

Origin of Buddhism

1. During the 6th century, a man named **Siddhartha Gautama** was born in **563 BC**. His lifetime coincides with the time when **Judah was exiled in Babylon**. Siddhartha experienced **extreme personal suffering** early on in his life. It caused him to become **disillusioned** with his wealth; and he committed himself to **discovering the source of suffering** and how to **eliminate it**.
2. One day during his **meditation**, Siddhartha was severely tempted by an evil spirit named **Mara**. After resisting her temptations, he attained enlightenment and became the **Buddha**, which means **the enlightened one**. He called his path to enlightenment the **Middle Way**, because it avoided the extremes of both **Affluence & Asceticism**; both of which caused him to suffer.
3. Shortly after his enlightenment, he traveled to **Benares, India**. There he preached his first sermon; and the contents of his sermon came to be known as the **Four Noble Truths**.
4. It is estimated that the number of adherents to Buddhism comprise around **6% of the world's population**. Today's most recognizable living symbol of Buddhism is **the Dalai Lama**. This is the title given to their spiritual leader who is believed to be the **bodhisattva** of compassion. This is one who has attained enlightenment, but out of compassion for the unenlightened, refuses to enter **Nirvana** in order to guide others along the path.

Beliefs/Practices of Buddhism

Despite the 'denominations' within Buddhism, there are beliefs commonly shared among Buddhists called the Four Noble Truths.

1. 1st Noble Truth: **Life consists of suffering.**
1. 2nd Noble Truth: **Everything is impermanent and ever-changing. We suffer because we desire things that are impermanent.**
1. 3rd Noble Truth: **The way to liberate oneself from suffering is by eliminating all desire.**
1. 4th Noble Truth: **Desire can be eliminated by following the Eight-Fold path.**

- A) **right understanding**: everything is illusory & thus 'I' does not exist
- B) **right thought**: renounce attachment to the desires of our selves
- C) **right speech**: speaking well of others
- D) **right action**: obey Buddhism's moral commands or abstentions
- E) **right livelihood**: avoid occupations that oppose precepts of Buddhism
- F) **right effort**: prevention of evil thoughts from entering the mind
- G) **right awareness**: heightened consciousness of the events of one's life
- H) **right meditation**: one can attain enlightenment

1. Buddha's ultimate goal was to **become liberated from the cycle of death and rebirth**. As we are successful in eliminating those attachments, then the effects of **karma** will have nothing to attach themselves to, which releases one from this realm of illusion. At the moment of enlightenment, a person achieves nirvana, which Buddha described specifically as **only the end of suffering**.
2. Buddhism does not teach reincarnation because no self exists to continue. Instead, it teaches that each individual consists of 5 aggregates called **Skandhas** that include: physical body, emotions, perception, volition, and consciousness. **Death** causes these aggregates to be dismantled.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO BUDDHISM

1. Buddhism is the religious discipline that resulted from the enlightened experience of a man named Siddhartha Gautama; who became the Buddha. Buddha then is not a god but a deified man. The deity of Buddhism is an abstract Void labeled Nirvana. **However in Christianity, the deity is an eternal God Who is personal, self-existent, and changeless.**

1. Buddhism purports a doctrine called *anatta*; the belief in 'no self'. This doctrine teaches that the human self is an illusion. Since the universe is impermanent and illusory, then 'I' does not exist in reality. This belief begs the question: how do I exist to say that my existence is not real if I didn't already exist? In other words, how can I not exist while I exist? Or how can I exist and not exist at the same time?

However In Christianity, we are taught that humans are made in the image of God; and we bear some of His realistic traits such as emotion, cognition, creativity (just to name a few) at their highest natural level. These traits can only be expressed through a real, living human being made from a real, living God.

1. Buddha taught we are to eliminate all desire if we are to be delivered from suffering.

First, one must have desire in order to eliminate desire; for one can not eliminate desire if there's no desire there to eliminate desire. Second, Jesus taught us the importance of having the right desire, not the removal of desire altogether. (Ps 37:4/Mt 5:6/I Peter 2:2)

1. Buddhism teaches that the means to Nirvana is through the 8-fold path. **In Christianity however, we are justified and reckoned as righteous through Christ before God. So where as the 8-Fold Path relies on the human self, salvation is our reliance on Christ and His total work of atonement on Calvary. (Mt 6:33/Romans 3:20-26/4:1-5,13/5:19-21/10:1-4/II Cor 5:21)**
1. Buddhism teaches that death causes the 5 aggregates to be dismantled and absorbed into the Void (Nirvana). **Christianity teaches, however, that individual selves survive death and will take on a glorified body to live eternally in the presence of God worshipping Him without end. (I Thess 5: 13-18/ I John 3:1-2)**