

THE ASSURANCE OF OUR FAITH

By Barney Hartline

LESSON 1—Right Convictions

Examples of wrong convictions:

Hebrews 11:1 (NASB)

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

It is possible to be assured of and convicted of the wrong things. How is it that so many people were mistaken about the examples cited below?

- 1.) The Tooth Fairy
- 2.) Adolf Hitler, was elected with 90% of the vote
- 3.) The crucifixion of Jesus, 100% of the crowd called for his crucifixion.
- 4.) The world is flat and the sun, moon and stars revolve around it.

Rev. 7:1 (NASB)

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth,

Joshua 10:13 (NASB)

So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,

- 5.) Saul's conviction that the church should be destroyed.

Galatians 1:13-14 (NASB)

For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it; [14] and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

God's Word, the basis of right convictions:

The Christians trust should be in the Word of God.

2 Tim. 3:16 (NASB)

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

The word translated "reproof" in both the KJV and the NAS is the Greek word *elegcon* (pronounced el-eng-khos). Means proof, evidence, conviction. Once we accept that the Bible is God's word, the evidence that we need for our Christian convictions is all there.

Romans 12:2 (KJV)

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Not all accept the Bible as the truth or as the will of God. Kids and grandkids are exposed to skepticism at school. The remainder of this class will be to establish the truth of the Bible.

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LESSON 2—DOES GOD EXIST?

Psalm 14:1 (NASB)

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."

They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds;

There is no one who does good.

Psalm 53:1 (NASB)

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God,"

They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice;

There is no one who does good.

Note that the result of not believing in God is evil. If the fool can disregard the Bible then he is free to disregard its moral standards as well. The word used by the translators of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament used by the early church) is *αφρων* (pronounced af-frone). This word denotes someone who shows poor judgment, who is irresponsibly stupid, and fails to use their thinking ability. Someone that is called by this Greek word does not necessarily have a low I.Q. or a mental handicap. The word allows for the fact that there are "educated fools".

EVIDENCE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD:

Sigmund Freud said that man created God out of three basic fears:

- 1.) Fear of nature
- 2.) Fear of his fellow man and the corresponding need for a righteous judge
- 3.) Fear of death

Problems with Freud's beliefs

- 1.) Even among those who do not believe in God, there is still a sense of right and wrong.

Romans 2:14-15 (NASB)

For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, [15] in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

- 2.) In order for the atheist to prove his point, "he must demonstrate how a morally responsible being could come from a purely materialistic source." BBB p. 52

Design demands a designer:

- 1.) "All that can be asked of anyone, theist or atheist, is that he show the balance of probability to be on his side." (quote from Chad Walsh) BBB P. 54 Take slips of paper and number them one through sixteen and put them in a paper bag. The probability of drawing them out of the bag in numerical order is one in 29 million. There are 500 trillion molecules in a human body. The idea of them all accidentally coming together to form a human body is absurd. Only a fool would believe such a thing.
- 2.) The second law of thermodynamics indicates that the universe is running down just like a wound up clock unwinds. Cars wear out and need repair, human bodies deteriorate with age, nothing goes from disorder to order.

Psalm 139:14 (NASB)

I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

Wonderful are Thy works,

And my soul knows it very well.

LESSON 3—THE AGE OF THE EARTH

BISHOP JAMES USHER

For several centuries readers of the King James Version of the Bible found the date of 4004 B.C. printed on the first page of Genesis. The very manner in which the date was printed at the top of this first page of the Bible led many to believe that it was part of the sacred text. In fact it was a calculation arrived at by James Usher(1581-1656) an Irishman and Archbishop of Armagh using the genealogies of the Old Testament. One of the things that Usher failed to realize is that Hebrew genealogies are often abbreviated. They were genealogies and not chronologies. See the chart below.

OLD TESTAMENT	MATTHEW
Joram (II Kings 8:24)	Joram (Matt. 1:8)
Ahaziah (II Kings 8:24)	
Joash (II Kings 11:2)	
Amaziah (II Kings 14:1)	
Uzziah (II Chronicles 26:1)	Ozias(Matt. 1:8)
Josiah (II Kings 22:1)	
Jehoiakim (II Kings 23:34)	
Jehoiachin (II Kings 24:6)	Jechonias (Greek form of Jehoiachin) Matt. 1:11

Shortcomings of Usher's Calculations:

The Bible really does not give an exact age of the earth, but here are some things to consider.

