

# Hinduism and Sikhism

## Listed Scriptures

Deut 18:9–14; Jer 50, 51; Ezek 14

## Lesson Aim

- 1) Understand that God will utterly destroy those who worship other gods and disobey His commandments.

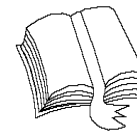
## Memory Verse

“You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.” (Ex 20:3–5a)

## Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Is 45–46, 57; Ezek 14

## B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



When the apostle Paul was at Athens, he was moved to preach to the people there because he saw idolatry everywhere. In his opening speech, he said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” (Acts 17:22–23).

If Paul had made it to India and observed the religious practices there, he might have said the same thing, because the religion that is known as Hinduism is not really a single religion but a variety of religious beliefs and practices. The word “Hindu” is a Persian word that refers to the people and culture of the Indus River area in northwest India. The word “Indus” sounds like “Hindus”, so Westerners used the name to describe the people there.

Scholars believe that Hinduism began around 3,500 years ago, out of interactions between the Aryans who conquered the region and the traditions already present there. When we refer to the Aryans, we must be careful not to associate them with the Aryans mentioned by Hitler in the twentieth century. The Aryans who influenced Hinduism are a completely different group.

The story of Hinduism arose out of what is present day Pakistan, in the Indus Valley. The people who lived there were civilized and sophisticated people for their time. Their civilization is known as the Indus Valley Civilization. At the height of its advancement, this civilization extended farther than the Egyptian and the Mesopotamian civilizations, two of the greatest civilizations in history. Around 1,500 BC, a wave of Aryan invaders from the northwest conquered the region. The interaction between the two peoples produced an integrated form of practices and beliefs that resulted in what we now call Hinduism. It is therefore a unique religion in that it claims no specific founder or founding historical event. Sikhism, on the other hand, is a religion that came through the revelations of messengers who lived in Northern India between 1469 and 1708. These men were called Sikh Gurus. They came from the protector or warrior class of Hindu society, called the Kshatriyas. They had the right to study the Hindu holy book, the Vedas, but could not teach them. Sikhs insist that their revelation came to them directly from God, who gave them a message to preach and the authority to proclaim it.

## W A R M U P



The class will be making sculptures, so you will need enough modeling clay for each student to make a sculpture. The amount of modeling clay you give the students will depend on your budget, how much time they have, and the size of the class. Each student should be given an equal amount of modeling clay.

Tell the class to use the modeling clay to create something that they wish. It does not matter what they create—this is their own sculpture.

Once they are done (you may set a time for this), ask the students to share their products. There must be no negative comments as they appreciate each other's artwork. Now ask them what they would think if one of them suddenly decided to talk to their sculpture. What about if they asked their own creation to do something for them (give them money, help them pass their exams, etc). Would they think such behavior was normal?

If we see someone speaking to inanimate objects, we would probably think they were a little strange at the least, or think the person has some psychological problems. However, a large number of people seem to feel this is perfectly acceptable. They make sculptures (images) and not only do they speak to these creations, they pray to them as though they were gods. This would be the same as the class praying to their little clay figures that they have made. They would not think of doing that—in fact, they would look extremely silly. So why do so many people feel it is perfectly acceptable to do this to certain images?

Today, we will look at the background of two major religious groups that pray to objects. As we study these religions, remember what our true God did to nations who sinned in the same way.

## B I B L E S T U D Y



### Part 1 *Hinduism*



### A. Overview of Hinduism

Hinduism is based on the "*Sanatana Dharma*," the Eternal Truths or Laws. These have been developed and taught over ten thousand years by great seers called "*rishis*." Hence, Hinduism claims to be the oldest religion in the world.

The British began using the word "Hinduism" around the beginning of the nineteenth century. Some Hindus prefer to be called by the ancient name Vedic. The Vedic teachings are contained within texts called the Vedas. These texts provide the only source for understanding the religious life of ancient India. Each of the texts is called a Veda, which means "sacred knowledge" or "learning" in Sanskrit, the oldest written language in India.

The Vedas consist of over 1,000 hymns describing the human relationship with

God. Over the years, rites surrounding the use of the Vedas have become so complicated that only highly trained priests can read the texts and explain them. The theologies found within the texts have also evolved through a collection of philosophical writings known as the “Upanishads.” The Upanishads were compiled between 500 BC and 200 AD.

