

Siddhartha and Jesus essay



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There are few historical figures, religious or secular, as highly revered as Siddhartha Gautama and Jesus of Nazareth. Both leaders established major religions that are exclusive of each other; one can not subscribe wholly to the tenets of either religion without consequently denying the validity of the other.

Nevertheless, it is evident that the two men shared some common philosophies and experiences. In order to fully understand the differences between Buddhism and Christianity, one must first understand the life and teachings of each of the leaders. Both Siddhartha and Jesus are considered in their respective religions to exemplify what believers should aspire to be. As such, they are considered to have both human and divine characteristics and have unique titles. Jesus is called “ the Messiah” or “ the Christ,” both of which translate into “ the Anointed,” while Siddhartha is regarded as the Buddha, meaning the “ awakened” or “ enlightened” one (Buddha). It is important to note that while Buddhists hold that any follower can become a buddha (Stevenson, 101), Siddhartha is the only person referred to as “ the Buddha.

” The definite articles, as well as the capitalization of the titles, signify each man’s importance to those who ascribe to their teachings. Both Jesus and Siddhartha were very focused on the spreading of their religions through instruction. Each began their teaching around thirty years of age. Many of the philosophies they taught about paralleled each other.

For instance, both placed great emphasis on qualities and practices that pertained more to the enrichment of the human spirit as opposed to the

glorification of the physical body or worldly aspirations (Buddhism). Both men had a global view in mind when they set forth to teach; they each gave missionary commands. It was their express intention that all of the world would be made aware of their teachings (Buddhism). In this way, the religion was not restricted to only the relatively small group within their sphere of influence; rather, the converts that were made through personal teachings from the respective leaders were able to ultimately be responsible for the further teachings. This is especially notable because both Jesus' and Siddhartha's "new" religions stemmed from other well established religions.

These religions, Judaism and Hinduism respectively, are considered ethnic religions (Buddhism), meaning that they refer not only to a particular set of beliefs but also to the culture of the people. Perhaps the most well known philosophy taught by Siddhartha is the concept of karma. One does not have to be a Buddhist to understand the idea that good things come to those who do good things, and conversely, bad things will happen to those who do wrong things. As people often say, "what goes around comes around."

Jesus also taught of this principle; the concept of reaping what you sow is apparent in many of the parables that He taught (Comparison). Siddhartha preached about the Eight-fold Path, a series of values that one must follow to achieve Nirvana, the highest state of being. In order to achieve Nirvana, Siddhartha taught that it is necessary to have right knowledge, right aspiration, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditation. Jesus also taught of the importance of a life filled with proper values.

There were significant differences in the early lives of Siddhartha and Jesus. Siddhartha was born a prince in India, the son of a king. He lived a life characterized by safety, security, luxury, and above all, extreme wealth (Comparison). Jesus' early life was much different. His birth was one clothed in scandal, having been born to an unwed woman claiming to be a virgin. It was also one of extreme humility, having occurred in a stable.

He was born into a poor tradesman's family. Although canonical Christian texts do not elaborate on the matter, it is widely assumed that Jesus Himself worked as a carpenter into adulthood. He became an itinerant preacher at the age of approximately thirty years of age. Another way in which Siddhartha and Jesus differ is in the nature of what is sought. Siddhartha Gautama left his life of wealth and luxury on his quest to learn and expand his understanding of life.

At finding that so many people were suffering in hunger, poverty, and illness, he focused on religion in search of understanding (Buddhism). When he achieved the wisdom he sought, he dedicated his life to sharing it with others. By contrast, Jesus did not seek wisdom. Christian texts ascribe wisdom and knowledge to him at an early age at a level that astounded well educated men who had studied all their lives. They were eager to learn from him. Instead of teaching the pursuit of wisdom, Jesus described God and his kingdom, and essentially himself as conduit, as the goal of the seeker.

While Siddhartha was one who found what he sought, Jesus described himself as that which is the goal to be sought. Many of Siddhartha Gautama's teachings originated in Hindu Philosophy. An important fundamental belief is

the idea that all of life is suffering and all people, even the gods, suffer due to their desires. The Buddha recognized that it is highly improbable that one can satisfy his or her desires, and that even if desires are satisfied he or she will not be happy as a result.

The satisfaction of desires only leads to more desires, so in the end, total satisfaction is unachievable. This results in the suffering of never-ending unsatisfied desire and craving (Stevenson, 100-103). The Buddha taught that the way to escape this suffering was to eliminate desire, since desire itself is ultimately selfish and deluding. He described what is called the Eight-Fold Path, his eight steps to freeing the self from itself and its desires, achieving enlightenment. This state of enlightenment, which he called nirvana, is the transcendence from the state of suffering that defines existence (Contrasting).

Following the Eight-fold Path to enlightenment is an effort engaged by the Buddhist himself, and nirvana, which is the ultimate goal, is achieved by his own success in its application. In contrast to the Buddha's self-reliant philosophy, Jesus taught that achieving the ultimate goal was dependant not on the work of the individual, but was provided by a unique and almighty God. Since people are sinful by their very nature, they are unable to achieve ultimate bliss, which in Christianity is defined as being with God for all of eternity, without God's help (Comparison). This help was provided in the person of Jesus Himself, who gave his life voluntarily as payment for the sins of all people, because they are unable to satisfy their debt. The believer can get into Heaven through the person of Jesus, who referred to himself as " the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (New Living Translation, John 14: 6) Although <https://assignbuster.com/siddhartha-and-jesus-essay/>

good works on the believer's part are important, achieving this goal comes primarily due to faith in Jesus' work and the mercy and grace of God. In conclusion, one can find many similarities and dissimilarities between Siddhartha Gautama and Jesus of Nazareth.

Like many leaders, the impression that they left on the people in their lives has transcended time. The followers of their religions still strive to achieve the ultimate goal, whatever it may be. Through a better understanding of the men behind the religions we are able to gain a better understanding of their religions.