

Essentials of Buddhism

Dr. Timothy Tennent



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Essentials of Buddhism
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Overview

Title: Essentials of Buddhism

Speaker: Dr. Timothy Tennent, Asbury Theological Seminary

This course serves as a summary of the beliefs and practices of Buddhism by Dr. Timothy Tennent. There are four messages that will introduce readers to a summary of the beliefs and practices of Buddhism, including the emergence of Siddhartha Gautama as the Buddha and the three major branches of Buddhism.

GOALS

1. Familiarity with Siddhartha Guatama's life and upbringing, including major life events.
2. Knowledge of the three different branches of Buddhism and their key features and distinctions.
3. Ability to describe the Hindu heritage of Buddhism and how Buddhism dissents from Hinduism.

REQUIREMENTS

1. 4 sessions
2. 2 hours per week (lesson and discussion)

PREREQUISITES

None

FORMAT

Audio

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DISTINCTIVES

World class. All Bible classes are taught by world-class professors from major seminaries.

Holistic. We want to see students move through content to deep reflection and application.

Configurable. Ministries can use BT lectures as well as their own to design their educational program.

Accessible. BiblicalTraining is a web-based ministry whose content is provided at no cost.

Community-based. We encourage people to learn together, in mentor/apprentice relationships.

Broadly evangelical. Our materials are broadly evangelical, governed by our Statement of Faith, and are not tied to any one church, denomination or tradition.

Partners. We provide the content and delivery mechanisms, and our partner organizations provide the community and mentoring.

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Your Speaker

Dr. Timothy C. Tennent is President of Asbury Theological Seminary and Professor of World Christianity.

He previously served 11 years as Professor of World Missions and Indian Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Mass. Prior to his work in Massachusetts, Dr. Tennent taught missions at Toccoa Falls College in Georgia, where he was honored as teacher of the year in 1995. He also teaches annually at the Luther W. New Jr. Theological College of Dehra Dun, India, where he has served as an adjunct professor since 1989.

He has also ministered and taught in China, Thailand, Nigeria and Eastern Europe. Ordained in the United Methodist Church, he has pastored churches in Georgia, and preached regularly in churches throughout New England and across the country.

Dr. Tennent is the author of several books, including *Building Christianity on Indian Foundations*, (ISPCK, 2000); *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable*, (Baker Academic, 2002); and *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think About and Discuss Theology*, (Zondervan, 2007). He is the co-author of *Revitalizing Practice*, which is about challenges to theological education in North America (Peter Lang, 2008). Dr. Tennent is also the author of a missiology textbook entitled *Invitation to World Missions: A Missiology for the 21st Century*, which was published in 2010.

EDUCATION

Ph.D., University of Edinburgh, Scotland

Th.M., Princeton Theological Seminary

M.Div., Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

B.A., Oral Roberts University

Student's Guide

We are pleased that you have chosen to use materials from BiblicalTraining.org. We trust that you will find them to be of the highest quality and truly helpful in your own spiritual growth and that of your church. Please read through the following guidelines; they will help you make the best use of this guide.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Listen or watch the lesson. The lesson for each chapter is designed to be listened to outside of your meeting. Each lesson lasts for an hour. This is a crucial step. If the meeting time with your fellow students is going to be productive and encouraging, everyone in the group needs to have listened to and wrestled with the lesson.

Take notes. This guide has the outline for each lesson with a summary of the teaching for each major point. If you are unable to take notes while listening to the lesson, please work through the guide at some point before your meeting.

Questions. Each chapter closes with a series of questions. Some of the questions are data based, confirming that you understand the information. Other questions are more reflective, helping you move beyond the important accumulation of knowledge to challenging you to think through what you are learning about God, yourself and others, and finally to application. Our encouragement is to think through your answers before your meeting and then use the meeting to share your thoughts and interact with others.

Meeting. Meet together with your group.

MEETING TOGETHER

While some people may have to study on their own, we strongly recommend finding a group with which you can study.

A group provides encouragement to finish the class.