Other texts are the sutras and shastras, which are collections of proverbs. The sutras contain instructions for priests and guides for human conduct. The shastras are concerned with personal conduct and code of ethics. Around 500 AD, Buddhism influenced Hinduism in a way that encouraged Hindus to depend less on priests and develop a more personal relationship with God.

## **B. Hindu Gods**

Hindus do not worship any single god, but worship a number of gods. However, they believe in a supreme being known as Brahma, who has unlimited forms, and who is omnipotent, omniscient, and beyond any confines of time and space. The search for this Supreme Being is done through the various gods. Hindus believe that gods often enter the world in human forms called avatars. Hindus would not argue about the true God because they believe that God can be represented through any form, all forms, or no form.

Hindus believe that three main gods represent three major aspects of the universe:

- a. Creation, connected to the god Brahma,
- b. Preserver of the Universe, called Vishnu,
- c. Destroyer, called Shiva or Siva.

The Hindu belief in this cycle is closely linked to their belief in reincarnation.

## **C. Reincarnation**

Hindus believe that one keeps being reborn from one form to another. The idea of reincarnation in Hinduism is tied to the principle of karma. Karma is the cause and effect under which a past life may affect one’s present (that is, what one is reborn as). What we become in our rebirth is dependent on the actions in our previous life. People are born over and over again until they achieve unity with the Supreme Being. Then the soul becomes one with the Supreme Being. This is the ultimate goal of every soul, because once that has been achieved, there will be no need for any more reincarnation for that soul.

## **D. One God, Many Gods**

Hindus claim to believe in one Absolute Being—that is, one God. However, they also believe that this Being is able to become incarnate in many different forms through many different times. Hence, they worship gods in many forms but think that all these different forms are just expressions of the same unchanging Absolute Being.

### Warnings from the Bible:

Read the following verses and briefly explain why God was angry with His people in these passages.

- a. Judges 2:11–15  
(The Israelites left God and served the Baals. They worshiped other gods, so God punished them by allowing enemies to plunder their country.)
- b. Judges 3:5–11  
(The Israelites inter-married with other races, and served their gods. They forgot their God, so He allowed them to be attacked by the enemies around them. However, when the Israelites cried out to God for help, He gave them a deliverer.)
- c. Judges 10:6–9  
(Once again, the people of Israel sinned and served other gods, so God again allowed their enemies to overcome them.)
- d. Is 19:1–4  
(The Lord will enter Egypt and destroy the idols there. The Egyptians will be punished for their beliefs, and a fierce conqueror will rule them.)
- e. Jer 2:7–9  
(God gave His people a bountiful country, but they defiled it. They worshiped idols and turned away from God. God will bring charges against them for their sins.)

The above are only a few examples of the many instances when the Israelites disobeyed God and served other gods. Once His anger was kindled, God often punished His people. However, He was always merciful and helped them again once they repented. What the people did was to turn away from God and look at other things as more important. Today, although we may not worship idols, we place many other things in our lives as more important than God. We must learn from the history of the Israelites, and remember that when God becomes angry, His anger can be frightening. We must never place other things (such as money, career, technology, etc) before God. These are our modern-day “idols” that we must be careful not to worship in our lives.



## Part 2 Sikhism

### A. Overview of Sikhism

The word Sikh means “learner” in Sanskrit. The Sikh’s faith began with the birth of their first Guru, Guru Nanak, in 1469. According to Sikh legend, Nanak, at the age of 30, went to bathe in a nearby stream. Suddenly, he disappeared in the fast flowing water. A search bore no results and he was presumed drowned. However, three days later, he miraculously appeared again, recovered from his drowning. Nanak told people that God had spoken to him. He was taken to God’s court, given nectar to drink, and instructed to rejoice in God’s name and teach others to do so as well. This event is described in detail in Nanak’s writing, “Birth Stories,” or “Janam Sakhis.”

