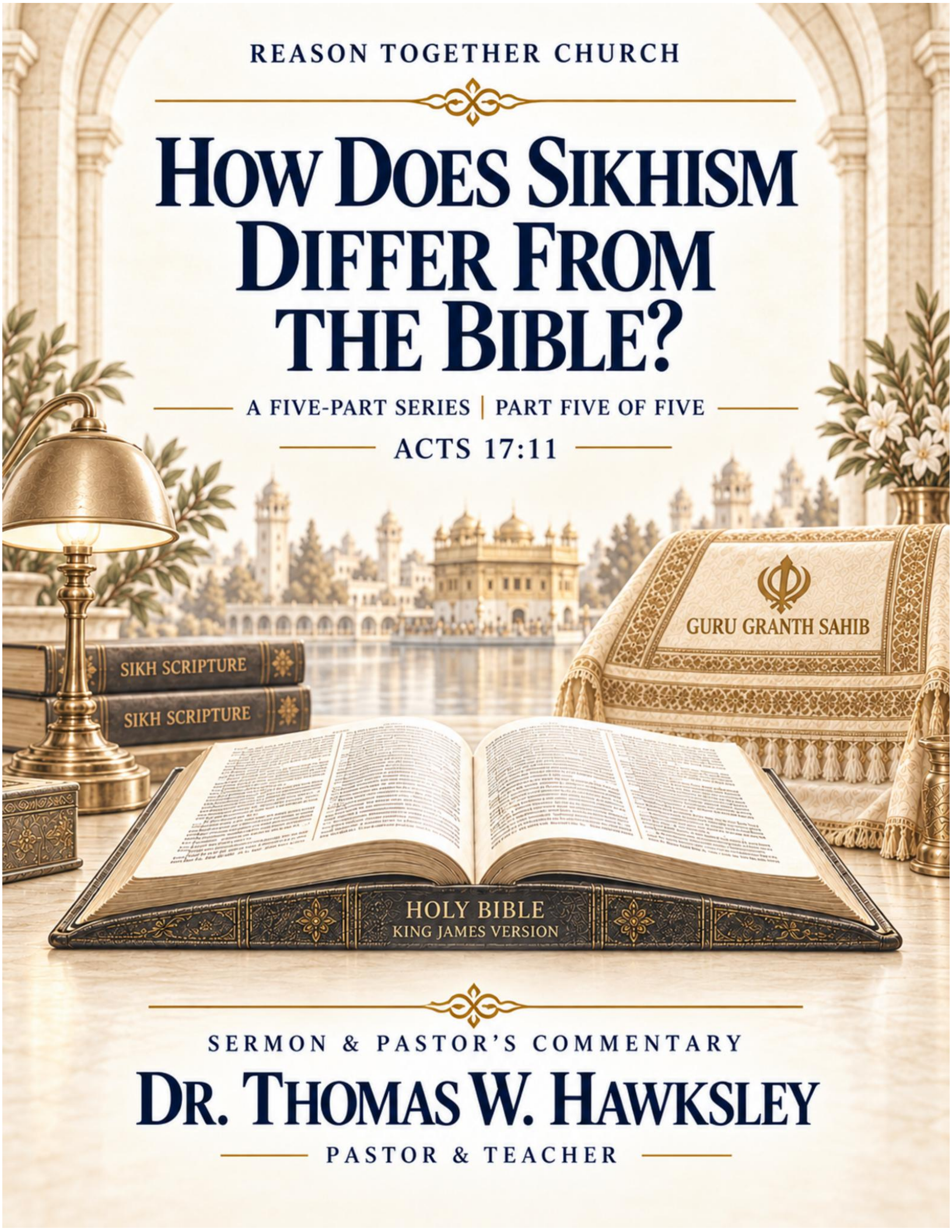


REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

HOW DOES SIKHISM DIFFER FROM THE BIBLE?

A FIVE-PART SERIES | PART FIVE OF FIVE

ACTS 17:11



SERMON & PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

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PASTOR & TEACHER

How Does Sikhism Differ from the Bible

Full Sermon Manuscript

Reason Together Church

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Aloha.

Welcome to Reason Together Church.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let us Reason Together the Word of God.

Today we come to the fifth and final study in our series comparing the teachings of major religions with the King James Version of the Bible.

We have considered Judaism.

We have considered Islam.

We have considered Hinduism.

We have considered Buddhism.

Today we ask, How Does Sikhism Differ from the Bible?

Those five religions are not five versions of the same system.

They disagree with one another about God, revelation, humanity, salvation, death and what follows death.

We will therefore treat Sikhism as a distinct religion.

We will not describe it as half Hinduism and half Islam.

We will not make fun of a turban, uncut hair, a steel bracelet or any other article of Sikh identity.

We will not confuse a Sikh neighbor with a Muslim neighbor merely because we recognize neither religion well.

We will not use the word terrorist when discussing a peaceful person whose appearance is unfamiliar to us.

We will not pretend that every Sikh believes or practices everything in exactly the same way.

We will do our best to describe Sikh teaching accurately.

Then we will place that teaching beside the King James Version of the Bible.

Our controlling authority is not a chart about world religions.

It is not a Christian website.

It is not my opinion.

Our controlling authority is the inspired, authoritative and correct Word of God.

Before we begin, let us pray.

Our Father, we thank You for giving us Your Word.

Protect us from pride, carelessness and cruelty.

Help us speak truthfully about people whose beliefs differ from ours.