1.) Genesis 1:1-2 (NASB)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. [2] And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. How long was the earth "formless and void" before the 6 days of creation started? Was it a few days, thousands of years or billions of years? We simply do not know.

2.) Apparent age—If Adam was created as a 30-year old man, his age on the earth would be zero but he would appear as if he were 30-years old. Likewise the rocks of a mountain might appear and test out to be billions of years old when they are not nearly as old in real time.

Shortcomings of Scientific Calculations:

All methods of scientific calculation depend on the theory of uniformity. For example, Carbon-14 dating assumes that the concentration of the carbon-14 isotope throughout the living world was the same at the death of the specimen as it is today.

Brother Batsell Barrett Baxter in his book, "I Believe Because" cautions against becoming too dogmatic about any theories regarding the age of the earth. Much difficulty has been brought upon us by insisting that the earth is only a few thousand years old based on the erroneous calculations of a Catholic Bishop from the early 1600s. On the other hand, science does not have a reliable answer to the question regarding the age of the earth either.

LESSON 4-The Theory of Evolution

Over time the Theory of atheistic evolution has moved from being presented as theory to being presented as fact in our modern day text books. The idea that the universe and life on the earth was created by an intelligent designer is not allowed to be presented to our children in most school districts today. While Christians should be opposed to theology being taught in schools, we should be opposed to children being taught such a problematic theory as evolution as fact rather than theory. Outlined below are some problems with some major tenants of this theory.

- 1.) **Missing Links:** The theory of evolution assumes that that lower life forms gradually evolved or changed into higher life forms. However “the fossil record of life is far from complete and also falls far short of demonstrating the upward progress of animal and plant life claimed by the evolutionist”. BBB p. 149-150. It is often said that there are missing links between lower and higher life forms. But if there was such an abundance of transitional life forms why doesn't the fossil record show it? The late J.D. Thomas who headed the Bible department at Abilene Christian University said, “There is no evidence whatever of change from one phylum to another or crossing over between phyla. Instead of a rare or occasional missing link, the whole chain is missing.’ BBB p. 160
- 2.) **Natural Selection:** The process by which the fit survive and the unfit become extinct. A classic example is the reduction of numbers of light-colored “peppered moths in areas in England darkened by the soot from the industrial revolution. They were easier to see by birds so their numbers diminished.



There is no doubt that natural selection occurs. But it only explain why some species become extinct while others survive. It fails to show how as evolutionary theory suggests that one species evolves into a different species.

- 3.) **Mutations:** Evolutionists maintain that species change due to mutations caused by genetic changes. There are three inherent problems with this theory: 1.) the number of original mutations of all kinds is extremely low; 2.) beneficial mutations are far less common than beneficial ones, about 1 in 1000 ; 3) mutations have never been observed to produce new organs. 4.) Julian Huxley a proponent of evolutionary theory points out, “With this proportion (1 in 1000 to get a favorable mutation...we should clearly have to breed a thousand strains to get one with one favorable mutation; a million strains(a thousand squared) to get one with two favorable mutations and so on, up to a thousand to a thousand to the millionth power to get one containing a million.

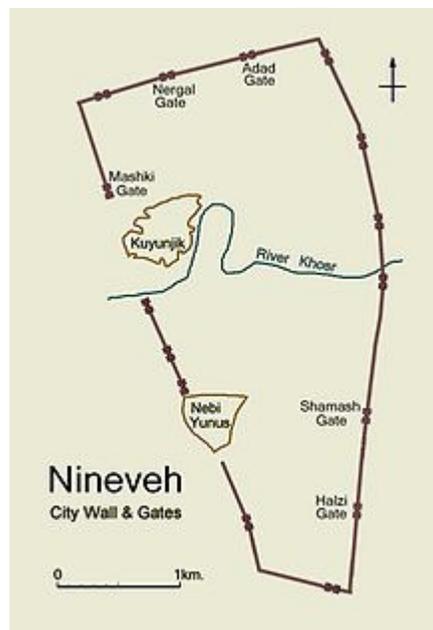
LESSON 5—The Historical Accuracy of the Bible

Up until now we have been discussing evidence that points toward a supreme being who designed the world in which we live. Subsequent lessons will explore why Christians have faith that the supreme being is truly the “unknown god” of Mars Hill (Acts 17:23).

- 1.) Ninevah, the city that wasn't supposed to be. Skeptics of the Bible said that the city of Ninevah was far too advanced to have existed during the time that the Bible said that it existed. In the late 1800s, archeologists began to uncover the ancient mounded city. Below is a map and reconstruction of one of these city gates from information gleaned from these excavations.

