

The Gospel and Other Religions

Goals of the Series

- ❖ To submit fully to the teaching from God's Word
- ❖ To discover what God's Word says about modern controversial topics
- ❖ How are we as Christians to engage with each of these topics
- ❖ Become equipped to take the Gospel in the culture

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. - Romans 12:1-2

"I believe that one reason why the church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the church Put your finger on any prosperous page in the Church's history, and [you] will find a little marginal note [that says]: 'In this age [people] could readily see where the Church began and where the world ended.' Never were there good times when the Church and the world were joined in marriage with one another." Charles Spurgeon

The Word is my only source of authority.

- ❖ A preacher's authority is NOT personal.
- ❖ A preacher's authority is NOT organizational.
- ❖ A preacher's authority is NOT intellectual.
- ❖ A preacher's authority is NOT psychological.
- ❖ A preacher's authority is NOT experiential.
- ❖ A preacher's authority is ONLY biblical.

Goals of this particular night

- ❖ Have a right understanding of Christianity and the Gospel
- ❖ Have a right understanding of other major world religions
- ❖ Have a right understanding of Christian cults that exist
- ❖ Understand the urgency to proclaim the Gospel to all people

Questions/concerns/challenges we face regarding this issue

- ❖ Out of 7.8 billion people on the planet, approx. 1.9 billion claim to be Christian (evangelicals, Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah's witness), 1.7 billion claim to be of the Islam faith, 1.6 billion claim to be atheist

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- ❖ A recent study from *NPR* believes that the Muslim population will outnumber Christians in the next few decades. It is currently the fastest growing religion
- ❖ According to *PewForum.org*, in the United States, Christianity and church attendance is on the rapid decline, while un-affiliation with any religion is greatly rising
- ❖ “Aren’t all religions basically the same?”
- ❖ Why can’t we just all “coexist?”

Gospel Foundations

- ❖ There is one God, and He is our gracious Creator

Genesis 1:1 - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Deuteronomy 4:39 - Today, recognize and keep in mind that the Lord is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other.

- ❖ Everything in creation was created by Him and for Him

Colossians 1:16 - For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things have been created through him and for him

- ❖ He is holy and He is our Judge, which makes us accountable to Him

Revelation 4:8 - Each of the four living creatures had six wings; they were covered with eyes around and inside. Day and night they never stop, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come.

Psalms 7:8 - The Lord judges the peoples; vindicate me, Lord, according to my righteousness and my integrity.

Romans 2:6-11 - He will repay each one according to his works: eternal life to those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality; but wrath and anger to those who are self-seeking and disobey the truth while obeying unrighteousness. There will be affliction and distress for every human being who does evil, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does what is good, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. For there is no favoritism with God.

- ❖ God made man and woman wonderfully and uniquely, in His own image

Genesis 1:26-27 - Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth." So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.

- ❖ All human beings became morally evil and corrupted by sin.

Genesis 3:6-7 - The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

John 8:34 - Jesus responded, "Truly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.

- ❖ All human beings are born choosing sin rather than choosing God

Romans 1:18-20 - For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, 19 since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse.

Psalm 51:5 - Indeed, I was guilty when I was born; I was sinful when my mother conceived me.

- ❖ All human beings became separate from God, are guilty before God, and deserve death

Isaiah 59:2 - But your iniquities are separating you from your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not listen.

- ❖ We are spiritually dead (Do not miss this)

Romans 5:12 - Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned

- ❖ Human rebellion rightly provokes the wrath of God and deserves His eternal condemnation

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- ❖ How can God express His holiness without consuming us in our sin?
- ❖ How can God express His love without condoning us in our sin?
- ❖ How can God judge sin and justify the sinner at the same time?
- ❖ How can God satisfy Himself and save us at the same time?

*“You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary” -
Jonathan Edwards*

- ❖ Jesus alone is able to remove our sin and restore us to God

1 Timothy 2:5-6 - For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time.

- ❖ Jesus lived a life we could not live

1 John 3:5 - You know that he was revealed so that he might take away sins, and there is no sin in him.

- ❖ Jesus died the death we deserve to die

1 Peter 2:24 - He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

- ❖ The essence of sin:

- Man substitutes himself for God.
- Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be.