Give us courage to identify real disagreement without misrepresenting anyone.

Give us compassion for every person listening.

Most of all, open our eyes to the glory of Jesus Christ.

Let the Holy Ghost use the Word of God to convict us of sin and draw us to the Savior.

We ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Our Scripture reading is John chapter 1, beginning with verse 1.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

“The same was in the beginning with God.”

“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”

“And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”

Verse 10 says, “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.”

Verse 11 says, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”

Verse 12 says, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”

Then verse 14 declares, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”

That statement will become the dividing line in our study.

Sikh teaching describes the Divine as beyond birth.

The Bible declares that the eternal Word was made flesh.

Those statements cannot be made identical by using the word one.

Before we continue, let me give our normal giving reminder.

Reason Together Church does not pass a plate.

Guests are not expected to give.

If you are a member of another church, please continue supporting your home church.

If the Lord leads you to give here, there is a giving box in the back.

If this is your first time with us, we would be honored if you completed a guest card with only your first name and email.

After the service, please join us in the Pastor’s Study on the second floor.

Reason Together Café will be open.

COFFEE reminds us that Christ Offers Forgiveness For Everyone Everywhere.

Refills on conversations are always free.

Now consider a common statement.

Christians and Sikhs both believe in one God.

Therefore, some conclude that Christians and Sikhs worship the same God by different names.

But does using the same word prove that two people mean the same thing?

Two people may both speak of a doctor while referring to two different people.

Two people may both speak of freedom while defining freedom in opposing ways.

Two religions may both use the word grace while disagreeing about what grace does and why it is needed.

The question is not only whether someone believes that God is one.

The question is who that one God is.

How has He revealed Himself?

What is His relationship to creation?

Has He entered human history?

What has He done about our sin?

Before answering those questions, we need to understand where Sikhism began.

Guru Nanak was born in 1469 in the Punjab region of South Asia.

He lived among Hindu traditions, Islamic government, Sufi teachers, devotional movements, caste divisions and many religious ceremonies.

He taught devotion to one Divine Reality.

He rejected empty ritual.

He challenged caste pride.

He emphasized honest work, generosity, remembrance of the Divine Name and truthful living.

Those who followed the teaching became known as Sikhs, meaning learners or disciples.

Guru Nanak was followed by nine human Gurus.

Guru Angad preserved the teaching and promoted Gurmukhi writing.

Guru Amar Das strengthened community service and challenged caste and gender restrictions.

Guru Ram Das became associated with the development of the community at Amritsar.

Guru Arjan compiled the Adi Granth, the earlier form of the central Sikh scripture.

Guru Hargobind emphasized both spiritual and temporal responsibility.

Guru Tegh Bahadur is remembered for martyrdom and defense of religious liberty.

Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa in 1699 and gave initiated Sikhs a disciplined public identity.

Mainstream Sikhism teaches that Guru Gobind Singh ended the line of human Gurus.

Authority now rests in the Guru Granth Sahib and the Guru Khalsa Panth.

The Guru Granth Sahib is not treated merely as a book containing information about a teacher.

It functions as the continuing Guru.

It contains devotional hymns, music and instruction connected with the Sikh Gurus and approved Bhagats from several backgrounds.

When Sikhs bow before the Guru Granth Sahib, we should not carelessly say that they are worshipping paper and ink.

The act expresses reverence for the Guru and submission to its authority.

We can disagree with that authority without lying about what the act means.

The Christian possesses a different authority.

Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God."

The Bible is God's written Word.

The Bible also directs us to the living Son of God.

Hebrews 1 says that God spoke in past times through the prophets and "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

Jesus is not one more human Guru in a continuing succession.

He is the eternal Son through whom God made the worlds.

This difference in authority leads to a difference in the identity of God.

The Guru Granth Sahib opens with the expression Ik Onkar.

English explanations may render it as one Supreme Reality, one Creator or one Universal Creator God.

The opening description speaks of the Divine as true, creative, without fear, without hatred, timeless, beyond birth, self-existent and known by the Guru's grace.

Christians should recognize the seriousness of that confession.

The Bible also teaches that God is one.

Deuteronomy 6:4 says, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD."

The Bible teaches that God created all things.

God is eternal.

God is self-existent.

God is holy.

God gives grace.

Yet those points of contact do not erase the differences.

Sikh teaching commonly speaks of the Divine as beyond creation while also pervasively present throughout creation.

It speaks of divine presence within all people.

That teaching supports Sikh commitments to human equality and opposition to caste discrimination.

The Bible also teaches human equality, but it gives a different reason.

Genesis 1 says humanity was created in the image of God.

Being made in God's image does not make us pieces of God.

The portrait is not the person it portrays.

The creature is not the Creator.

Romans 1 warns against worshiping and serving "the creature more than the Creator."

God is present everywhere, yet God remains distinct from everything He made.

Someone may respond that Christians also say God lives within people.

Romans 8:9 gives an important qualification.

"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

God is omnipresent.

Every human bears His image.

But the Holy Ghost indwells those who belong to Christ in a saving covenant relationship.

The Bible does not teach that every person possesses the same spiritual union with God without conversion.

The indwelling Spirit does not make a Christian part of God's essence.

It makes the Christian God's redeemed child and temple.

Sikhism and Christianity also disagree about the Trinity.

A Sikh may hear Christians speak of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost and conclude that we believe in three Gods.

We do not.

The Father is God.

The Son is God.