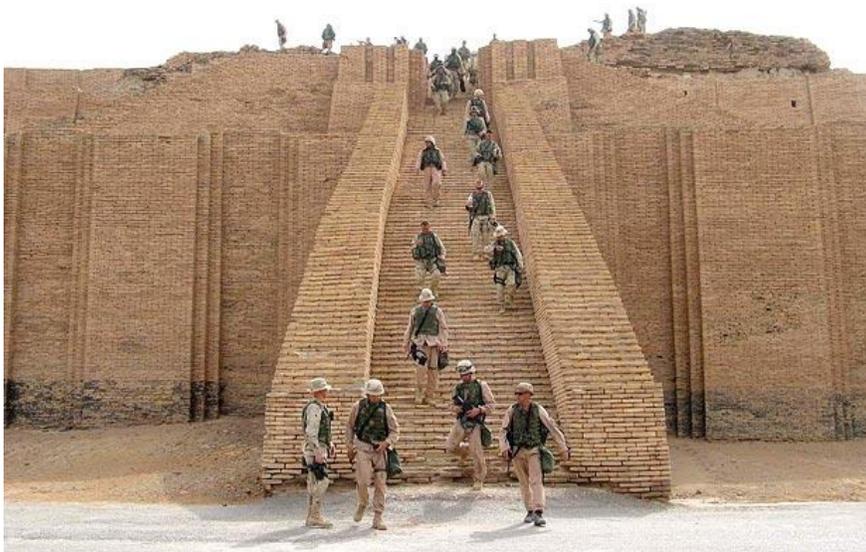
Mashki Gate (below left)

Translated "Gate of the Watering Places", it was perhaps used to take livestock to water from the River Tigris which currently flows about 1.5 kilometres (0.9 mi) to the west. It has been reconstructed in fortified mudbrick to the height of the top of the vaulted passageway. The Assyrian original may have been plastered and ornamented.



- 2.) **Ur, the home of Abraham—**In Southern Iraq near a U.S. military base established during the Iraq war, archaeologists uncovered the ancient city of Ur mentioned in the Bible as the home of Abraham. Surprisingly Abraham's home was even found in the ancient ruins. It is a large house with more than a dozen rooms and no roof. There are stairs that lead up to a second floor, but this floor was not reconstructed. The stairs end at the top of the walls where one can walk and look down on the rooms. There is a large courtyard with the original drainage system. This drainage system consists of a hole about eight to twelve inches in diameter and about four feet deep with shards of broken pottery around the edge.

Picture of Abraham's House reconstructed based on ruins at Ur. (below)





3.)Statue of Baal, unearthed from Ram Shamra, ancient city of Canaan.

Acts 19:26 (NASB)

"And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all.

4.)Pictures of ancient Jericho, the oldest city in the world. Next to Jerusalem it is the most excavated site in the Middle East. Below (right) archeologist points to the remains of Jericho's walls. Below (left) the remains of a tower dating back to the stone age, about 7000 B.C.



A sycamore tree quite common in the city of Jericho.



Luke 19:1-10 (NASB)

And He entered and was passing through Jericho. [2] And behold, there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; and he was a chief tax-gatherer, and he was rich. [3] And he was trying to see who Jesus was, and he was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. [4] And he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. [5] And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." [6] And he hurried and came down, and received Him gladly. [7] And when they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." [8] And Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much." [9] And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. [10] "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

LESSON 6—The Bible is True Because it Works

Wherever the Bible has gone civilization has been lifted to a higher plane. It has made better husbands and wives, better fathers and mothers, better sons and daughters, and better employers and employees. It has been the strongest influence for good in the history of the world. Could this influence for good have come from a source which was itself a fabrication and a collection of false claims? Batsell Barrett Baxter, *I Believe Because* P.174

Think about how civilization has been affected by the Bible.

- 1.) Human sacrifice, including infants and children
- 2.) Exodus 20:13-17 (NASB)
 - "You shall not murder.
 - [14] "You shall not commit adultery.
 - [15] "You shall not steal.
 - [16] "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
 - [17] "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."
- 3.) Romans 13:9 (NASB)
 - For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."
- 4.) Matthew 5:43-46 (NASB)
 - "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' [44] "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you [45] in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. [46] "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same?
- 5.) "Jesus of Nazereth, without money and arms conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, he shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, he spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced effects which like beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a line, he set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise, than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times." Philip Schaff BBB p. 219

When God's word is followed, it also works in modern times and is the answer to the problems that we face as individuals and as a nation. Embracing God's values as a nation increases the success of our nation. Rejecting them causes a decline in the quality of life. Consider the following;

A study by Christian Smith a sociologist at Nortre Dame University found that children with religious backgrounds do better in school than those from non-religious backgrounds.

