

## What About Hinduism? Revelation 5:11-13

### Introduction

Hindu said to a native missionary, "I am sure if I lead a good life and do what is right, giving up my bad habits, God will be pleased with me and receive me into heaven." "That is the way most people reason today," replied the missionary. "You know the babul tree (a tree with long, sharp thorns). Now, suppose you break off from its branches a hundred or more of the nasty thorns, then will the tree cease to be a babool tree?" "Certainly not."

"Suppose you should apparently stop one or another or even many of your evil ways and habits, you would still remain the same like the babool tree. You must have an entirely new nature, must become a new man, in order to please God. Only Christ can give you a new heart." The missionary's reply was sound and scriptural. The message of Christ, His first and only message to sinful man, is his need, not of works, no matter how good they may be, but his need of repentance, and acceptance of the Truth; Jesus Christ.

### Transition

Now, we will take the second part of our trip through the three largest religions in the world, outside of Christianity. Hinduism will be our focus in what is to follow. As we travel through the subcontinent of India, passing over the landscape to gain a sense of its most prominent religion, we will discover that religion without foundation is not a means of transcending this reality in favor of some great spiritual enlightenment, but a means of transcending both reason and revelation.

While Hinduism seeks to aide its adherent in transcending this fleshly world in favor of a higher, more complete, spiritual understanding, it does not so much liberate a person from worldly human social and ethical constructs; it enslaves people to vain philosophies, superstition, and baseless beliefs.

### Exposition

The age of the Hindu religion is not easy to ascertain. Hinduism arose over a period of several thousand years and is indigenous to the subcontinent of India, with various influences coming into it from outside cultures, helping to shape it.

Hinduism, in its present and constantly changing form, evolved, and is evolving from the end of that ancient period right up until today. Hinduism has no dogmas, rigid structures, or even a set of commonly held beliefs. *It is Foundationless.*

As a religion Hinduism is largely defined by its practitioners, not by its holy books or by any organized church structures. Rather than calling Hinduism a unified religion, it is much more appropriately to say that Hinduism is a set of religious practices which are connected primarily in that they are practiced by one people group; the variances in religious practice and belief within Hinduism would otherwise easily constitute a collection of many religions.

The primary thing that binds them together under one umbrella is that it is one people group, the Indian people, which practice them. In the Religions of Mankind, the author states, "The word Hindu originated, not as the name of a religion, but as a geographical marker. Hindu derives from the Sanskrit word for river, sindhu, from which the Indus River received its name. Sometime in the first millennium B.C., the Persians, who were then South Asia's closest neighbors, mispronounced sindhu, and designated the land around the Indus River as hindu. Over a thousand years later, in A.D. 712, the Muslims invaded the Indus Valley. To distinguish themselves, they called all non-Muslims hindus; the name of the land became, by default, the name of the people and their religion (Schoeps, 1966, p. 148; referenced from <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/2579>)

So, as you can see, the term Hinduism does not refer specifically to a set standard of religious practices so much as it identifies a people group. Among Hindu belief and practice there is wide diversity. According to Edward Rice, in Eastern Definitions, "The Way of the majority of the people of India, a Way that is a combination of religious belief, rites, customs, and daily practices, many of which appear overtly secular but in most cases have religious origins and sanctions. Hinduism is noted as being the only one of the major beliefs that cannot be defined, for any definition is inadequate, contradictory, and incomplete." (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978. p.166-167)

So, I will not here attempt to define the indefinable but rather examine briefly and learn from the central tenants of this ever changing and nonspecific belief system. Hinduism is essentially a collection of cults and religious practices from the various regions of India. The only defining motif is a lack of definition.

The only thing that binds this religion together is that each of the various cults who worship its own god, gods, or conception of eternal reality, identify with one another culturally and ethnically and geographically. It is a polytheistic religion, (many gods). There is one predominant theme in Hinduism which pervades much of the variations and practices of the people of the Indian subcontinent. Because it is a polytheistic religion, by definition, there can be no standards.

Each cult or regional worship system is regarded as just as valid as any other. The central theme is the idea that man can attain, through various means, a connection with the Brahman. In their system all lesser gods proceed or are born of Brahman; the ultimate reality and the key to cosmic control.

In Hinduism the highest state of reality comes when one experiences the state of Moksha, and it is the goal of all Hindus. Moksha is the supreme goal of all Hindus as it is said to be a kind of ultimate “self realization” or god (Brahman) realization where a person loses him or her self as all of their material worldly understanding melts away until all that is left is the complete awareness of being one with the reality of one’s unity with Brahman.

The idea is that none of us really exist. All of our self awareness and understanding of our self is illusionary in that we are all expressions of Brahman. Life is seen as the endless cycle of birth and rebirth, known as Samsara where each soul is born and reborn until finally achieving this state of awareness, of Nirvana, and finally being separated from the cycle to enjoy eternal bliss.

Some Hindus see this eternal state as a sort of heaven while others see it as becoming one with Brahman and escaping “self awareness” entirely. In this endless cycle of birth and rebirth a soul continues to carry with it the positive and negative “energy” into each existence as each soul works out its Karma in each successive life. In between lives a soul is said to either spend time in a sort of heaven or hell depending on its works in the most previous life.

Among the many holy books in Hinduism, the Bhagavad-Gita is perhaps the most important, or at least the best known. In one of its pages, it says, 2:22 states, “Just as a man discards worn out clothes and puts on new clothes, the soul discards worn out bodies and wears new ones.” Reincarnation is central to Hinduism.