Interacting with others, their understanding and insight, is the most effective way to sharpen your own thoughts and beliefs.

Just as you will need the help of others from time to time, so also they will need your help.

Mentor's Guide

If you are leading the group or mentoring an individual, here are some suggestions that should help you.

Your role is to facilitate. This is not an opportunity for you to teach. In fact, the less visible role you take, the better. Your role is to listen and bring out the best in the other people.

Preparation. Be sure to have done your homework thoroughly. Have listened to the lesson and think carefully through the questions. Have an answer for each question that will get the conversation going. A great question is, "What is the Lord teaching you this week?"

Creativity. What works to help one person understand may not help another. So listen to the conversation and pray that the Lord help you bring out the greatest interaction among all the people.

Correct error. This is difficult. If someone says something that isn't right, you don't want to come down on them, telling them they are wrong and shutting down their participation. On the other hand, if you let an obvious error pass, the rest of the group may think you agree and what was said was correct. So look for gracious ways to suggest that perhaps the person's comment was incorrect.

Focus. Stay focused on Jesus and the Bible, not on church or religious traditions.

Lead the discussion. People don't want to listen to a sharing of common ignorance. Lead by asking questions that will prompt others to think.

Silence. Don't be afraid of silence. It may mean nothing more than people are thinking. But if the conversation lags, then ask thought-provoking questions to get the discussion started, and then step out of the way.

Discipleship. Be acutely aware of how you can mentor the people in the group. Meet with them for coffee. Share some life with them. Jesus' Great Commission is to teach people to obey, and the only way this happens is in relationship.

Men and women. Be aware that men and women tend to learn differently. Don't ask the men to become women in how they answer.

Privacy. All discussions are private, not to be shared outside the group unless otherwise specified.

Goal. The goal of this study is not just increased knowledge; it is transformation. Don't be content with people getting the "right" answers. The Pharisees got the "right" answer, and many of them never made it to heaven (Matt 5:20).

Relationships. Share everyone's name, email and phone number so people can communicate during the week and follow up on prayer requests. You may want to set up a way to share throughout the week using Slack or WhatsApp.

Finish well. Encourage the people to make the necessary commitment to do the work, think reflectively over the questions, and complete the class.

Prayer. Begin and end every meeting with prayer. Please don't do the quick "one-prayer-covers-all" approach. Manage the time so all of you can pray over what you have learned and with what you have been challenged. Pray regularly for each individual in the meeting.

1

Introduction to Buddhism

LESSON OVERVIEW

Discussion of the events surrounding the emergence of Siddhartha Gautama as the Buddha.

BUDDHISM IN THE WORLD

1. Global adherents

Around 379 million Buddhists in the world today, representing nearly 6 percent of the world population.

2. Buddhism defined

“A religious and intellectual movement founded in north India by someone named Siddhartha Gautama in the 6th century B.C.”

The term “Buddhism” comes from the word “Buddha”, which means “the enlightened one,” referring to Siddhartha Gautama and his teaching.

3. Dharma

Teaching about the eternal truth about reality, believed to provide complete liberation from all suffering.

4. Relation to Hinduism

Hinduism is the most important context to be aware of when studying Buddhism; Buddhism is one of three major dissent movements against Hinduism.

SIDDHARTHA GAUTAMA

1. Gautama's early life

Born into a powerful military family, Gautama grew up in such a life of ease and luxury and protected in the palace, that he had never actually been exposed to any of the more difficult and painful aspects of human existence.

2. The four sights

Gautama went on a ride out into the village, outside the walls of his protected castle and was exposed for the first time to four dramatic shocks that he had never seen before.

A. Old age

Having never seen anyone of old age, Gautama describes what he is seeing to his charioteer and asks what he is seeing, the charioteer responds "This is called 'old age.' It has broken him down. It is the murderer of beauty. It is the ruin of vigor. It is the birthplace of sorrow, the grave of pleasure, the destroyer of memory, the enemy of the senses."