- ❖ The essence of salvation:

- God substitutes Himself for man.
- God sacrifices Himself for man and puts Himself where only man deserves to be.

- ❖ We are saved both by God and from God

- ❖ God calls all people in all nations to repent and believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins

Luke 24:45-47 - Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. He also said to them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead the third day, and repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

- ❖ This involves turning from all sin, and submitting to the Christ's Lordship

Galatians 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- ❖ All who have faith in Jesus will be reconciled to God forever

Ephesians 2:4-7 - But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace! He also raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

- ❖ God only made one way to reconciliation and one way only

1 Timothy 2:5-6 - For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time.

- ❖ In Christ, we experience a new life, with a new heart, mind, and attitude through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!

Titus 3:4-7 - But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, he saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy—through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. He poured out his Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior so that, having been justified by his grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life.

John 16:8-14 - When he comes, he will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment: About sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; and about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. "I still have many things to tell you, but you can't bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. For he will not speak on his own, but he will speak whatever he hears. He will also declare to you what is to come. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you.

- ❖ Gospel-centered faith will lead to a Gospel-centered lifestyle

Matthew 5:16 - In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

- ❖ Heaven is a glorious reality for those who trust Jesus, and hell is a dreadful reality for those who die without Christ

Phil. 3:20-21 - Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of his glorious body, by the power that enables him to subject everything to himself

Rev. 20:11-15 - Then I saw a great white throne and one seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books. Then the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them; each one was judged according to their works. Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

- ❖ No one decides to "make Jesus Lord of their life." He already is! The only question is "will I submit to His Lordship?"

Philippians 2:9-11 - For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2 Corinthians 4:1-6 - Therefore, since we have this ministry because we were shown mercy, we do not give up. Instead, we have renounced secret and shameful things, not acting deceitfully or distorting the word of God, but commending ourselves before God to everyone's conscience by an open display of the truth. But if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case, the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we are not proclaiming ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus's sake. For God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

❖ We have to say something

2 Peter 3:7 - By the same word, the present heavens and earth are stored up for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

➤ Who are the "ungodly?"

The Gospel and other Religions

❖ We're not here to win arguments, but to win souls.

The Gospel and Buddhism

❖ Brief History

- Founded in the 4th or 5th century BC by Siddhartha Guatama, a young prince from Northern India, who came to be known as Buddha
- Guatama noted the materialism of his upbringing contrasted with the suffering, sickness, and death all around him.
- This led his pursuit to find the cause of suffering and the cure for suffering.
- After 40 days of meditating, he reached "Enlightenment" and taught others this path until his death
- Two major sects of Buddhism
 - Theravada Buddhism
 - Buddha was simply a wise teacher
 - Enlightenment is available to the few after many reincarnations
 - Mahayana Buddhism
 - Buddha was an eternal savior
 - Enlightenment is available to many now

❖ What do they believe?

- All is One
 - Balance of opposites is highest goal in life
 - Good and evil must be balanced
 - No such thing as individuality
 - One does not learn from Buddha, one becomes Buddha\
- Four Noble Truths
 - Dukkha - Everyone suffers in life
 - Samudaya - The cause of suffering is selfish desire
 - Nirodha - Suffering ends when we overcome our desires
 - Freedom from suffering comes from Buddha's 8-fold path
 - Right views
 - Right intent
 - Right speech
 - Right conduct
 - Right livelihood
 - Right effort
 - Right mindfulness
 - Right concentration/meditation
- Cycle of life
 - Reincarnation

"For every event that occurs, there will follow another event whose existence was caused by the first, and this second event will be pleasant or unpleasant according as its cause was skillful or unskillful." – Buddha

- Enlightenment (nirvana)
 - Salvation comes through self-effort

"Those who, either now or after I am dead, shall be lamps unto themselves, relying upon themselves only and not relying upon any external help, but holding fast to the truth as their lamp, and seeking their salvation in the truth alone, and shall not look for assistance to any one besides themselves, it is they...who shall reach the very topmost height!" - Buddha, The Buddha's Farewell

- Liberated from suffering and absorbed into reality

- ❖ How does it compare to Christianity?
 - Some similarities

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John 16:33 - I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.