Hinduism is a fascinating set of religious ideas and beliefs, but it is a religion without any foundation of truth. In Hinduism all truth is relative and unknowable. Hinduism has also given rise to a highly separated caste or class system where the rich and the poor are separated intentionally by these economic divisions.

These divisions are an entrenched part of the society and affect society negatively in numerous ways. According to Soma Wadhwa, in her book, “For sale childhood,” states, “India, along with Thailand and the Philippines, has 1.3 million children in its sex-trade centers. The children come from relatively poorer areas and are trafficked to relatively richer ones.” (1998)

According to Human Rights Watch, “There are approximately 10 million prostitutes in India.” (Robert I. Freidman, “India’s Shame: Sexual Slavery and Political Corruption Are Leading to An AIDS Catastrophe,” The Nation, 8 April 1996) Because Hinduism has no standards of moral or ethical obligations, the faith of the Indian people can not even speak to this catastrophe of human rights.

In examining Hinduism, even in such a cursory fashion, we easily see that it does not pass the litmus test of salvation that I proposed earlier in this series of examinations of the world’s most prominent religions outside of the Christian faith; “What think ye of Christ?” (Matthew 22:42 KJV)

Hinduism says that there is no ultimate source of truth, yet Jesus said, “Jesus replied, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6 NET) Jesus gives us a clear picture of truth. He shows us the way of truth, He points us to the ultimate source of truth; the one and only true God.

Jesus used the Word of God in His earthly ministry, gave authority to the Apostles to write down His words and His teachings as we have them in the New Testament, and then He not only died for our sin but rose again from the dead that we might know eternal life and ... TRUTH.

Jesus, in His high priestly prayer, on the eve of the crucifixion prayed to His Father, saying, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” (John 17:17 NIV) Truth can be known, Hinduism, in denying the reality of truth denies the reality of Christ. I heard a missionary from India speaking once who said that if you give a Gospel presentation to a room full of Hindus and then ask them “Who wants to receive Christ as Lord and Savior,” every hand in the room will raise. But if you then ask them “who wants to receive Christ as your *only* Lord and Savior, and Him alone,” far fewer hands will remain raised.

You see, in rejecting the very notion of knowable and absolute truth, Christ and His message must be rejected. My fear for the American Church in general, across all denominational lines, is that the very similar lies of the New Age movement, which find their roots in Hinduism and Buddhism, have infected the minds of many well intentioned and well meaning Christians.

I fear further that where absolute truth has been removed that vacuum has been filled with pride. Many in our day do not accept the notion of absolute truth because if there is such a thing then it demands something of me;

And this, they say, simply cannot be. The fastest way to free oneself from obligation to God and commitment to Christ is to free oneself of the very notion that there is anything absolute in the universe. But Jesus said, “If you want to be My disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison – your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be My disciple. And if you do not carry your own cross and follow Me, you cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:26-27 NLT)

Being a disciple is about strapping on your sandals, picking up your walking stick, and following after the Master of Mercy, wherever that road leads, no matter how dusty the trail gets, regardless of how callused and worn your hands may become; being a disciple of Christ requires forsaking all other masters to follow after *truth*.

The modern worldview constantly bombards us with the notion that truth is not knowable and that truth is incredibly relative. We hear lies that all roads lead to the same god and to follow Christ does not necessarily entail rejecting false gods. This, however, is not the case. The Gospel is exclusive to other truth claims.

### **Conclusion**

“I am by birth,” said a converted Hindu, “of an insignificant and contemptible caste; so low, that if a Brahmin should chance to touch me, he must go and bathe in the Ganges to purify himself. Yet God has been pleased to call me, not merely to the knowledge of the gospel, but to the high office of teaching it to others.”

Then addressing a number of his countrymen, “My friends, do you know the reason of God’s conduct? It is this: If God had selected one of you learned Brahmins and made you the preacher, when you were successful in making converts, people would say it was the amazing learning of the Brahmin, and his great weight of character, that were the cause. But now, when anyone is convinced by my instrumentality, no one thinks of ascribing any of the praise to me; God gets all the glory.”

The glory of God, the truth, has been expressed in the very Word of God; the Bible. Where Hinduism says that life is an endless cycle of birth and rebirth, truth says that it is appointed unto man once to die and then he is to give an account of sins, but the glory, the truth, is that Christ died for our sins. We are not so much required to account for our sins, because Christ has already accounted for them.

What we are to account for is but one thing, what did you do with Christ? What think ye of Christ?” Hinduism fails that test by rejecting truth.

What about us? Have we bought into the lie of the modern worldview, the New Age movement which has crept in the back door of the Church, which has borrowed mystic philosophy from Hinduism? Lord, let it be not said of us that in embracing the postmodern philosophy of the relativity of truth, we rejected Christ.

Heaven forbid that I should boast in anything less than Christ and His righteousness! O, Lord that we should never trust in man's philosophy but in God's truth; in Jesus Christ alone; forsaking all others and traveling the roads of this life, following after the revealed truth; Jesus Christ!

All things are not equal. All roads do not lead to the same destination. Our experience bears this out. Who among us would trust our own guesses when traveling on a long road trip of many hundreds of miles rather than trusting a compass and a map? Let us embrace truth. Let us embrace Christ.