B. Disease

He discovers that everyone ultimately encounters at some point, sickness and pain.

C. Death

He discovers that everyone at some point will experience the ravages of death.

D. Meditation

Returning to the palace he sees a fourth man, a man meditating under a tree, someone who denounced both pleasure and pain in search for truth.

“He knows about old age; he knows about sickness; he knows about death. Yet he seems so much at peace; he seems so much in touch with something higher.”

3. The first great renunciation

"I shaved my head, put on robes, renounced my home and became a monk"; Gautama becomes a beggar, and Buddhist today are still known as beggars.

4. Dissatisfied with the teaching of the Brahmins

Gautama was not satisfied with their teachings because they could not tell him how to put an end to rebirth and escape from the wheel of this life's suffering.

5. The second great renunciation

Where Gautama left the five aesthetics and he denounced their extreme aestheticism as not being helpful, rather, it weakened his mind, it weakened his body and he was not able to concentrate properly.

6. The middle way

Buddhism charts a path between the two renunciations, referred to as “the middle way” between materialism and extreme aestheticism.

7. The Bodhi tree

“The wisdom tree, the tree of enlightenment” where Gautama experienced Dhyana, a special meditative trance, for the first time; Gautama became at this point a perfected saint in the Buddhist belief and begins to issue his Dharma, or teaching.

8. Dhyana

Stages of Dhyana: first detaches himself from all of his senses; then gets to the point in stage two where his mind is totally focused into a single point; in stage three his body experiences complete detachment from this world in bliss; in stage four he is freed from any of the dichotomies or dualisms of pain and pleasure or elation and depression; finally he receives a windfall of knowledge known as “super knowledge.”

TEACHINGS OF THE FIRST DHARMA

1. First sermon: the four noble truths

Found in Buddha's first sermon, these truths serve as the Buddhist diagnosis of the human race, explaining what is wrong with the human race and what to do about it.

A. Dukkha

Meaning suffering, dukkha explains that all of life is eventually sorrowful and all of life involves suffering.

B. Tanha

Meaning thirst, tanha explains that all of our sorrow is caused by the thirst or the cravings which are within the human existence

C. Cessation of dukkha

The cessation of desire or putting out this thirst is the key to extinguishing the ego; the key to stopping suffering is to stop desires and if desire can be eliminated, then one will realize nirvana.

Nirvana is the going into emptiness or nothingness that is achieved when our desire is extinguished.

D. The eight-fold path.

There is a path which can lead to the cessation of suffering which Buddha calls the eight-fold path; best understood in three categories:

1) Proper wisdom:

Understanding the importance of life, the proper qualities of the mind, etc.

a) Right understanding

b) Right thought

2) Proper conduct or morality:

You free yourself in a wholesome state of mind and speech and work. You learn to treat others with morality. You refrain from telling lies and gossip. You don't kill, you don't steal, things of this nature.

a) Right speech

b) Right action

c) Right livelihood

3) Proper practice

At the end of the eight-fold path, you would leave the wheel of illusion, leave the wheel of samsara and you would be able to go into the state of nirvana.

a) Right effort

b) Right mindfulness

c) Right concentration

2. Second Sermon: dissent from Hinduism.

A. The three characteristics of the human condition

Human existence is marked by impermanence; we live in a period of angst; there is no such thing as "the self, the 'I', the 'ego'."

B. The five aggregates

Buddhism denies atman and Brahman, instead replacing them with what is known as “the five aggregates”; Buddha believed that each of these five aggregates that make up human existence are all impermanent.

1) The body

The material form that we all live in.

2) Bodily sensations

Our feelings, the sensations of the body.

3) Our perceptions

What we learn to recognize as certain physical objects.

4) Our mental life

Certain mental states that we can enter into: we have attitudes, dispositions, etc.

5) Consciousness

The sense of being aware of one's self and the ability to discriminate between myself and another person; "I and thou."