Before he died, Guru Nanak appointed a disciple, Angad, to carry on his mission. Angad’s successor was his disciple, Amar Das, who then appointed his son-in-law, Ram Das Sodhi. From this point on, all the Gurus came from the Sodhi family. Here is the list in order:

- a. Guru Nanak (1469–1539)
- b. Guru Angad (1539–1552), disciple of Nanak. He united the community and gathered together the hymns of Guru Nanak.
- c. Guru Amar Das (1552–1574), disciple of Angad. He declared a gathering of Sikhs at his headquarters three times a year, during the times of Hindu festivals. This forced the Sikhs to choose between serving their Guru and observing Hindu rituals. They could not be both Sikh and Hindu.
- d. Guru Ram Das (1574–1581), son-in-law of Amar Das. He began the building of the *Harimandir*, or Golden Temple, at Amritsar, the place that was to become the center of Sikhism.
- e. Guru Arjun (1581–1606), son of Ram Das. He completed the Golden Temple. He also collected the hymns of his four predecessors, those written by himself, and some Hindu and Muslim holy men. He produced the first version of the Sikh scriptures. It was given the title *Adi Granth*. The Mogul rulers captured him and he died in captivity.
- f. Guru Hargobind (1606–1644), son of Arjun. He led the Sikhs to arm themselves against the Mogul conquerors.

- g. Guru Har Rai (1644–1661), grandson of Hargobind. His leadership was uneventful.
- h. Guru Har Krishan (1661–1664), son of Har Rai, selected as Guru at the age of 3, and died of smallpox as a child.
- i. Guru Tegh Bahadur (1664–1675), youngest son of Hargobind. He was also imprisoned by the Moguls, and was beheaded.
- j. Guru Gobind Singh (1675–1708), only son of Tegh Bahadur. In 1699, on the Punjabi New Year’s Day, he baptized the Brotherhood of the Pure Ones, or the *Khalsa*, and gave them and himself a new family name of Singh, which means “lion.” Sikh men now keep the name Singh, while women use the name of Kaur, which means “princess.” Before his death, Gobind Singh proclaimed that the line of Gurus would end. The sacred book, the *Adi Granth*, would be regarded as the living Guru and be known as the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Gobind Singh died at the hands of an assassin.

### B. Beliefs and Practices

Guru Nanak taught that God can only be known through the divine name of “Nam.” The aim of life was union with God, which can be achieved only by blending your light with the eternal light. This blending can be achieved through meditation, when chanting the various names of God would free one from the physical world. This illusion (or *maya*) of the physical world must become detached and the base desires and mind must be overcome in order for one to obtain the true knowledge of God. Nanak thought that realization of Truth came from one’s heart through the light and sound of God.

Sikh Gurus are the mediators of divine grace and the closest embodiments of divinity that can be known on earth. Through them, one can purify oneself and achieve a higher state of consciousness. Sikhs believe that we are all born in ignorance of God’s grace, become awakened to this Truth through the grace of the Guru, and then awaken to realize God. The bliss of this realization allows one to approach God.

The sacred book of the Sikhs, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, is a collection of hymns and poems composed by various Gurus and lay people. It is a unique book compared to other faiths in that it also contains writings by non-Sikhs (Muslims and Hindus, for example). In the Sikh place of worship, called a *Gudwara*, the *Guru Granth Sahib* is treated like a human guru. It is put on a raised platform at the front, and treated as a living Guru. When it is not in use, it resides in a special room. Families

who own a copy will also set aside a room for the book. Whenever the Guru Granth Sahib is to be moved, whether from its own room to the Gudwara, or elsewhere, it is attended by five Sikhs who represent the Khalsa.

Sikhs are expected to rise before dawn, bathe, then recite the sacred prayer of Nanak. Many Sikhs will recite verses from their sacred book during their daily activities. They believe in the discipline of purification and the overcoming of greed, anger, false pride, lust and attachment to materialistic things. At the end of life, a person's good and bad conduct is put on a balance, and the result determines the family, race, and character of the person when reborn. There is no direct belief in heaven or hell. The soul develops through the various reincarnations, until it finally becomes united with the infinite one.

Sikhs developed a warrior attitude because of their history. The conquering Moguls were violent, and the Sikhs formed rebellions against them. When the Khalsa was established, the five K's were instituted:

- a. Kesh (uncut hair)
- b. Kangha (comb)
- c. Kirpan (sword)
- d. Kara (steel bracelet)
- e. Kachch (short pants for use in battle).

As a result Sikhs wear long uncut hair with a comb in it, and a steel bracelet on the right wrist. The sword and short pants are usually reserved for battle.