The Holy Ghost is God.

The Father is not the Son.

The Son is not the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is not the Father.

These three Persons eternally share the one divine nature.

When Jesus commanded baptism, He said, “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

He used one name while identifying three Persons.

At the baptism of Jesus, the Son stood in the water.

The Holy Ghost descended like a dove.

The Father spoke from heaven.

That is not one Person changing costumes.

It is not three competing gods.

It is the one God revealing Himself as Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

The Trinity does not abandon monotheism.

It identifies the one God according to His own revelation.

The greatest disagreement appears when we return to the opening of the Guru Granth Sahib.

The Divine is described as ajooni, beyond birth.

From a Sikh perspective, incarnation may appear to reduce the infinite God to a physical form.

Christians also reject the idea that God stopped being God.

We reject the idea that the infinite God was changed into a mere creature.

John does not say the Word began in Bethlehem.

He says, “In the beginning was the Word.”

He does not say the Word was almost God.

He says, “the Word was God.”

He says all things were made by Him.

Then he says, “the Word was made flesh.”

The eternal Son assumed a true human nature without surrendering His divine nature.

He did not receive a mortal body because of karma from a previous life.

He entered history voluntarily to redeem sinners.

The incarnation was not reincarnation.

It was the unique coming of God the Son in human flesh.

First Timothy 3:16 says, “God was manifest in the flesh.”

The question cannot be avoided.

If Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, He cannot be placed beside every other religious teacher as one helpful voice among many.

If Jesus is not God manifest in the flesh, Christianity is false at its foundation.

The religions do not merely offer different words for the same truth.

They make contradictory claims.

Now we must ask what is wrong with humanity.

Sikh teaching frequently identifies haumai as a central problem.

Haumai concerns ego-centeredness, self-assertion and the false sense of separation from the Divine.

Sikh teaching also warns against five thieves: lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride.

The Bible agrees that each of these is a serious spiritual problem.

Lust corrupts desire.

Anger destroys relationships.

Greed worships possessions.

Attachment makes the world more precious than God.

Pride exalts the self.

Yet the Bible's diagnosis goes deeper than saying we lack awareness or live under ego.

First John 3:4 says, "sin is the transgression of the law."

Sin is not merely forgetting who we are.

Sin is violating the command of the God who made us.

Sin brings real guilt.

Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Romans 5:12 says, "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin."

Adam disobeyed God.

Sin entered human experience.

Death followed sin.

Every one of us has also sinned personally.

We have not loved God with all our heart.

We have not loved our neighbor as ourselves.

We have lied, coveted, hated and placed ourselves above God.

Humanity is not merely uninformed.

Humanity is guilty.

Humanity is spiritually dead.

Humanity faces judgment.

If our problem were only ignorance, we would need a teacher.

If our problem were only ego, we would need discipline and humility.

If our problem were only attachment, we would need release.

Because our problem includes guilt before a holy God, we need atonement.

Because we are spiritually dead, we need new birth.

Because our bodies die, we need resurrection.

Sikhism places the human condition within karma and repeated birth.

Actions bear moral consequences.

Present conduct affects spiritual condition.

The soul remains within the cycle of birth and death until liberation.

We should not reduce Sikh teaching to a points chart in which enough good deeds automatically purchase a better body.

Sikh teaching also emphasizes divine grace, the Guru, Naam and transformation.

Still, karma belongs to a worldview of repeated birth.

Someone may point to Galatians 6:7, which says, “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

The Bible certainly teaches moral consequences.

It does not teach that we are reaping deeds performed in a forgotten previous life.

It does not teach that we will return for another mortal life.

Biblical sowing and reaping occurs within the framework of creation, one earthly life, death, judgment and resurrection.

Karma also raises a serious question about forgiveness.

If every action carries a just consequence, upon what basis can grace release a guilty person without justice being ignored?

The Bible does not answer by pretending sin never happened.

God does not call evil good.

God does not erase His law.

Romans 3:26 explains that God is “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

How can God remain just while justifying the guilty?

The answer is the cross.

Christ took the judgment of sinners.

Isaiah 53 says, “he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.”

First Peter 2:24 says that Jesus “his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.”

Biblical grace is not God overlooking evil.

Biblical grace is God providing His Son to bear the judgment we deserved.

Justice is not abandoned.

Justice falls upon the willing Substitute.

Mercy is not earned.

Mercy is offered because Christ paid the price.

That brings us to the Sikh concept of mukti.

Mukti refers to liberation from ego, attachment, spiritual bondage and the cycle of birth and death.

It may be described as union with the Divine, nearness to the Divine, harmony with Hukam or liberation while still living.

Naam Simran involves remembrance and meditation upon the Divine Name.

Seva is selfless service without seeking recognition.

Sikh communities have often demonstrated the practical power of service through langar, the communal kitchen and meal open to all.

Christians should be willing to acknowledge generous service when we see it.

Feeding a hungry person is good.

Serving without applause is good.

Rejecting caste pride is good.

Honest labor is good.

But none of those good actions provides an offering for sin.

Service may help my neighbor.

It cannot remove my guilt before God.

Meditation may discipline my attention.

It cannot change the historical fact that I have sinned.

Religious devotion may appear sincere.

It cannot raise my dead body.

Biblical salvation includes forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, new birth, adoption, the indwelling Holy Ghost and the promise of bodily resurrection.

Ephesians 2:8 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

Verse 9 says, "Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Verse 10 immediately says that believers are created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

Good works have a proper place.