C. Pratīyasamutpāda

The foundational doctrine of Buddhism meaning the doctrine of interdependent arising; the belief that the whole world that we know of, including your self, your own human existence, the world around you, everything is caught up in this massively interconnected web of mis-perceptions which interdependently arise, and each causes the other.

D. Twelve causal links

Buddha believed that the whole of human existence can be explained through these twelve interconnected links; these should be viewed not in a long line, but in a circle, each linked to the other.

1) Ignorance

Everything is characterized by ignorance.

2) Karmic predisposition

We have a predisposition to build up karma through our actions or deeds, creating various kinds of karmic debt giving a perception of human existence.

3) Consciousness

We all have a sense, an awareness that we exist.

4) Name and form

We all have a name that gives a sense of a separate identity; we all have a form in that we inhabit certain kinds of bodies.

5) The five senses

Seeing hearing, taste, etc.

6) Contact

The sense that we have relationships, we have various kinds of connections with other things in the world.

7) Feeling and response

We have the ability to touch, to feel, to respond; we are relational creatures.

8) Craving and desire

We crave and long for a separate existence and independent existence.

9) Grasping after objects

10) Action in the world

Various ways we like to act to make a name for ourselves and to build security around ourselves.

11) Rebirth

Life is a cycle and that one continues to be reborn to future existence based of your karma over the past life.

12) Old age and death

One of the things Buddha saw on his chariot ride that characterizes the nature of human existence.

E. Weakest link: Craving and desire

The whole of Buddhist thinking, meditation and morality and their living is all geared toward breaking this eighth link in the chain; once you break that, then you are free from the wheel of samsara—you are free from the existence of this life.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BUDDHISM AND HINDUISM

1. Compassion and serving others

Buddha had the opportunity to reach nirvana but refused so he could come back and help others, creating a whole new ethical base for Buddhism; this compassion was something that was not prominent in Hinduism.

6. Describe the purpose and elements of the eight-fold path more fully.

7. Describe the three characteristics of the human condition. In Buddhism what do the five aggregates represent, and what are they?

8. Describe the one foundational doctrine of Buddhism.

9. What are the twelve links in the wheel of Samsara? What did Buddha see as the weak link?

10. How was Buddhism a radical example of compassion and serving others?

11. How was Buddhism a dissent movement from Hinduism?

RECOMMENDED READING FOR THE COURSE

Buddhist Priests Choose Christ, John R. Terry, Dawn Press, 1989

Christianity at the Religious Roundtable: Evangelicalism in Conversation with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, by Timothy Tennent, Baker Books, 2002

The Unexpected Way, Paul Williams, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2002

Sharing Jesus Effectively in the Buddhist World, David Lim and Spalding, William Carey Library Publishers, 2005

2

Buddhism Becomes a Religion

LESSON OVERVIEW

Description of how Buddhism became a religion. It expanded into three branches, Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajranyana.

THREE MAJOR BRANCHES

1. Theravada

Means “the way of the elders”; the most ancient Buddhist thinking; often called Universal Buddhism because it represents the seminal idea of the Buddha.

2. Mahayana

Means “great vehicle”; sometimes called “Messianic Buddhism” because it introduces the special Messianic figures.

3. Vajrayana

Often translated “thunderbolt vehicle, vehicle of power”; a special form of Buddhism which involves a lot of mystical practices and is associated mainly with Tibetan Buddhism.

THEREVADA

1. First converts

According to Buddhist beliefs, the first converts were the five aestheticians under whom he had studied under in Varanasi; became known as Buddhists.

2. The three jewels of Theravada Buddhism

First vows of Buddhism, which represent the initial vows of a Buddhist priest today; "I take refuge in the Buddha. I take refuge in the Dharma. I take refuge in the Sangha."

A. "I take refuge in the Buddha"

I take refuge in the enlightened one, this great teacher that taught us these seminal truths.

Theravada Buddhists believe that Siddharta Gautama is the central reality of this age, of this existence in this world.; he is not just an exceptional person, he is omniscient, he has all knowledge; he is the Tathāgata, the one and only one to lead us all to enlightenment.

