **Monasticism is the ideal life for achieving *Nirvana***
- **A “do-it-yourself” approach to enlightenment**
- **Focus on wisdom and meditation**
- **Goal is to become a *Buddha***
- **Fairly unified in belief & practice (some cultural differences)**



# Schools of Buddhism - Mahayana



## The “Great Vehicle” – “People’s Buddhism”

- Developed first century C.E.
- Found in Northern Asia (China, Japan, etc.)
- Lay Buddhism – Buddhism “for the masses”
- Devotional – seek guidance from *Bodhisattvas* (“wise beings”) & heavenly *Buddhas*
- Focus on compassion
- Goal is to become a *bodhisattva* and assist others toward enlightenment (the “*Bodhisattva Ideal*”)

# Schools of Buddhism - Tibetan

## Vajrayana - “The Diamond Vehicle”

- Developed 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E.
- A mix of Theravada & Mahayana:
  - Rituals (*Tantra*):
  - ***Bodhisattvas*, namely the Dalai Lama – 14th reincarnation of Avalokiteshvara (compassion)**
  - Meditation, monasticism, wisdom & compassion
- *Bardo Thodol* -Tibetan Book of the Dead



# Schools of Buddhism –Zen



## The “meditation” school:

- Lay and monastic
- Seeks sudden enlightenment through meditation, arriving at emptiness and the “Buddha Nature”
- **Incorporates Daoism – seeking harmony with nature and balance in life (yin & yang)**
- Use of meditation masters
- Koans (paradoxical riddles to confound reason)
- Beauty, arts & aesthetics – gardens, archery, the tea ceremony, calligraphy, etc.



	<b>Buddhism</b>	<b>Christianity</b>
God	Abstract “voidness”; unknowable	Personal, self-existent, changeless
Humanity	The self is an illusion to be escaped	Made in God’s image; exist beyond death
Man’s Problem	Suffering brought on by the desire of that which is temporary	Suffering b/c of the consequence of sin; separating us from God
The Solution	Cease desire, recognize the nonexistence of self	Forgiveness by and reconciliation with God
The Means	Self-reliance: accrue karmic merit	Reliance on the work of Christ
Outcome	Nirvana – end of self (Bodhisattva)	Eternal fellowship with loving & personal God

# Suggestions for Evangelism



Acknowledge common ground – wisdom & conduct

- *Desire can cause suffering*
- *Self discipline does have spiritual value*
- *Meditation and prayer are important*
- *Compassion is a virtue that should be nurtured*

# Suggestions for Evangelism



Pick up on the issue of desire – righteousness

- *Right desire vs. elimination of desire*
- *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” (Matt. 5:6)*

# Suggestions for Evangelism



Be open about your faith in a personal God

- *The Void of Buddhism cannot hear or answer prayer,*
- *...or empathize with suffering,*
- *...or love us.*

# Suggestions for Evangelism



## Point to aspects of God's permanence

- *Void: end of existence as individuals*
- *Salvation: joining intimate relationship*
- *“Food” and “water” passages – permanence*
  - *John 6:27-29 – food that endures*
  - *John 4:13 – living water to end thirst*

# Suggestions for Evangelism



## Be clear about sin & the opportunity for forgiveness

- *Buddhist sila*
  - Killing any form of life
  - Stealing
  - Sexual immorality
  - Lying
  - Ingestion of intoxicants
- *No forgiver*

- Vertical dimension to sin
- Because God is personal:*
- Concern about sin
  - Able to forgive
- Because God is faithful:*
- We can trust

# Cultural Concerns



- Place within fields of counseling, psychology, pain management (natural therapies)
- Proposed harmony with other faiths, including Christianity
- Gateway entry for young people into dualism
- “Americanized” Buddhism