- Buddhism denies existence of personal God, distinct from Creation

Genesis 1:1 - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:31 - God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed.

- Buddhism teaches illusion of self

Genesis 1:27 - So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.

- Buddhism teaches salvation through work and self-reliance

Ephesians 2:8-9 - For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast.

- A Buddhist's goal is elimination of desires

John 6:35 - "I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again.

John 10:10 - A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.

❖ How do I share the Gospel with them?

- Focus on Redeemer who conquers all evil
 - Emphasize cause of evil (Genesis 3)
 - Proclaim the forgiver of sin
- Be patient
 - Define all words/terms
 - "God" is NOT eternal buddha
 - "Sin" is NOT bad karma
 - "Eternal Life" is NOT nirvana
 - "Born again" is NOT a bad thing
 - Ask questions
- Focus on renewal on all things

Romans 8:18-22 - For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. For the creation eagerly waits with anticipation for God's sons to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to futility—not willingly, but because of him who subjected it—in the hope that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of God's children. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now

The Gospel and Hinduism

- ❖ Brief History
 - “Hindu” refers to land and inhabitants surrounding the Indus river near India
 - Does not have a single founding figure
 - Mainly passed down through oral tradition from as early as 2000 BC
- ❖ What do they believe?
 - Very complex and diverse
 - No one set of religious text
 - Earliest set of sacred writings is the Vedas
 - Samhitas: praise songs to the gods.
 - Brahmans: guide to the priests, outlining rituals and prayers.
 - Aranyakas: instructions on how to worship and meditate.
 - Upanishads (including the Bhagavad Gita): mythical stories and philosophical teachings.
 - ◆ Bhagavad Gita
 - Most well-known text
 - Essence of Hindu devotional teachings
 - Mainly pantheism mixed with polytheism
 - Pantheism: God is everything, everything is God
 - one impersonal god - Brahman
 - Polytheism - Many gods
 - Three chief manifestation - Brahma (creator god), Vishnu (preserving god), and Shiva (destroying god)
 - ◆ From these three come manifestations of millions of other gods
 - ◆ Shakti - feminine representative of Brahman
 - Dharma
 - individual works
 - duty, law, order, virtue, justice, morality, etc.
 - Lifestyle will determine which caste you will belong to in next life
 - System of castes due to cycle of “Samsara” (reincarnation)
 - Brahmins: priests, genealogists, astrologers, traditional physicians.

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- Kshatriyas: rulers, leaders, warriors, nobles.
- Vaisyas: record keepers, shopkeepers, moneylenders, goldsmiths.
- Shudras: slaves, laborers, artisans, carpenters, tailors, blacksmiths.
- Dalits: untouchables (technically no caste; subhuman).
- Worship is individualistic, not necessarily congregational
- Karma
 - Whatever someone has, is ultimately result of past life
 - Goal is to live good enough to reach “Moksha” (Ultimate Reality), where believer’s human spirit is reunited with Brahman
 - Achieved through:
 - ◆ Yoga (clear the mind and connect to Brahman)
 - ◆ Mantras (prayers and chants)
 - ◆ Ritual Bathing in rivers with cleansing powers
 - ◆ Festivals expressing devotion to gods
- ❖ How does it compare to Christianity?
 - Hinduism teaches there are millions of gods, each worthy of worship
 - Each Hindu god is an avatar/manifestation of the supreme God

Malachi 3:6 - Because I, the Lord, have not changed...

John 1:1 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

- Hinduism teaches many paths leading to one reality

John 14:6 - Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

- Hindus must uphold entire “law” perfectly to move up in system

Romans 3:10-12 - There is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one.