B. "I take refuge in the Dharma"

Meaning I take refuge in the teaching of the Buddha as symbolized by the two sermons.

Therevada Buddhists believe that Buddha's first two sermons, which represent the thirteen core teachings make up the essence of Buddha's teaching and only will accept the teachings that they believe came directly from the Buddha as he traveled around and taught.

All of the writings of Buddha are considered a closed cannon and placed in three baskets known as "Tripitaka": basket of discipline; basket of discourses; basket of philosophical and advanced teachings.

C. I take refuge in the Sangha

The community or flock; represents those who gather together to begin to follow the Buddha.

Enlightenment could only be achieved after many, many lifetimes of effort and work that culminated in giving your life as a monk in a monastic life, so the goal is to become a monk; one must follow the path from "stream winner", to "once returner", to "non-returner", end as a "arhat", or a teacher who could help lead others to enlightenment.

MAHAYANA

“The great vehicle” Buddhism; represents about 80 percent of all Buddhists.

1. Problem of exclusivity

Over time the monastic Buddhists became a special spiritual elite, which in a way mimicked one of the big problems that the Buddhists found with Hinduism with salvation being limited to “high caste Brahmins”

In light of the exclusivity of the Theravada, Mahayana Buddhists pejoratively referred to the Theravada as “Hinayana”, meaning “little vehicle”, unable to save many.

2. Three insights

Mahayana Buddhists believe that there were other teachings of the Buddha that were rejected by Theravadans, that should also be accepted; these teachings are known as the three insights.

A. Buddha taught secret truths

Around the time of Christ a group of new texts, or new sutras, emerge that claim to be the discourse of the Buddha; it is believed that these teachings go back to the time of Buddha and were withheld until the community reached a certain maturity.

The canon is not closed; there are new teachings which are now being added to the baskets, that expand our understanding of the Buddhist teaching.

B. Three-fold body of Buddha

1) Nirmanakaya

The historical body of Buddha; Siddhartha Gautama was born, he lived, he became the enlightened one and there is this historical Buddha who lived and taught and eventually died in north India.

2) Dharma body

“The body of essence”, the broad teaching of Buddhism which transcends the historical Buddha and undergirds the universe.

3) The body of bliss

A heavenly experience; a place of happiness where you learn more of the Buddhist teachings to prepare you for when you come back again.

C. Expansion of the Buddha

If history goes back innumerably through history eternally, then Siddhartha Gautama cannot be the only being who came to earth to teach the Dharma; therefore, there are many Buddhas that have come and taught the Dharma over the years

3. Bodhisattva

“The quality of being a wise being”; there is no god in Buddhism, but “Bodhisattvas” are enlightened beings that can help you along the eight-fold path, making enlightenment accessible even to a lay person.

A. Textual support

There are hundreds of texts and famous summaries of texts in Buddhism, making it impossible to read all of the sacred texts; in addition the Mahayana have additional texts that support Bodhisattva.

1) Prajnaparamita sutras

“The perfection of wisdom and teachings”; date back to the first century A.D. but were hidden from the sixth century B.C. these texts teach a new goal of becoming a Bodhisattva.

a) Diamond sutra and heart sutra

Condensed versions of the Prajnaparamita

2) Lotus sutras

Another text which summarizes the essence of the Bodhisattva teaching, the Bodhisattva path and the Mahayana doctrines.

a) Three vehicles of Buddhism

Monastic life, which brings one to enlightenment through monasticism;
meditation, which leads to enlightenment;
messianic vehicle, where an enlightened being can come to save you.

QUESTIONS

1. Who were the first people that took vows to be Buddhists?
2. What are the three jewels of Therevada Buddhism? Explain each one.
3. What does the name "Mahayana" mean? Why does this group refer to Therevada as Hinayada?

4. What are the “three insights” of Mahayana Buddhism?

5. What is the idea of the “Bodhisattva” and why is it important?

3

Mahayana Buddhism

LESSON OVERVIEW

Discussion of how Mahayana Buddhism has opened the door to different schools of thought or lineages of Buddhism.

