

Study Guide for the Week of April 23, 2006

Christianity and the Religions of the World—Part 2

Buddhism

This study guide is designed to help you to become more familiar with the Bible. Study these passages on your own, with a friend, or with a group. If you or someone you know needs a Bible, please take one from under a chair in the Worship Center. They are there for you to take home and use! Sermon manuscripts are available at www.saintpauls-umc.com.

This week we will examine various Bible passages related to peace and comfort in the face of the anxiety, suffering and difficulties of life which the Buddha noted were a part of the human condition. Christians acknowledge this suffering but find our peace and comfort in God through faith and prayer.

Monday – Review your notes from yesterday’s sermon. The Buddha challenges each of us with regard to the things we are attached to. He is right in noting that our attachments, clinging and desires can lead to suffering. Aaron noted that Christians believe some attachments are given by God and are good. But there are some attachments God would **not** want us to foster. Among these are the craving, desire and attachment to our possessions, power, or an unhealthy obsession with even good desires. Let’s begin our study this week with a study of what Jesus said about these kind of desires – their words echo some of the positive ideas of Buddhism. **Read Matthew 6:24-34.** Now **read Luke 12:13-21.** What is the point of this last story? The Buddha taught non-attachment through meditation. Jesus calls us to keep our minds focused on the most important things first (6:33), to trust in God for the rest, and to not be obsessed with wealth. Invite the Lord to give you a heart of contentment, and to help you trust him, and to help you to seek first the Kingdom of Heaven.

Tuesday – Trusting in God, and committing our ways to him offers us peace. King David knew this and experienced peace in the midst of turmoil through prayer and worship. The Psalms are a collection of the prayers and praises of God’s people through which they found, or expressed, peace. Today we turn to the most famous of these: **Read Psalm 23.** How does this picture of God and the relationship the psalmist had with God bring peace in the face of anxiety and suffering?

Wednesday – Buddhism, like Hinduism, teaches reincarnation through multiple lifetimes. Furthermore, Buddhism teaches that there is no soul – there is no “you” that goes on after this life – only karmic energy which is transferred to another life being born. In addition, when nirvana is finally achieved, this karmic energy is snuffed out, dissipated throughout all creation. Christianity teaches resurrection – that we live this life only once, and then our soul lives on after our body, and is given a new heavenly body. **Read I Corinthians 15,** the entire chapter. Re-read the last verse – a powerful “therefore” in response to the teaching regarding the resurrection. Thank God today for the promise and hope we have in Christ.

Thursday – Let’s look once again at the concept of karma. The key idea is that your deeds and thoughts in past lives, and in this life, will determine your future here and your future lives. The way out of this cycle is to try harder to do more good deeds than bad. But few if any ever attain perfection in this life. Christianity also affirms that we reap what we sow. But among the central tenets of the Christian faith is that God chose to help us by sending his perfect son to suffer on our behalf, taking upon himself our “bad karma” while crediting to our account his “good karma”, thus offering grace instead of endless judgment. **Read II Corinthians 5:19-21.** As those who have received Christ we now pursue a life of love in response to what God has done for us, not seeking to win salvation, but in gratitude for it.

Friday – Christians find their peace, guidance and comfort in prayer, trust and the work of the Holy Spirit. **Read Philippians 4:6-7 and Romans 8:18-39.**