- There is no grace. Each person is rewarded or punished for their good and bad “dharma”

2 Corinthians 5:21 - He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

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- The “Dalits” are subhuman, and unworthy of any recognition, or honor, or love.

Matthew 25:40 - “And the King will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

1 Corinthians 1:28-30 - God has chosen what is insignificant and despised in the world—what is viewed as nothing—to bring to nothing what is viewed as something, so that no one may boast in his presence. It is from him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom from God for us—our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption

❖ How do I share the Gospel with them?

- Define sin
 - Sin is NOT a violation of social norms or offense against one’s own caste
 - Sin is primarily an offense against God
- Proclaim the unique nature of Christ, our mediator
- Proclaim the exclusivity of Christ
- Emphasize the forgiveness of sins in Christ

Matthew 11:28 - Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

The Gospel and Islam

❖ To be clear...

- MYTH #1 - All Muslims are terrorists who hate America
 - TRUTH – Most are very happy and friendly
- MYTH #2 - All Muslims hate Jesus
 - TRUTH – Most have respect and reverence for Jesus who does appear in the Quran

❖ Brief History

- Muhammed, born in 570 AD, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, is most famous prophet of God (Allah)
- Raised by his uncle, a caravan tradesmen after his father, mother, and grandfather passed away

- At age 25, Muhammed married a wealthy widow named Khadija, a wealthy traveling merchant
- Scholars believe that these two people had profound effect on Muhammed's life by introducing him to inaccurate Biblical accounts on their travels
- At age 40, had a vision of the angel Gabriel visiting him in a cave near Mecca, which began a twenty three year period of receiving the revelation of the Quran, the Islamic holy book
- After years of rejection, persecution, warfare, and death of wife and uncle, fled from Mecca to Yathrib. His traveling, called the "hegira" marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar
- Married multiple women and became the city's religious and political leader
- Led an army back to Mecca, where he took control of the city, destroyed the idols, and declared Kaaba (the main temple in Mecca) to be the holy shrine of in Islam (the place toward which all devout Muslims direct their prayers today)
- Muhammed died in 632 which led to division
 - Sunni's
 - Believed successors should be chosen by consensus/election
 - Shiite's
 - Believed successors should be from Muhammed's descendants
- Other branches of Islam
 - Sufis
 - Large mystical tradition
 - Nation of Islam
 - African American political and religious movement
 - modern Western ethnocentric religion
 - Not recognized by orthodox Muslims as an authentic Islamic tradition
- ❖ What do they believe?
 - Central Islamic creed: "There is no god but Allah and Muhammed is his prophet." (NOTE: Muhammed is NOT God)
 - Qur'an
 - Muhammed's recitations
 - Written by one human author, Uthman, after Muhammed's death
 - Earthly version of heavenly book
 - Holy book that supersedes all other previous books, which have been corrupted
 - Supplemental Texts
 - Hadiths
 - Oral traditions, teachings, and stories based on life of Muhammed
 - All sects of Islam have their own version of these
 - Shariah

- Legal interpretations of Muslim teachings that prescribe religious and secular duties
- Disputes of practical application between different sects
- Five Pillars
 - Shahada: The Confession of Faith
 - The confession and belief of the central Islamic statement
 - ◆ “There is no god but Allah and Muhammed is his prophet.”
 - Salat: Prayers
 - Recitation of prayers five times a day
 - Includes: standing, bowing, prostrating, and sitting
 - Often promoted by a call to prayer (Adhan) over loudspeaker in many places around the world
 - Shows their devotion and submission to Allah
 - Zakat: Giving
 - Required to give at least 2.5% of income to religious officials or local mosque for the purpose of helping the poor and needy in community, maintain religious meeting place, and furthering of the message of Islam
 - Sawm: Fasting
 - Muslims must abstain from eating and drinking from sunrise to sunset throughout Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar
 - Fast is broken at sundown each night with special meal (Iftar)
 - This commemorates the month when Muhammed received his first revelation
 - Hajj: The Pilgrimage
 - Every Muslim who is able (physically and financially) must make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once during his or her lifetime
 - Number of ritual practices must be done during pilgrimage
 - One of most important is walking counter-clockwise around Kaaba (sacred shrine considered to be holiest spot on earth) seven times
- Humans are spiritually neutral and weak, but not fallen
 - Man’s greatest need is instruction, not salvation
- Islam does not need a savior, but rather has many prophets
 - Jesus is considered to be a prophet
- Redemption is based on the freedom of Allah’s will
 - Person can atone for their sins based on devotion to Allah, repentance of sins, and good works
- The faithful life leads to Paradise (Jannah)
 - Only Allah determines if a Muslim is worthy to enter paradise