They are not the price of salvation.

They are the fruit of salvation.

We are not saved by serving.

We are saved to serve.

Sikhism includes grace, but its grace operates within a path of liberation involving the Guru, Naam and transformed living.

Biblical grace rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus cried, "It is finished," He did not announce that He had shown us the first step in a cycle.

He announced that His saving work had been accomplished.

Now turn to Hebrews 9:27.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

Notice the order.

One earthly life.

One physical death.

Then judgment.

The verse does not leave room for a return to another mortal body.

Jesus did not teach Nicodemus that he needed another physical birth after death.

He taught that a person needs spiritual birth from above in this life.

The Biblical hope is resurrection.

Resurrection does not mean returning as another person, animal or life form.

God raises the person who died.

Personal identity remains.

The body is transformed.

Judgment is final.

Everlasting destiny follows.

John 5 says that all who are in the graves will hear Christ's voice and come forth.

Some rise unto the resurrection of life.

Others rise unto the resurrection of damnation.

Reincarnation and resurrection cannot both describe our destiny in the same sense.

Then Hebrews 9:28 completes the comparison.

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."

One earthly life.

One coming judgment.

One sufficient sacrifice.

We do not need repeated lives because Christ does not need repeated sacrifices.

We do not need another mortal body to pay yesterday's debt.

We need the righteousness of the One who paid the debt in full.

Christianity also rests upon a claim about history.

First Corinthians 15 says Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

He was buried.

He rose again the third day.

He was seen by Peter, the twelve and many other witnesses.

Paul did not present resurrection as a symbol of positive thinking.

He did not say Jesus lived on only in the memory of His followers.

He declared that the crucified Jesus appeared alive.

First Corinthians 15:14 says, “if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.”

Christianity does not merely offer another theory of liberation.

It announces that something happened in history.

Jesus Christ walked bodily out of the grave.

If that did not happen, our faith collapses.

If it did happen, Jesus cannot be reduced to one respected teacher among many.

His resurrection confirms His identity and guarantees the believer’s resurrection.

The Christian hope is not escape from embodiment forever.

It is a redeemed body in God’s renewed creation.

Philippians 3 says Christ will change our vile body and fashion it like His glorious body.

Revelation 21 speaks of a new heaven and a new earth where God dwells with His people.

Sikh history contains honored martyrs.

Guru Arjan is remembered for suffering rather than abandoning conviction.

Guru Tegh Bahadur is remembered for defending religious liberty.

Sikh families may carry deep respect for courage under persecution.

We can recognize courage without changing theology.

Was Jesus simply another courageous religious teacher who died for what He believed?

John 10:18 records His words: “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.”

Jesus gave His life voluntarily.

His death was more than martyrdom.

A martyr’s death may inspire us.

Christ’s death atones for us.

A martyr may defend another person’s freedom.

Christ bears another person's sin.

A martyr cannot reconcile humanity to God.

Jesus is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.

Jesus did not merely die for what He believed.

He died for sinners.

That is why the Bible calls Him the one mediator.

First Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

A Guru dispels darkness, communicates truth and directs a disciple toward liberation.

Jesus is not merely a Guru who offers better instructions.

He is truly God and truly man.

He is sinless.

He bore sin.

He conquered death.

He lives forever.

He alone can place one hand upon holy God and one hand upon sinful humanity because He alone is the God-man.

John 14:6 records His declaration.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

A guru may teach a way.

Jesus is the way.

A guru may communicate truth.

Jesus is the truth.

A guru may direct someone toward life.

Jesus is the life.

Jesus does not merely tell us how to save ourselves.

Jesus saves.

Someone may say that this sounds arrogant.

It would be arrogant for Christians to claim that we invented the only way.

We did not invent it.

We are not claiming that we are better people.

We are confessing that we could not save ourselves.

If a doctor identifies the only treatment capable of curing a fatal disease, truthfulness requires the doctor to say so.

Acts 4:12 says, “Neither is there salvation in any other.”

That message excludes every competing savior, but it welcomes every people.

There is no superior race at the cross.

There is no saving caste.

There is no Western ownership of Jesus.

There is no economic class with privileged access.

Every sinner comes through the same Savior.

Jesus was not born in Europe or America.

The gospel reached Africa and Asia during the apostolic period.

Revelation 5 describes redeemed people from every kindred, tongue, people and nation.

Sadhu Sundar Singh, born into a Sikh family in Punjab, later became a Christian preacher who retained an Indian manner of dress and communication.

His experiences are not our authority.

The Bible is our authority.

His life nevertheless illustrates that Jesus Christ is not a Western deity.

A Sikh does not need to become culturally American to follow Jesus.

A Filipino does not need to become culturally American to follow Jesus.

A Hawaiian does not need to become culturally Jewish to follow Jesus.

Every person must give Jesus the worship, trust and authority that belong to Him alone.

We should also be honest about moral comparison.

A Sikh may feed more hungry people than a professing Christian.

A Sikh may show greater courage than a church member.

A Sikh may be more disciplined, hospitable or truthful than someone who carries a Bible.

Those comparisons should humble Christians.

They do not determine whether reincarnation is true.

They do not determine whether Jesus is God.

They do not determine whether the tomb was empty.

Truth does not change because a person who professes it behaves hypocritically.

Yet hypocrisy can make truth harder for another person to hear.

If we proclaim grace while refusing to love our neighbor, we contradict our message with our conduct.

We are not saved because we are better.