Sikh infants are given a name at the naming ceremony at a Gudwara. Hymns are sung, and the sacred book is opened at random. The child is given a name beginning with the first letter of the first word on the left page. The parents take some time to consider the name they want, then more hymns are sung when the name is chosen. Sikhs have many ceremonies held to celebrate the birth and death of the ten gurus. They also commemorate the deaths of martyrs, and the festival for the anniversary of the Baisakhi, the date the Khalsa was founded, which was originally a harvest festival. Five major observances include:

- a. Baisakhi
- b. Birthdays of Gurus Nanak and Gobind Singh
- c. Martyrdom of Gurus Arjan and Tegh Bahadur.

All Sikh festivals are marked by continuous forty-eight hour readings of the Guru Granth Sahib.

## C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



- 1 What is the Vedas? What other sacred texts are there in Hinduism?
- 2 What is the sacred text of the Sikhs, and what does it contain?
- 3 What are the five K's in Sikhism?
- 4 What are the idols we must beware of in our lives?

## L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



### *The Authority of the Bible*

Have copies of the TJC publication "Q & A on the Basic Beliefs" ready. Ideally, each student should have a copy for this class and the next lesson. Each group will need one sheet of chart paper, and each student will need a marker.

Our beliefs are revealed to us in the Bible, which is the inspired word of God. Even though all sacred texts contain teachings on how to become a better human being, they do not contain the truth that will lead people to God. In order to be able to defend our beliefs convincingly, we need to understand our church's position regarding the Bible. Today and next week, we will use the Q & A book to help us in our understanding.

Task:

1. Divide students into 5 groups if possible. A group can be a pair, threes or fours.
2. Each group gets one piece of chart paper and each student a marker. Draw a fairly large circle in the middle of the chart paper.
3. Refer to pages 34 and 35 from the Q & A book. Each group will read one of the points: unity, historical and geographical accuracy, prophetic accuracy, scientific accuracy and fulfillment of promises.
4. Have the class do a brainstorming exercise around their circle. Jot down key

- words to the point in their Q & A book.
5. After 5 minutes, ask the students to rotate the chart paper clockwise to another group. Each group should have the chart paper from another group in front of them now.
  6. The new group has to make sure that all the key points have been written down around the circle. They will need to refer to the book and read the point the previous group read. Add anything that is missing to the chart. (5 mins)
  7. Rotate the chart paper clockwise again. The job for this next group is to pick out the key ideas and write it neatly, in point form, in the center circle. They should not refer to the book. Give them 5 minutes to do this.
  8. The chart paper rotates clockwise again. It will now be read by the fourth group. This group will read everything that's there, and agree on what's been written in the center. They may add or edit. (5 mins)
  9. Rotate the chart paper to the next group. Each group selects one person to read aloud what is in the circle, then puts the chart paper up on the wall in class.

At the end of the exercise, every group will have read all the 5 points about the reliability and divine authority of the Bible, as well as thought about the key ideas within each point.

## REFLECTION & PRAYER



*In a multicultural society, it is very difficult to insist that we have the truth. Those who proclaim their message in this way are often labeled "religious fundamentalists." The term is used in a negative way. However, we must hold on to the truth that God teaches us through His Holy Spirit. Let us now pray and ask the Holy Spirit to grant us the courage to embrace the truth despite all external pressure within society. Let us pray.*

## Lesson 12

# Buddhism and Scientology

### Listed Scriptures

Mt 15 & 16; Gal 1:1-12, 3-5

### Lesson Aim

- 1) To learn about other faiths and understand the differences between their beliefs and ours.

### Memory Verse

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him." (Col 1:15-16)

### Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Josh 24; Jer 2, 10, 18:1-17, 19

## BIBLE BACKGROUND



Buddhism is based on the teachings of Buddha. The term "Buddha" was derived from the Sanskrit language—*budh* means to "awaken." Buddha means "awakened" or "enlightened one."

The Buddha was a name given to Siddhartha Gautama. Scholars agree that he was born in Kapilavastu in Nepal near the Indian border. However, scholars disagree about the date of his birth, which was either around 448-368 or 563-483 BC. Siddhartha was born a prince in the kingdom of the Sakyas. His father, Suddhodana, and his mother, Mahamaya, ruled an area called Magadha. Siddhartha was reported to have married a young princess named Yasodhara at the age of sixteen, and to have had a son called Rahula.