In 1900 only 7% of marriages ended in divorce. By 1975 the rate rose to 1 out of every two marriages and has remained at that rate ever since.

Out of wedlock pregnancies increased from 4% in 1950 to 32.8% in 1998.

Since 1960 the crime rate in the United States has increased over 350%.

LESSON 7—THE SCIENTIFIC ACCURACY OF THE BIBLE

We have already answered the skeptics questions regarding the creation story in Genesis 1. But the Bible is scientifically accurate and in some cases was well ahead of the times in which it was written.

1.) Job 26:7 (NASB)

"He stretches out the north over empty space,
And hangs the earth on nothing.

In the ancient world where pagan religions had the world resting on giant elephants and mythical gods like Atlas, the Bible got it right.

2.) Isaiah 40:22 (NASB)

It is He who sits above the vault of the earth,
And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers,
Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain
And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.

The Hebrew word translated "vault" actually means "circle". That is the way the KJV version translates the word. Once again ancient pagan religions depicted the world as a flat plane.

3.) Leviticus 13:45 (NASB)

"As for the leper who has the infection, his clothes shall be torn, and the hair of his head shall be uncovered, and he shall cover his mustache and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!' The practice of quarantine was far ahead of its time compared to other ancient religions. If the concept of quarantine would have been understood during medieval times countless lives could have been saved during the bubonic plague.

4.) Genesis 9:4 (NASB)

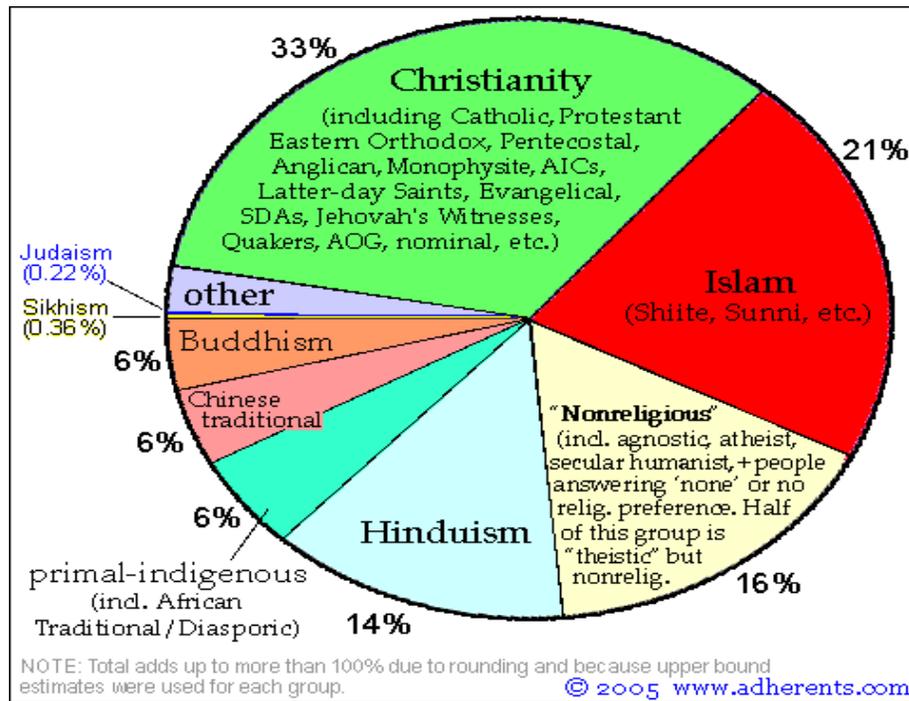
"Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

Again many pagans drank blood especially in ritualistic practices.

5.)The Bible refers to going up and down in altitude in an age when there were no instruments to accurately measure altitude.

6.) Studies have shown that cervical cancer rates among Jewish women are much lower due to the fact that their husbands are circumcised.