We are saved because Christ is sufficient.

Let us gather the comparison into five questions that you can carry with you.

First, what is the final authority?

For mainstream Sikhism, the Guru Granth Sahib functions as the continuing Guru within the life of the Panth.

For the Christian, the Bible is the inspired written Word that bears authoritative witness to Jesus Christ.

These authorities do not merely use different illustrations.

They give different answers about the incarnation, sin, death and final destiny.

We cannot submit to both whenever they contradict one another.

Second, who is God?

It is not enough to answer that God is one.

The Bible reveals that the one God eternally exists as Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

The Son was not created.

The Son did not become divine through spiritual progress.

The Son did not receive a title because He taught with unusual wisdom.

The Word was God and the Word was made flesh.

Third, what is wrong with us?

The five thieves describe real corruptions of the human heart.

Pride is real.

Greed is real.

Lust is real.

Anger is real.

Disordered attachment is real.

But the Bible will not allow us to speak only of inward imbalance.

We have sinned against the holy God.

We do not merely need to become less self-centered.

We need forgiveness for actual guilt.

We need a new heart.

We need life from the dead.

Fourth, what has God done to save?

The gospel is not first an instruction about what we must accomplish.

It is an announcement of what Jesus Christ has accomplished.

He came.

He obeyed.

He suffered.

He bore sin.

He died.

He was buried.

He rose.

He reigns.

Christian service begins after that announcement.

We love because He first loved us.

We serve because we have received grace.

We do not serve to turn the cross into a down payment that our efforts must complete.

Fifth, what happens after death?

The Bible does not tell us to expect another mortal childhood.

It does not tell us that forgotten deeds from a forgotten life explain every present hardship.

It tells us that we will die once, stand before God and be raised.

The believer's hope is not that personal identity will dissolve into an undefined absolute.

The believer's hope is to see Jesus, to be made like Him and to dwell with Him in a redeemed creation.

Those five questions reveal why the differences are not minor.

Authority.

God.

The human problem.

God's saving act.

Final destiny.

At every point the Bible brings us back to Jesus.

He is the subject we cannot place at the edge of the discussion.

He is the dividing line.

He is also the invitation.

Now bring the entire five-part series to one question.

Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism do not teach the same thing.

They disagree with one another as well as with the Bible.

But every comparison eventually brings us to Jesus Christ.

Who is He?

Is He merely a Jewish teacher?

Is He only a prophet?

Is He one divine manifestation among many?

Is He an enlightened religious figure?

Is He one respected teacher standing beside the Gurus?

Or is He the eternal Word made flesh?

If Jesus is who the Bible says He is, He cannot be placed politely beside every other authority.

He must be received as Lord.

This invitation is not directed only to Sikh guests.

You may have been raised Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, Christian or with no religion at all.

Your background does not remove your sin.

Your background does not prevent Christ from saving you.

God is holy.

You and I have sinned.

Our sin brings death and judgment.

Jesus is God the Son made flesh.

He lived without sin.

He bore our sins upon the cross.

He died and was buried.

He rose bodily from the grave.

He offers forgiveness and eternal life.

You must repent and believe upon Him.

Romans 10:9 says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Acts 16:31 says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

A prayer does not become another religious ritual.

Repeating my words will not save you.

Jesus saves the person who turns to Him in faith.

If you are ready to trust Him, you may speak to Him now.

Father, I confess that I am a sinner.

I cannot remove my guilt through religion, service or good works.

I believe Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God who came in the flesh.

I believe He bore my sins upon the cross.

I believe He died, was buried and rose bodily from the grave.

I turn from my sin and every competing spiritual authority.

I place my trust in Jesus Christ alone.

Forgive me.

Give me eternal life.

Teach me to follow You according to Your Word.

I ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

If you prayed sincerely, please understand that following Christ may bring difficult questions.

You may fear rejection by your family.

You may wonder which parts of your culture you can retain.

You may face conflict during weddings, funerals or religious ceremonies.

You may worry that Christians will not understand your background.

You do not need to face those questions alone.

Please speak with me after the service.

We will open the Bible together, pray with you and walk with you patiently.

Following Christ does not require you to despise your family, language or cultural history.

It does require you to give Christ first place and refuse every spiritual authority that competes with Him.

Amen.

Church, let us apply what we have learned.

Learn before you speak.

Do not confuse Sikhs with followers of another religion.

Never mock a turban, uncut hair or article of faith.

Ask respectful questions.

Listen carefully to the answer.

Explain Jesus positively.

Serve Sikh neighbors sincerely.

Invite them to read the Gospel of John with you.

Let your conduct support the gospel you proclaim.

If you are investigating Christianity, do not decide the question by comparing the worst Christian you have met with the best Sikh you have met.

Open the Bible and investigate Jesus Christ.

Ask whether He is the eternal Word made flesh.

Ask whether He bore your sins.

Ask whether He rose from the dead.

Ask whether anyone else has done what He did.

Remember the message of Hebrews 9.

One earthly life.

One coming judgment.

One sufficient sacrifice.

Sikhism presents devotion, discipline and liberation within karma and rebirth.

The Bible presents the incarnate, crucified and risen Son of God.

Jesus does not merely show the way.

Jesus is the way.

Please join us after the service in the Pastor's Study on the second floor.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let us Reason Together the Word of God.

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

Aloha Nui Loa.

