

Sermon: What We Believe Really Matters

Text: 2 Peter 2

Discussion Questions:

How familiar are you with what other religions and cults believe about who God is and how a person is "saved"? You shouldn't be surprised that not everybody believes the same thing in respect to these topics. Not even close! Read over and discuss these core beliefs:

Who is the Supreme Being?

Biblical Christianity: One personal / supreme God who is Creator & Lord of everything that exists. He eternally exists as Triune God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

Mormonism: God is an exalted man with a physical body of flesh & bone. Was a man in a pre-existence.

Hinduism: Impersonal Ultimate Reality; or "The absolute" Major Triad: Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu.

Islam: God (Allah) is one. Strict monotheism - "There is no God but Allah."

Who is Jesus?

Biblical Christianity: One divine Person, eternal, with two natures-human & divine. Born on earth as a fully human being. Supreme example of God's character & His love for humanity. Full and final revelation of God and His love.

Mormonism: Jesus is the spiritual & physical offspring of God by procreation. Had a preexistence as God's spirit child and brother of Lucifer.

Hinduism: For some Hindus, Jesus was an Avatar or incarnation of God - one among many Avatars; a great spiritual teacher, a guru.

Islam: A major prophet, spirit of Allah (or God), without sin, but not divine; His miracles are signs that He came from God.

What was the primary work of Jesus?

Biblical Christianity: Jesus was born, lived, & died in a given time & place as a unique historical event. He lived a sinless life & willingly died on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of humanity. He is Messiah (Christ), Lord and Savior.

Mormonism: His death guarantees immortality to all regardless of their faith, but one's exaltation must be completed by works. Suffered in Gethsemane for Adam's original sin.

Hinduism: Jesus was a great religious teacher whose teachings can be valuable today.

Islam: Jesus was sent to the children of Israel & faithfully showed the signs of Allah, taught prayer, & brought the gospel (Injil). He did not die on a cross, but Allah took Him into heaven.

What is the basic human problem?

Biblical Christianity: Sin: By their free will, human beings have chosen to sin against God, rejecting His nature, & course of life that is opposed to His essential character & revealed law.

Mormonism: Sin: disobedience to God's laws. Adam's fall, in God's plan, caused loss of immortality. Each person responsible for his or her own sin.

Hinduism: The human condition is samsara (the flow of reality in which souls are continually dying & being reborn). The present existence is an illusion; people are unaware of their oneness with God.

Islam: Sin: disobedience of responsible human beings to the law of Allah. Sin is caused by human weakness, forgetfulness, & a spirit of rebellion.

What is the solution to the basic human problem (How am I saved)?

Biblical Christianity: Salvation-release from the guilt & power of sin - is God's gift of grace through Christ's atonement, received through personal faith in Christ.

Mormonism: Exaltation or godhood through obedience to Mormon teachings: repentance, faith, baptism, endowments, celestial marriage, tithing. Baptism for the dead saves some non-Mormons posthumously

Hinduism: Goal of life is to gain release (liberation) from the cycle of reincarnation & to pass beyond illusion to become one with the divine (Ultimate Reality) by following the proper yoga (path or discipline).

Islam: Allah (The Merciful One) acts in mercy. A person's salvation depends largely upon personal observance of the Pillars of the Faith & submission to Allah.

Examination:

- **Read 2 Peter 1:19-2:10a**
 - The final three verses of 1 Peter chapter 1 (vv. 18-21) discuss the authority of God's Word, and the reliability of the message of the prophets (the Old Testament). Their message is reliable because it was the Holy Spirit who inspired their words (v. 21).
 - According to 1 Peter 1:19, what is the ultimate purpose of the prophetic message? What do you think it means for "the morning star to rise in your heart"?
 - Do you believe that God's Word is under attack in our world? In what way?
 - Peter says that we "will do well" to pay attention to God's Word. What does he mean by this? What happens if we don't pay attention to it?
 - Peter begins chapter 2 (v. 1) by describing how "back in the day," when the prophets were speaking God's Words (think Moses in 1400BC, or Isaiah in 700BC), there were false prophets who were also claiming to be speaking on behalf of God—but were actually telling lies. That sounds incredibly confusing, doesn't it! And it raises an immediate question: How do you know the difference? Discuss that question. How can you discern if what you're hearing or reading is from God?
 - Peter quickly moves on in the later part of verse 1 to say that the same issue remains the case today. Just as there were false teachers "back in the day," there are also false teachers among us right now. According to verses 1-3, what is the tell-tale sign that what their saying isn't true?
 - In verses 4-6, Peter provides three examples of what God ultimately does to those who sin, or who lead others down the path of sin. What are those examples, and what was God's response? Why is it important for Peter to establish this fact?
 - What can we learn from the example of Lot in verses 7-10a?
- **Read 2 Peter 2:10b-22**
 - What do you think it means that these false teachers "blaspheme in matters they don't understand"? (v. 12) What are some examples of this?
 - Verses 13-14 describe the LIFESTYLE of these false teachers. It's not just what they SAY, it's HOW they live. What is it about their lives that gives them away?
 - The metaphor of "a spring without water" (v. 17) is very powerful. These false teachers PROMISE to provide refreshment and satisfaction—but in reality they have NOTHING to provide. What are some examples of this in our present time?
 - Verses 20-22 describe the person who has been living a sinful lifestyle, and then hears the message of the Gospel. Upon hearing the Truth of God's Word, there is an immediate response. They even come to "know" Jesus as their Lord and Savior. BUT. But before long, they are once again entangled in the corruption of the world.
 - Have you ever seen this happen to someone you know?
 - What is the warning that is contained in these verses?
 - How important is it to not only "know" the Truth—but to live it out?

Application:

There is a SERIOUS warning in this chapter to be careful what you believe—and who you're listening to. False teachers aren't just "out there," they are "among us." Spend time in God's Word. Know what is true. Don't believe everything you hear. If something doesn't sound right, seek wise Godly counsel.