INVOCATIONAL BUDDHISM

1. Definition

“Devotional Buddhism”; Buddhism for the lay person.

2. Role of the bohdisattvas

If you call on their name, if you trust in them, if you believe in them and trust in their efficacy, they can help you to achieve enlightenment; these become more or less functional savior figures.

3. Pure land Buddhism

Emerged based on the Mahayana doctrine that the Buddha left secret teachings; most widely practiced Buddhism in China

A. "Ajita" or "Amitabha"

A special bohdisattva who is the Buddha of Infinite Light believed to have been a man named Dharmakara

B. Dharmakara

Achieved enlightenment, but took a vow to stay on the wheel of samsara to help other people.

C. Nembutsu

“To call upon the name of”; doctrine that encourages and develops the conception that someone could call upon the name of Amitabha Buddha and he will help you reach the pure land.

D. Prayer wheels

A circular cylinder that can be turned round and round and it is believed that by turning this one time, a prayer of invocation to Amitabha Buddha goes up to heaven.

MEDITATIVE BUDDHISM

Meditative Buddhism traces back to a person from China whose name is Bodhidharma, an Indian missionary who sought to perfect meditative techniques.

1. Zen Buddhism

Meditative Buddhism that focuses on lineage stories; very individualistic and does not accept the traditional activities of the religious life.

Emphasis is on practicing meditative techniques to achieve higher enlightenment; techniques include sitting for long periods of time to develop focal points, mentoring methods to help one another along the path, and striving to think beyond the dualities of this world.

2. Koans

In order to realize that perceived reality that goes beyond things that we experience, you have to look beyond it; Meditative Buddhists developed political statements, political "haiku," beautiful poetry for the purpose of helping one think beyond the normal way of thinking called Koans.

TENDAI BUDDHISM

Rationalistic Buddhism, which focuses on the philosophical schools of Buddhism; enlightenment comes from right philosophical thinking.

1. Two schools

Neither school accepts ultimate reality

A. Madhyamaka

Everything can be proven ultimately to be void or nothingness; they accept the ultimate emptiness of all reality.

B. Yogachara

Accepts a form of reality, but only reality in your mind, or in your consciousness, what is called "cittamatra" the "mind only" school of philosophy.

NICHIREN BUDDHISM

Nichiren Buddhism believed that the key was to bring together the invocational strands, the textual strands of Tendai, and the meditative strand of Zen into one coherent system.

1. Lotus sutra

Rather than calling on a particular Bodhisattva, they essentially personify the lotus sutra text and they would do invocation and call upon the lotus sutra.

QUESTIONS

1. According to invocational Buddhism, what do you do to get free from the wheel of samsara?

2. What does Pure Land Buddhism teach?

6. What is a “koan,” and what is its purpose?

7. What is the key to enlightenment in Tendai Buddhism?

8. What is the Tendai Buddhist’s view of ultimate reality?

4

Vajranyana Buddhism

LESSON OVERVIEW

Discussion of Vajranyana Buddhism, which is also known as Tibetan Buddhism.

VAJRANYANA BUDDHISM

“The thunderbolt vehicle”; emphasis on a flash of power or magical power.

1. Three distinctions of Vajranyana Buddhism

Some scholars see Vajranyana Buddhism as yet another expansion of the basic Mahayana ideal, but there are three distinctions that set it apart.

A. Monastic emphasis

Vajranyana returns in many ways back to the monastic ideal with an emphasis on monasticism that is much stronger than found in Mahayana.

B. Variance from key Mahayana doctrines

They do not accept some Mahayana doctrines.

C. Buddha and the wheel of Dharma

They like to use the language that the Buddha turned the wheel of Dharma a third time

2. Tibetan Buddhism

The most prominent expression of Vajranyana Buddhism is Tibetan Buddhism; Tibetan Buddhism had its own ways that adapted to and responded to and in many ways syncretized with the indigenous religion of the Bon religion of Tibet.