How Does Sikhism Differ from the Bible

Biblical Commentary

Reason Together Church

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Understanding the Question

Sikhism and Biblical Christianity both speak of one God, grace, truth, devotion and service. Those shared words can create the impression that the two religions differ only in culture. A closer comparison shows that they identify God, humanity's problem and salvation differently.

This Commentary follows the order of the sermon and provides the background needed to examine each claim. It treats Sikhs respectfully while allowing the KJV to control the Biblical conclusion. The goal is neither hostility nor artificial agreement. The goal is accurate comparison.

The central question is not whether both traditions use the word God. The question is who God is, how He has revealed Himself and whether Jesus Christ is the eternal Son made flesh.

Guru Nanak and the Sikh Tradition

Guru Nanak was born in 1469 in the Punjab. His setting included Hindu traditions, Islamic rule, Sufi devotional currents, the Sant movement, caste divisions and ritual practices. He taught devotion to one Divine Reality, remembrance of the Divine Name, truthful living, honest labor and generosity. He also rejected empty ritual and challenged caste pride.

It is inaccurate to describe Sikhism as simply a mixture of Hinduism and Islam. Nanak used language known in his region, but the Sikh community developed its own Gurus, scripture, worship, institutions and discipline.

Nine human Gurus followed Nanak. Guru Arjan compiled the Adi Granth. Guru Hargobind strengthened the community's spiritual and temporal responsibility. Guru Tegh Bahadur is remembered for martyrdom and defense of freedom of conscience. Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa in 1699 and ended the succession of human Gurus in mainstream Sikh understanding.

The Guru Granth Sahib and Authority

The Guru Granth Sahib is the central Sikh scripture and the continuing Guru of mainstream Sikhism. It contains hymns associated with Sikh Gurus and approved Bhagats. Its poetry is organized for musical and devotional use.

Sikhs who bow before the Guru Granth Sahib express reverence for the Guru and submission to its authority. Christians may reject that authority without misrepresenting the practice as simple worship of a physical object.

The KJV presents a different relationship between Scripture and Christ. The Bible is inspired written revelation. It bears authoritative witness to the living Son. Hebrews 1:1-2 says that God,

who spoke through the prophets, has now spoken by His Son. Jesus is not the next member of a line of human spiritual guides.

Ik Onkar and Biblical Monotheism

Ik Onkar opens the Guru Granth Sahib and affirms one ultimate Creator. The Mool Mantar describes the Divine as true, creative, without fear, without hatred, timeless, beyond birth, self-existent and known by grace.

The Bible also teaches that God is one. Deuteronomy 6:4 calls the LORD one LORD. Genesis 1:1 identifies God as Creator. These agreements should be acknowledged.

Agreement about numerical oneness does not settle God's identity. Biblical monotheism includes the Father's deity, the Son's deity and the Holy Ghost's deity while maintaining one God. Matthew 28:19 joins the Father, Son and Holy Ghost under one name. John 1 identifies the eternal Word as both with God and God.

Question	Mainstream Sikh teaching	KJV teaching
God	One ultimate Creator, timeless and beyond birth	One Creator revealed as Father, Son and Holy Ghost
Incarnation	The Divine is beyond birth	The eternal Word was made flesh
Creation	The Divine is pervasively present	God is present but distinct from creation
Revelation	Guru Granth Sahib as continuing Guru	Inspired Scripture bearing witness to the Son

Creator Creation and Divine Presence

Representative Sikh explanations speak of the Divine as present throughout creation and within all people. This understanding supports equality and opposition to caste discrimination.

The Bible grounds equality in creation in God's image. It also distinguishes the Creator from the creature. God is omnipresent and sustains everything, yet creation is not part of God's essence.

The indwelling Holy Ghost must also be distinguished from universal divine presence. Romans 8:9 states that anyone without the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ. The Spirit indwells believers in a saving relationship. This does not make the believer divine.

The Trinity and the Incarnation

Christians do not believe in three gods. The one divine Being eternally exists as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The Persons are distinct but share the one divine nature.

The sharpest contrast appears between the Sikh description of the Divine as ajooni, beyond birth, and John 1:14, which says the Word was made flesh. The incarnation does not mean the Son

began to exist in Bethlehem or ceased to be God. He assumed a true human nature while remaining fully divine.

The incarnation is not reincarnation. Christ did not return in another mortal body because of karma. The eternal Son entered history once to redeem sinners.

Haumai Sin and the Fall

Haumai refers to ego-centeredness, pride and a false sense of separation. Sikh teaching also warns against lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. Christians should acknowledge the moral seriousness of these warnings.

The Bible's diagnosis includes those vices but reaches further. Sin is transgression of God's law. Adam's disobedience brought sin and death into human experience. Every person also sins personally and stands guilty before God.

The different diagnoses lead to different remedies. Ego and ignorance suggest awakening, discipline and liberation. Guilt and spiritual death require atonement, forgiveness and regeneration.

Karma Justice and Forgiveness

Sikhism teaches that actions have consequences across the cycle of birth and death. Grace, Hukam and the Guru prevent this teaching from being reduced fairly to a mechanical scorecard.

The Bible teaches moral sowing and reaping but not previous or future mortal lives. Hebrews 9:27 says that a person dies once and then faces judgment.

The cross explains how God forgives without abandoning justice. Romans 3:26 calls God just and the justifier of the person who believes in Jesus. Christ bore the penalty of sin. Mercy is free to the sinner because it was costly to the Savior.