*“By Allah, though I am the Apostle of Allah, yet I do not know what Allah will do to me.” -
Hadith 5.266*

- The unfaithful life leads to hellfire (Jahannam)
- ❖ How does it compare to Christianity?
 - God reveals Himself/His Law through the revelations of the prophet Muhammed

Hebrews 1:1-4 - Long ago God spoke to our ancestors by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. God has appointed him heir of all things and made the universe through him. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. So he became superior to the angels, just as the name he inherited is more excellent than theirs.

- Jesus was merely a great prophet

Colossians 3:15-17 - He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and by him all things hold together

- Jesus did not die on a cross

“They slew him not nor crucified, but it appeared so unto them.” - Qur’an 4:157

- Some Muslims believe that Allah took Jesus to heaven just before the crucifixion because it is unthinkable that an approved prophet of God should face such a humiliating defeat.
- Other Muslims believe that Jesus was taken down from the cross in a coma and that
- Strong devotion to God helps atone for your sins

Ephesians 2:8-10 - For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

- ❖ How do I share the Gospel with them?
 - Focus on the unity infallibility (not wrong) of the Scriptures
 - Multiple authors

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- Different languages, continents, time periods
- Textual criticism - the study of finding what the primary text said by studying all variants of written copies
- If all religious text have been corrupted, how was God able to keep the Quran free from corruption?
- Focus on what the Bible teaches about God
 - His Triune nature
 - His personal nature
 - His revelatory nature
 - His redemption nature
 - His regenerate nature
- Atonement and Assurance
 - Jesus Christ alone is the atoning sacrifice for our sins
 - Our adoption into His family means there is no room for doubt if we will be saved

The Gospel and Cults

- ❖ What is a cult? - Groups which claim to be in harmony with Christianity but deny foundational Christian doctrines

❖ Mormonism

- Brief History
 - Based on the teachings of Joseph Smith, the first President and Prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
 - Had first vision at age fourteen where God told him every sect of Christianity is wrong
 - In 1823, an the angel “Moroni” visited him and told him of two golden plates written in hieroglyphics
 - Smith translated the plates using two reading crystals (Urim and Thummin)
 - Smith would put his face in a hat and peer through the stones and the English translation would appear before his eyes

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- The result was the Book of Mormon, contained the story of lost Israelites who migrated to America in the 6th century BC and were killed in battle in 428 AD.
- Smith continued to receive visions throughout his life, each telling him to live in different parts of the country
- He instated polygamy, based on the belief that Jesus had many wives
- He and his brother were arrested in 1844 and ultimately killed
- This led to a split in the faith
 - A small group of Josephites became the Reorganized Church, located in Missouri
 - Another group, led by the new successor, President, and prophet, Brigham Young to Utah, and founded Salt Lake City
- What do they believe?
 - Continued authoritative revelation
 - *Book of Mormon*
 - *Doctrine and Covenants*
 - ◆ Revelations and inspired declarations from 1830-1978 AD
 - *Pearls and Great Price*
 - ◆ Revelations, translations, and writings of Joseph Smith
 - *KJV Holy Bible* (not inerrant or sufficient)
 - Personal revelation
 - ◆ Can superset previous revelation from God
 - ◆ Can only be brought forward by Mormon President
 - God was once man but progressed to godhood
 - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are 3 distinct gods
 - Thousands of gods exist
 - Prior to creation, many gods inhabited worlds and planets
 - Men and women are spirit sons and daughters of God
 - We left our heavenly home, took on human bodies, and are now working to progress to godhead
 - Jesus is firstborn spirit child of the heavenly Father and heavenly Mother
 - Jesus progressed to deity in the spirit world
 - Jesus died on a cross to enable us to return to our original state
 - Grace and various works ultimately save you
 - Baptism
 - Moral lifestyle (abstain from tobacco, coffee, alcohol, drugs, etc.)
 - Various rituals
 - Once body is reunited with spirit, one of four destinations await
 - Celestial Glory
 - ◆ Highest level: Married Mormons who have kept laws and commandments and participated in rituals