3. "Tantrism" or "tantras"

An umbrella term to describe religious activities that release spiritual power; this belief becomes very central to Vajranyana Buddhism

A. "Mandala"

A depiction of the whole universe in kind of small replica drawings that they draw that represent the universe which is manipulated and used for meditation in order to get into some contact with the metaphysic of the universe.

4. Understanding of Buddha

Everything that we see, all that exists, is in fact, Buddha but it is just that Buddha has not yet been realized or recognized as Buddha.

5. Transcending of dualities

They argue that samsara is nirvana, there is no distinction between the world of samsara and the world of nirvana.

6. Enlightened beings

Enlightened beings are actually born on earth and live on earth and teach us on earth; Buddha always dwells among us, not just at certain times in history or at one time in history; but someone who dwells with us all of the time; as an example, the Dalai Lama is a Buddha.

7. Three fires

A. Veneration of the Lama

The veneration of sacred teachers who dwell among us and teach the Buddhist Dharma.

B. Belief in shamanism

Shamanism is the belief that one can actually have conversations with the dead and be able to have communication with the unseen world.

C. Belief in Tantrism and mysticism

VISUALLY EXPERIENCING BUDDHISM IN THE WORLD

1. Buddhist statues

A wide range of figures are represented: Siddhartha Gautama in some cases or more likely depictions of Bodhisattva if you are in Southeast Asia.

2. Buddha's appearance

In India you often see statues of the Buddha in more of an emaciated state, with ribs showing, emphasizing his ascetic period; in the east, you will see the Buddha as a much larger figure, much heavier with a large stomach and a very different kind of figure, representing the happy, kind of lay, popular Buddhism.

3. Posture of statues

A. Lotus position

Statues depict Buddha or a Bodhisattva with legs crossed and a very erect, straight form; this is representative of a meditative technique.

B. Mudras

Various hand gestures that represent the different ways that the Buddhists depict the Bodhisattva in their various iconographic depictions.

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO BUDDHISM

1. Historicity of the Christian Faith

Christianity is not some religious idea but rather about historical faith rooted in real historical events.

A. History and contradiction in Buddhism

Buddhism, in contrast, exists on the plain of supra history and the only way to resolve the dramatic contradictions in Buddhist doctrines and so-called historical stories is to abandon the real nature of history.

B. History and authority

The truths of Buddhism transcend the nature of Buddha as an historical person, rendering Buddha dispensable and unimportant; Christianity roots everything in the real history of Jesus Christ the Risen Lord.

C. History and mercy

“Although leaders of Buddhism might speak about mercy, it was not an historical event, but only a probability, whereas the Cross of Jesus is a solid certainty.”

2. Suffering

Suffering is normative in Buddhism so there is no appreciation for the vicarious suffering of Christ where Jesus Christ suffers for us to deliver us from suffering , that we might come to know Him as our Lord and Savior

3. Creation

In Buddhism, because there is no creation, no history, and no substance to your own existence there is therefore only emptiness; in the Gospel we realize that Jesus Christ is in fact the creator of the world, therefore creation is good and to be enjoyed and explored.

4. Ultimate reality

Because Buddhists do not have a proper view of God, there is no category of ultimate reality thus they struggle to understand what Christians actually teach about Jesus.

5. The nature of self

The "I" in Buddhism is nothing but just the flux of contingent continuity bound together by the temporary laws of karma, whereas in Christianity we have a fundamental value of self that finds fulfillment in Christ.

6. Desire

In Buddhism the whole of human suffering is rooted in desires, thus all desire is bad; Buddhism fails to distinguish between good and evil desires.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the three characteristics that distinguish Vajranyana from the other two types of Buddhism?
2. What strategies do Vajranyana Buddhists use to get into contact with the metaphysic of the universe?
3. What are the differences between Vajranyana and other types of Buddhism?

10. How are the Buddhist and Christian views of self different?

11. How are the Buddhist and Christian views of desire different?

12. Why is the influence of Buddhism likely to increase in the West?