Mukti Naam Seva and Biblical Salvation

Mukti concerns liberation from ego, attachment, bondage and rebirth. Naam Simran means remembrance and meditation upon the Divine Name. Seva is selfless service without desire for recognition. Sikh langar provides a visible example of service and equality.

Biblical salvation addresses guilt, condemnation and death. It includes forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, new birth, adoption, the indwelling Spirit and future resurrection.

Ephesians 2:8-10 assigns good works their proper place. Salvation is God's gift received through faith. Good works follow as the fruit of new life. They do not purchase forgiveness.

Issue	Sikh framework	Biblical framework
Human problem	Haumai, attachment, karma and rebirth	Sin, guilt, death and judgment
Goal	Mukti or liberation	Forgiveness, reconciliation and resurrection
Means	Grace, Guru, Naam, devotion and truthful living	Grace through faith based on Christ's atonement
Good works	Seva belongs to the spiritual path	Good works follow salvation
Assurance	Humility before grace	Promise grounded in possessing the Son

Reincarnation and Resurrection

Reincarnation places human existence within repeated birth and death. Mukti releases the person from that cycle. Biblical resurrection follows one earthly life, death and judgment.

Resurrection is not another mortal birth. God raises the person who died. The body is transformed and personal identity remains. John 5:28-29 describes a resurrection of life and a resurrection of damnation.

Christ's bodily resurrection is a historical claim at the center of Christianity. First Corinthians 15 says that without it Christian preaching and faith are empty. The gospel therefore stands or falls with what happened to Jesus after His crucifixion.

Reincarnation	Biblical resurrection
Repeated mortal births	One earthly life
Karma continues across lives	Death is followed by judgment
Liberation releases from the cycle	God raises and transforms the person
Final hope moves beyond rebirth	Final hope is everlasting embodied life

Martyrdom and Atonement

Sikh history honors martyrs, including Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur. Their courage should be described respectfully.

The death of Jesus is unique in purpose and effect. He voluntarily laid down His life and bore sins. A martyr may inspire others through courage. Christ reconciles sinners to God through substitutionary sacrifice.

Isaiah 53, Mark 10:45, Romans 3:25-26 and 1 Peter 2:24 explain why the cross cannot be reduced to the death of a brave teacher.

The Guru and the One Mediator

A Guru communicates spiritual truth and guides the disciple. First Timothy 2:5 identifies Jesus as the one mediator between God and humanity.

Jesus qualifies uniquely because He is truly God, truly man, sinless, crucified and risen. He does not merely explain a path of salvation. John 14:6 records His declaration that He is the way, the truth and the life.

Christian exclusivity is not a claim that Christians are morally or culturally superior. It is a claim about Christ's unique identity and work.

Sikh Identity and the Five Ks

The Khalsa is the initiated Sikh community established under Guru Gobind Singh. Amrit Sanchar marks formal initiation and commitment to the Sikh discipline.

The Five Ks are kesh, unshorn hair; kanga, a comb; kara, a steel bracelet; kirpan, an article associated with responsibility and defense against injustice; and kachera, a disciplined garment. The turban is a central visible sign of identity but is not itself one of the Five Ks.

These articles should be treated as commitments of identity and obedience, not five methods of earning liberation. The Sikh Coalition compares their relational significance to a wedding ring whose meaning exceeds its practical function.

Christian Witness and Cultural Respect

Following Jesus does not require a Sikh to become culturally Western. Language, family affection, food and nonreligious customs do not belong to one religion. Spiritual worship and authority must nevertheless be given to Christ alone.

Sadhu Sundar Singh, born into a Sikh family in Punjab, became a Christian preacher while retaining an Indian manner of dress and communication. His experiences are not doctrinal authority, but his life illustrates that Christianity is not Western property.

Christian witness should begin with listening. Ask what the individual Sikh believes rather than reciting a chart. Explain Jesus positively. Offer to read the Gospel of John together. Be prepared to support anyone facing family or cultural consequences because of faith in Christ.

Key Terms for Careful Conversation

Ik Onkar is the opening affirmation of one ultimate Reality or Creator. Christians may begin with the shared conviction that there is one Creator, then ask how that Creator has revealed Himself. The expression should not be treated as if it were simply another spelling of the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity.

Guru means a spiritual teacher who dispels darkness. In mainstream Sikh life, the title applies to the ten historical Gurus and now to the Guru Granth Sahib. Calling Jesus a guru can sound respectful, but the word is insufficient if it reduces Him to a teacher. The New Testament identifies Him as Creator, Lord, sacrifice, mediator and risen Son.

Shabad means word, hymn or divine instruction and often points to the Guru's revelatory word. Naam refers to the Divine Name and the reality made known through it. Naam Simran is attentive remembrance or meditation upon the Name. A Christian should not assume that Naam is identical to calling upon the name of Jesus in the New Testament. The practices rest within different accounts of God and salvation.

Hukam refers to divine order, command or will. It includes more than a single rule and concerns living in harmony with the Divine ordering of reality. Biblical submission to God's will is personal obedience to the Creator who speaks, judges and redeems. Similar language about surrender must therefore be interpreted within each tradition.

Haumai is commonly associated with ego, self-centeredness or the false assertion of the self. It helps explain why humility and remembrance matter in Sikh practice. Biblical sin includes pride but also guilt for transgressing God's law. Haumai and sin overlap at points without being equivalent diagnoses.