LESSON 8—THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN RELIGION COMPARED TO OTHER WORLD RELIGIONS



Christianity including all denominations 2.1 billion
 Islam including Shiite and Sunnis 1.5 billion
 Agnostics and atheists 1.1 billion
 Hinduism 900 million
 Buddhism 376 million

We are told as Christians that we must be tolerant of all religions, that one religion is as valid as the rest. Let's examine this premise.

The Quran, Buddhist scripture, and Hindu scripture cannot claim the same historical and scientific accuracy as the Bible. Neither do these religions provide the hope of Christianity. Below is an overview of the world's major religions.

Islam: Moslems look at themselves as descendants of Abraham through Ishmael. According to Arab tradition, Abraham abandoned Hagar and Ishmael on the site where Mecca stands today. The Bible tells of mistrust in God that led to Ishmael being born in sin;

Genesis 16:2 (NASB)

So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.

The Bible speaks of the nature of Ishmael.

Genesis 16:12 (NASB)

**"And he will be a wild donkey of a man,
His hand will be against everyone,
And everyone's hand will be against him;
And he will live to the east of all his brothers."**

Genesis speaks of Ishmael of being defiant and rebellious;

Genesis 25:18 (NASB)

And they settled from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria; he settled in defiance of all his relatives.

To this day we bear the consequences of Sarai and Abraham's mistrust of God's promise. Some of the descendants of Ishmael continue to be our enemies to this day.

A Taliban spokesman recently said, "THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF YOUTH WHO LOOK FORWARD TO DEATH LIKE THE AMERICANS LOOK FORWARD TO LIVING." Contrast this with;

Proverbs 8:36 (NASB)

**"But he who sins against me injures himself;
All **those who hate me love death.**"**

Below are quotes from the Quran and quotes about comparable subjects from the Bible. Read them and decided which is the superior religion.

The Quaran says;

Sura 5:51: "O you who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors: they are but friends and protectors to each other. And he among you that turns to them for friendship is of them."

Of the Unbelievers: Sura 4:89 "seize them and slay them wherever you find them: and in any case take no friends or helpers from their ranks."

Slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush. (Sura 9:5)

"The infidels should not think that they can get away from us. Prepare against them whatever arms and weaponry you can muster so that you may terrorize them." Sura 8:59

Contrast these teachings with these Bible verses;

Luke 6:27 (NASB)

"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

Galatians 5:15 (NASB)

But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another.

Matthew 7:12 (NASB)

"Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

It should be pointed out that moderate Muslims say that the above quote from the Quran apply only to a specific time in the past. As long as they do not follow the above verses, we can live in peace with them and they have as much right to peacefully practice their religion as we do. We however cannot tolerate Muslims that think the above verses apply to us today.

Buddhism

The man who eventually became The Buddha was the son of a wealthy king. He found very little pleasure with his life of luxury and began to go on excursions outside of the castle seeking a more fulfilling life. While on these excursions he encountered people who lived in abject poverty and began to ask himself why he should live in such luxury while others barely had enough to eat. So he became an ascetic, someone who practices self denial for spiritual reasons. He found no pleasure in that lifestyle either. Finally he came up with what he thought would end suffering in this world. He came up with the concept of Karma. Evil people had bad Karma and good people had good Karma. Those with bad Karma would not find satisfaction either in this life nor the life to come. Their bad Karma would come back on them in this life in the form of mental anguish and they would be reincarnated as a lower life form when they died. Those with good Karma would live life with a satisfied mind in this world and would break the cycle of reincarnation and enter a highly satisfied mental state called Nirvana when they died.

The Buddha was merely a man and never claimed that he was a deity. Some of his followers eventually elevated him to that status. Compare this with the teachings of Jesus;

John 14:6 (NASB)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.

Rev. 21:4 (NASB)

and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

Hinduism

Hinduism is a diverse religion practiced primarily in India. There is variation in local practices and the worship of particular deities. However, there are central tenants that unify it as one religion. The core of Hinduism is the belief in Brahman, the underlying universal life force that encompasses and embodies existence. According to Hindu scriptures, one's ignorance of the true nature of the self (*atman*) as one with Brahman is what traps one in the cycle of endless death and reincarnation (*samsara*). Thus, the highest goal of Hinduism is liberation (*moksha*) from the karmic cycle of death and rebirth. It is comparable to Buddhism in it's

belief in reincarnation, The cow and the monkey are both considered sacred animals to the Hindu and are sometimes treated better than humans.

Compare these beliefs to what the Bible says.

Hebrews 9:27 (NASB)

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

Genesis 1:28 (NASB)

And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