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- Become gods who inhabit their own planets
- ◆ Lower level: Single Mormons who lived worthy lives as well as good people who didn't have a chance on earth to hear about or accept Mormonism
- Terrestrial Glory
 - ◆ Non-Mormons that live good lives, or unworthy Mormons
- Telesstial Glory
 - ◆ Those who reject Mormonism and continue to sin
 - ◆ They serve God but cannot come into His presence

NOTE: one can move up in levels after death if one receives Mormon ordinances vicariously on earth

- Outer Darkness
 - ◆ Those that apostatize (abandon) Mormonism
- How does it break off from Christianity?
 - Multiple Scriptures and multiple teachings

2 Peter 1:20-21 - Above all, you know this: No prophecy of Scripture comes from the prophet's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

- Anyone can aspire to be God
 - God is unchanging

Exodus 3:14 - God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM

- God of the Bible alone is the one true God

Psalm 96:5 - For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

- How do I share the Gospel with them?
 - Focus on the infallibility (not wrong), inerrancy (without error), and authority of Scripture

Revelation 22:18-19 - I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will

take away his share of the tree of life and the holy city, which are written about in this book.

- Define key theological terms
- Focus on the Bible's teaching of the Gospel

❖ **Jehovah's Witness**

➤ Brief History

- Started by Charles Tase Russell in 1872
- Russell grew up in church, but questioned many Christian doctrine including the Trinity and eternal punishment
- In 1879, Russell co-published his doctrine and teachings in The Herald of the Morning magazine, which he took over and renamed The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom
- In 1881, he started his own publishing company called "The Watchtower Bible," which is still in effect to this day
 - Published 16 million books by time of Russel's death in 1916
 - Claims to have a circulation of 42 million copies of each issue of The Watchtower
- Russel claimed the Bible could only be understood according to his interpretations
 - Believed the Bible became corrupted after the 3rd and 4th century

➤ What do they believe?

- God's true name is Jehovah
- There is one God
 - Jesus was created as a lesser god
 - The Holy Spirit is a force, not a person
- Use only the "New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures"

John 1:1, New World Translation - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, **and the Word was a god.**"

- Jesus is the archangel Michael before the world existed
 - His resurrected was spiritual, not physical
 - His second coming occurred spiritually and invisibly in 1914
- Body and soul inseparable
 - Once body dies, soul dies as well
 - No eternal punishment
- 144,000 faithful JW's will go to heaven

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- Remainder of JW's will remain on earth
- All other non-believers will be resurrected and given second chance to become a JW
- Anyone who still doesn't believe will be annihilated
- How does it break off from Christianity?
 - Jesus is not God
 - Holy Spirit is not God
 - Hell is not a real place. God simply annihilates souls of unrighteous

Revelation 14:10-11 - He will also drink the wine of God's wrath, which is poured full strength into the cup of his anger. He will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the sight of the holy angels and in the sight of the Lamb, and the smoke of their torment will go up forever and ever.

- How do I share the Gospel with them?
 - Discuss Scripture
 - Consider JW's own Biblical interpretation of Jesus

John 1:3, New World Translation "All things came into existence through him, and apart from him not even one thing came into existence."