Mukti means liberation. Sikh descriptions connect it with freedom from ego, attachment and rebirth, sometimes as a present liberation while living. Biblical salvation includes present justification and new life but moves toward bodily resurrection rather than release from a cycle of bodies.

Seva is selfless service. Langar, the open communal meal, gives seva a visible communal expression. Christians can honor such generosity and practice hospitality themselves. Service remains evidence of love rather than an atoning payment for sin.

Khalsa refers to the initiated Sikh community established by Guru Gobind Singh. The Five Ks publicly express its discipline and identity. They should not be mocked, confused with weapons of aggression or presented as five techniques for earning salvation.

Reading the Controlling Bible Passages

John 1:1-14 establishes Christ's identity before it describes His coming. The Word already exists in the beginning, is with God and is God. All created things come into being through Him. Verse 14 therefore does not describe a human teacher discovering divinity. It describes the eternal

Creator assuming human flesh. This passage answers both the identity of Jesus and the meaning of the incarnation.

Romans 3:23-26 joins universal guilt, grace, redemption, atonement and justice. All have sinned. Justification is freely given by grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus. God does not forgive by declaring that evil has no consequence. He sets forth Christ as the propitiation and remains just while justifying the believer. This is the central Biblical answer to the tension between moral consequence and mercy.

Romans 5:12-21 places humanity under two representative heads. Sin and death enter through Adam. Righteousness and life come through Jesus Christ. The solution is not a succession of lives in which the same soul gradually repairs itself. It is transfer from Adam's condemned humanity into Christ's redeemed people through God's gift.

First Timothy 2:3-6 combines a wide invitation with one mediator. God desires people to be saved and Christ gives Himself a ransom for all. The universality of the offer does not require many saving mediators. It magnifies the sufficiency of the one mediator who is truly human and uniquely able to reconcile humanity to God.

Hebrews 9:24-28 repeats the word once. Christ enters heaven itself, appears before God for His people and offers Himself once. Human beings die once and face judgment. Christ is offered once to bear sins and will appear again. The passage joins one life, one judgment, one sacrifice and one returning Savior. Reincarnation and repeated sacrifice are both excluded by the finality of His work.

First Corinthians 15 treats resurrection as public gospel truth. Christ died for sins, was buried, rose on the third day and appeared to witnesses. Paul allows the claim to be tested: if Christ did not rise, preaching and faith are empty. The chapter also explains bodily transformation. Resurrection preserves personal identity while changing the body from corruption to incorruption.

John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 state the exclusivity of Christ directly. Their force should not be softened into the claim that Jesus is one particularly effective path. Neither should they be used with personal superiority. Christians stand under the same verdict of sin and depend upon the same mercy they offer to others.

A Whole-System Comparison

Religions should be compared as connected systems rather than as lists of isolated words. In Sikhism, the Guru, Shabad, Naam, Hukam, karma, rebirth, seva and mukti belong together. In Biblical Christianity, creation, fall, covenant, incarnation, atonement, justification, new birth, resurrection and judgment belong together.

This method prevents false equivalence. Grace in one system may not answer the same problem or rest upon the same act as grace in another. Meditation upon the Divine Name is not automatically the same as faith in the crucified and risen Christ. Liberation from rebirth is not the same destination as resurrection life in a renewed creation.

It also prevents unfair reduction. Sikh teaching should not be described as earning points through works while ignoring grace and the Guru. Biblical Christianity should not be described as intellectual agreement without transformed living. Ephesians 2 places grace before works but still insists that redeemed people are created unto good works.

The most productive comparison therefore asks a sequence of questions. What source has final authority? Who is God? What is a human being? What went wrong? What has God done? How is the saving benefit received? What kind of life follows? What happens at death? What is the final hope? Once those questions are answered, the decisive differences become clear without mockery.

Difficult Questions

Does belief in one God mean Christians and Sikhs worship the same God? No. Numerical oneness does not settle God's identity. The traditions disagree about the Trinity, incarnation, revelation and salvation.

Do Sikhs believe Jesus was a prophet? Some individuals may use that or another respectful title, but mainstream Sikh authority supplies no single developed Christology. The sound comparison asks what Sikhism does not confess about Christ.

Is Sikhism a works religion? That label is incomplete. Sikhism includes grace, the Guru and Naam as well as disciplined living and service. The Biblical difference concerns the ground of forgiveness in Christ's atonement.

Are the Five Ks ways of salvation? No. They are articles of Khalsa identity, discipline and commitment.

Does Sikhism teach that every religion is equally true? Representative explanations affirm different paths to connection with the Divine, but Sikhism retains its own authority and does not approve every doctrine of every religion.

Why is Christianity exclusive? Because the Bible identifies Jesus as the incarnate Son, sin-bearing Savior and risen Lord. The offer is universal even though the Savior is unique.

Reflection Questions

1. Why does the shared phrase one God fail to settle the identity of God?
2. How does the Creator-creature distinction differ from divine presence within all people?
3. Why is the incarnation incompatible with treating Jesus as only another religious teacher?
4. How does the Biblical doctrine of sin differ from haumai and ignorance?
5. How does the cross allow God to remain just while forgiving sinners?
6. Why can reincarnation and resurrection not both describe final human destiny?
7. What is the difference between a martyr's courageous death and Christ's atoning death?
8. How should Christians acknowledge Sikh virtue without confusing virtue with doctrinal truth?
9. What practical steps would help you speak respectfully with a Sikh neighbor?
10. Have you personally trusted the incarnate, crucified and risen Jesus Christ?

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