

## Introduction:

When one looks at religion today they see some that are "Christ centered" and some that are not. The question arises, "Where did they come from?" We want to look at this from what the scriptures and some secular history tells us about the various religions we see today.

### I) Definitions (dictionary.com)

#### A) Origin

1. Something from which anything arises or is derived; source; fountainhead
2. The first existence or beginning of anything; the birth.
  - a. The mouth of a river is where it started.
  - b. Bill Monroe is the father of Bluegrass music; he is the source

#### B) Religion

1. a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, esp. when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs.
2. a specific fundamental set of beliefs and practices

generally agreed upon by a number of persons or sects: the Christian religion; the Buddhist religion.

## II) In The Beginning

### A) Patriarchal Dispensation

1. God created Adam and Eve and spoke to them.
2. He spoke to the heads of the families, Cain, Abel, Seth, Noah, Abraham, etc. *Genesis 4.3-4; Hebrews 11.4; Romans 10.17.*
  - a. They built altars and offered sacrifices to God.
  - b. Early in man's existence there were no other religions but one.
3. See Melchizedek as priest and king in *Genesis 14.18.*
4. Even after the Law of Moses was given the gentiles were still under law to God.
  - a. Described as the law written in their hearts in *Romans 2.12-15.*
  - b. Account of Jonah shows God dealing with the gentiles and their need for repentance.

### B) Eventually man deviated and created his own religions

1. Rachel stole her father's idols, *Genesis 31.19, 32.*

2. The people of Mesopotamia, apparently worshipped idols.
3. So did the people of Canaan for there was the prohibition of marrying the people of the land for they would then worship their gods, *Joshua 24.15*
4. Egypt had many gods and images they worshipped. Before the death of the first born God said He would judge all their gods, *Exodus 12.12*.
5. The nations Israel passed through worshipped various gods, *Deut. 29.17*

### **C) Different forms of worship**

1. Various gods
  - a. Baals - there were different names for the "sun-god" each nation or group of people tended to give him a different name.
  - b. Molech, *Leviticus 18.21* a deity of the Ammonites.
  - c. Rephan, god for the planet Saturn.
2. They had their priesthood, altars, and sacrifices.
3. Other terms used to denote some type of idolatry: astrology, witchcraft, soothsaying, divination.
  - a. The use of magic - Pharaoh relied on his magicians, sorcerers, and wise men, *Exodus 7.11*

- b. Nebuchadnezzar did likewise in *Daniel 2.1-2*.

### III) The Law of Moses

#### A) Given on Mount Sinai, *Exodus 20*.

- 1. Moses was a lawgiver.
- 2. Later on God spoke to the children of Israel by other prophets.

#### B) This included the 10 commandments and other statutes

#### C) God prohibited idolatry

- 1. No carved images
- 2. No other gods
- 3. The charge not to marry the people of the land was partly because of their idolatry and its effect on Israel.

#### D) Eventually many did worship other gods, *2 Kings 17.7-18*

- 1. Partly because of them intermarrying with the people of the land
- 2. Partly because they wanted to be like all the nations around them. *Acts 7.43*

### IV) The Samaritans

#### A) Their origin

1. Samaria was the capital of Northern Israel and came to represent the kingdom.
2. After the Northern Kingdom was taken captive many were taken from their land. A small group were left and people from other countries were brought to Samaria. *2 Kings 17.24-29*
  - a. They were worshipping their own gods
  - b. They were also worshipping the god of the land.

## **V) Other Religions**

### **A) Buddhism - 560 BC**

1. Means "to wake up" or "to know"
2. Buddha means "the Enlightened One" or "the Awakened One".
3. Four principles - knowledge of suffering, origin of suffering, destruction of suffering, removal of suffering.
4. Denies the existence of God; world evolved by natural power and law not by divine command, all is God and God is all, truth is subjective, reincarnation.

### **B) Hinduism - 1500 BC third largest religion in the world with 600 million**

1. Considered one of the oldest living religions in the world

2. A mixture of beliefs, no one sacred writing but a number of writings.
3. Has 330 million gods, all beings a part of the universal spirit.
4. Reincarnation based on one's past life - the caste system.

## **VII) Their Commonality**

- A) **Animism - belief that natural phenomena and objects such as rocks, trees, the wind, etc., are alive and have souls**
- B) **Pantheism - God is not a person but all the laws and forces of nature makes up God. God is everything and everything is God.**
- C) **Polytheism - belief in and worship of many Gods.**
- D) **Henotheism - there is one chief god over all the other gods**
- E) **Agnositicism - God is unknown and unknowable**
- F) **Atheism or humanism - man has outgrown the need for God.**

## **VI) Effects of These Religions**

- A) **Breeds superstition-- Kings allowed their idols to dictate their actions, *Ezekiel 21.21***
- B) **Human sacrifices - Israel sacrificed their children to Baal, *Jeremiah 32.35***

- C) Immoral conduct - temple prostitutes**
- D) Human suffering**
- E) People being lost for eternity**

**Conclusion:**

We have the word of God, *John 1.1ff.* We have the truth, *John 17.17.* We have the way, the truth, and the life, *John 14.6.* We are not bound by idols or superstition, but by the Law of Christ.