- Consider two categories:
 - ◆ All things that NEVER came into being: God
 - ◆ All things that CAME into being: all created things
- If Jesus caused all created things to come into existence, then He must have existed before all created things came into existence.
 - ◆ Therefore, the Word could not have been created.
 - ◆ If Jesus created everything that has come into being, and Jesus also came into being (as Jehovah's Witnesses claim), then that would mean Jesus created Himself.
 - ◆ He would have to exist as Creator before He existed as a created thing, which is impossible.
 - ◆ Therefore, Jesus can't be labeled "All things that came into being."
 - ◆ If Jesus can't be placed with created things, then He must go with uncreated things, identifying Jesus as the uncreated Creator.
 - ◆ Therefore, Jesus is God.

❖ Christian Science

- Brief History

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- In 1864, Mary Baker Eddy visited mentalist Phineas Quimby for instruction in principles of divine mind or matter for physical healing
- In 1866, she injured herself when she slipped on ice and hit her head. She was given a few days to live
- Reading about the paralyzed man in Matthew 9 and applying metaphysical principles of mind over matter, Baker claimed to experience complete healing
- In 1875, Baker founded Christian Science Publishing Society and began circulating copies
- In 1879, Baker founded Church of Christ, Science
- What do they believe?
 - The human mind and human intelligence is God
 - One God
 - Rejection of trinity
 - God is a philosophical universal principle
 - If God is perfect, then man must be perfect
 - Sin is an illusion
 - If we are taught there is such a thing as sin, sickness, and death, then we will be subject to the illusion of these things
 - If we acknowledge these things do not exist, then we will be set free from them
 - Jesus only appeared to die, escaping death, by exhibiting the supreme act of mind over matter
 - His disciples were to follow his example
- How does it break off from Christianity?
 - Jesus was not God
 - Crucifixion was unnecessary to atone for sins
 - Sin, misery, and death are unnecessary and an illusion

1 John 1:8 - If we say, "We have no sin," we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

- How do I share the Gospel with them?
 - Focus on the Bible's teaching of sin, misery, and death
 - If God created all and All is God, where did evil originate from?
 - If sin and sickness don't exist, why believe that healing can be achieved by prayer?
 - Focus on what the Gospel teaches about Christ
 - If Jesus claims to have died in Scriptures, why deny that He truly died?

❖ The Gospel and Atheism/Agnosticism/Secularism

➤ Brief History

- In the 18th century, authors, scientists, and philosophers during the Enlightenment period, proclaimed reason and individualism, over religious tradition
- In 1859, Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of the Species* providing scientific proof for a lack of Creator
- Soon after, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche published his work on anti-theistic philosophy, using the phrase “God is dead.”

“The design of the universe is very magnificent and shouldn’t be taken for granted. In fact, I believe that is why Einstein had so little use for organized religions, although he strikes me as a basically very religious man. He must have looked at what the Christians said about God and felt that they were blaspheming. He had seen much more majesty than they had ever imagined, and they were just not talking about the real thing. My guess is that he simply felt that religions he’d run across did not have proper respect for the author of the universe.” Charles Misner, on Albert Einstein

➤ What do they believe?

- Atheism
 - Denial of the existence of God
 - Materialistic theory of life
 - ◆ No ordered purpose in the world
 - Philosophical Naturalism
 - ◆ Affirms the natural.
 - ◆ Denies the supernatural.
 - ◆ Knowledge is gained by scientific inquiry into the natural, not simplistic appeal to the supernatural.
 - Ethics and morals are determined over time by results in culture.
 - ◆ Through human discovery.
 - ◆ Through human achievement.
 - ◆ Ethics and morals develop over time through progress in society.
- Agnosticism
 - Believe in God (or gods) but impossible to know for certain
- Secularism
 - Human reason is the ultimate authority
 - True wisdom comes free from any influence of the church or religion

➤ How does it compare to Christianity?

- There is no self-existing God
- There is no rhyme and reason to this world

Hebrews 1:3 - The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

- There is no need for special revelation, but all there is, is that with which we can see, hear, taste, touch, and smell
- How do I share the Gospel with them?
 - Create humble dialogue
 - “Tell me about the God you don’t believe in”
 - Cause honest questioning
 - “Can you prove God? Can you prove atheism?”
- Focus on issues of morality
 - Where do we get our sense of right and wrong?
 - Can good and evil exist apart from God?

Objections/Questions:

- ❖ Is Catholicism a false religion? Or a cult?
 - Neither
 - More closely related to a false teaching, due to misinterpretations of Biblical truth
 - Purgatory
 - Praying to Mary
 - Insufficiency of Scripture
 - Justification through works
 - Pope is the ultimate authority of church and holds same authority as Scripture
 - If Catholic upholds the teaching and obedience of Scripture, and not of Catholic tradition, a Catholic can be saved
- ❖ Is Joel Osteen, Bill Johnson, Steven Furtick, TD Jakes, everyone at Hillsong, or **insert whatever preacher's name here** a false teacher/prophet/cult leader/anti-Christ?
 - Don't just rely on judgment of “expert”
 - Listen carefully for yourself
 - Examine their teachings in accordance with the Scripture

Acts 17:10-11 - As soon as it was night, the brothers and sisters sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. Upon arrival, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 The people here were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, since they received the word with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

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- “But our president, country’s leaders, CNN, Fox News said “ _____ ” about
insert religious group here
 - Study other religions wisely
 - Study God’s Word carefully
- ❖ Can Christians do yoga?
 - Understand that yoga has Hindu roots
 - Differentiate between stretching and ancient religious practices
 - Bible never commands us to empty our minds, but the exact opposite

Romans 12:2 - Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

Psalms 1:2 - Instead, his delight is in the Lord’s instruction, and he meditates on it day and night.

- ❖ Will God really send all these people to hell if there are not a Christian?

Acts 4:12 - There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.”

Practical Takeaways:

- ❖ Pray
 - For the unsaved

2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.

- For boldness

Matthew 9:37-38 - Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.”

- For the Spirit to change people

Acts 16:13-14 - On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate by the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and spoke to the women gathered

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there. A God-fearing woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, was listening. The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying.

❖ Know what you believe...

1 Peter 3:15 - but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

❖ and open your mouth from a place of love

1 Peter 3:16 - Yet do this with gentleness and reverence, keeping a clear conscience, so that when you are accused, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame.

“If you believe there is a heaven and hell, and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think it’s not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward.... how much do you have to hate somebody not to proselytize (evangelize)? How much do you have to hate someone to believe everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? If I believed, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that a truck was coming at you, and you didn’t believe it, that that truck was bearing down on you, there’s a certain point that I tackle you, and this is more important than that.” - Penn Jillette, devout atheist, upon being given a Bible by “kind, nice, and sane” Christian

❖ Understand that ultimately God alone changes hearts....

John 6:44 - No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him

❖ ... BUT Christians proclaiming is the primary means by which the Gospel goes to every person in the world

Romans 10:13-17 - For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. But not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message? So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.

❖ Go boldly and proclaim the Gospel now!

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John 4:35-38 - "Don't you say, 'There are still four more months, and then comes the harvest'? Listen to what I'm telling you: Open your eyes and look at the fields, because they are ready for harvest. The reaper is already receiving pay and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together. For in this case the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap what you didn't labor for; others have labored, and you have benefited from their labor."

Acts 20:24 - But I consider my life of no value to myself; my purpose is to finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God's grace.

Recommended Reading

For further study on the topics covered in tonight's sessions, see the resources listed below. Please note, however, that Hope Chapel Youth ministry does not endorse everything contained in these resources. As always, we urge you to examine these resources and the topics covered in this study in light of the truths of God's Word.

- ❖ Greg Gilbert, *What is the Gospel*
- ❖ Greg Koukl, *Tactics*
- ❖ Ligonier Ministries, *A Field Guide on False Teaching*
- ❖ Nabeel Qureshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*
- ❖ Walter Martin, ed. Ravi Zacharias, *The Kingdom of the Cults*
- ❖ Dean Halverson, ed., *The Compact Guide to World Religions*

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