



Session 6

Confucianism

Notes:

Questions

1. Why was Confucius treated as more than a wise man?
2. Explain the relationship between the ideas of Yin and Yang.
3. Imagine that God and heaven were merely impersonal principles. How would you feel?
4. In what way is the theology of Confucianism similar to the theology of naturalism (Session 2)?
5. What is the Biblical response to Confucian concepts?

A comparison of Biblical Christianity and Confucianism

Focusing on their **foundational beliefs, view of God, humanity, ethics, salvation, and purpose**:

◆ 1. Founder and Origin

Category	Biblical Christianity	Confucianism
Founder	Jesus Christ (c. AD 30)	Confucius (Kung-fu'tzu, c. 551–479 BC)
Origin	1st century AD, Israel	6th century BC, China

◆ 2. Authority

Category	Biblical Christianity	Confucianism
Sacred Texts	Bible (Old and New Testaments)	<i>The Analects, Five Classics, Four Books</i>
Ultimate Authority	God's Word (the Bible)	Wisdom of Confucius and ancient Chinese traditions

◆ 3. View of God

Category	Biblical Christianity	Confucianism
Nature of God	Personal, Triune, Creator, Sovereign	Generally agnostic or silent about a personal God; mentions "Heaven" (Tian) as a moral force
Relationship	God desires a personal relationship with humans	No emphasis on a personal relationship with the divine

◆ 4. View of Humanity

Category	Biblical Christianity	Confucianism
Human Nature	Created in God's image but fallen and sinful (Genesis 1:27; Romans 3:23)	Humans are inherently good and perfectible through education and virtue
Solution to Moral Failure	Redemption through faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8–9)	Moral self-cultivation and adherence to traditional values

◆ 5. Ethics and Morality

Category	Biblical Christianity	Confucianism
Moral Code	Based on God's commands and Christ's teachings (e.g., Ten Commandments, Sermon on the Mount)	Based on <i>Li</i> (ritual propriety), <i>Jen/Ren</i> (benevolence), <i>Yi</i> (righteousness), etc.
Motivation	Love for God and others, empowered by the Holy Spirit	Social harmony, filial piety, and virtuous living

◆ 6. Salvation and the Afterlife

Category	Biblical Christianity	Confucianism
Salvation	By grace through faith in Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12)	No doctrine of salvation; focus on this life and one's legacy
Afterlife	Eternal life with God or separation from Him (heaven or hell)	Not clearly defined; emphasis on honoring ancestors and living ethically in this life

◆ 7. Goal of Life

Category	Biblical Christianity	Confucianism
Purpose	To glorify God and enjoy Him forever (1 Corinthians 10:31)	To cultivate virtue and maintain social harmony
Final Hope	Resurrection and eternal life in God's presence	An ideal society through virtuous living and good governance

◆ Summary

Topic	Christianity	Confucianism
Theistic?	Yes (Monotheistic)	No (Ethical/Humanistic)
Relational God?	Yes	No
Focus	Salvation through Christ	Ethical behavior and social harmony
Afterlife?	Yes	Unclear or secondary
Means of Change	God's grace and transformation through Christ	Self-effort and education

◆ Biblical Response to Confucianism:

While Confucianism promotes many noble values (respect, integrity, family honor), it **lacks the truth about God, human sinfulness, and the need for redemption** through Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that **morality without a restored relationship with God cannot save** (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:10–12). True righteousness comes **not by self-effort, but through faith in Christ** (Philippians 3:9).

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” — Proverbs 14:12

Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Biblical Christianity

	Confucianism	Daoism (Taoism)	Buddhism	Biblical Christianity
Founder	Confucius (551–479 BC)	Laozi (6th c. BC, traditional)	Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha, c. 563–483 BC)	Jesus Christ (AD 1st century)
Key Texts	Analects, Five Classics	Tao Te Ching, Zhuangzi	Tripitaka, Mahayana Sutras	Bible (Old & New Testament)
Ultimate Reality	No personal god; emphasizes moral order (Li)	The Dao (impersonal force, “the Way”)	No creator God; the ultimate reality is Nirvana	One personal God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) (Gen 1:1; Matt 28:19)
Goal of Life	Social harmony, moral virtue	Harmony with the Dao	Escape suffering, reach Nirvana (liberation from rebirth)	Eternal life with God through Christ (John 17:3; 1 John 5:11)
Path to Goal	Education, self-cultivation, filial piety	Wu Wei (non-action), living in harmony with nature	Eightfold Path, meditation, karma	Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus (Eph 2:8–9)
View of Humanity	Basically good; needs moral guidance	Part of nature; blend with Dao	No permanent soul (Anatta); cycle of rebirth	Created in God's image; fallen into sin; needs redemption (Gen 1:27; Rom 3:23)
Afterlife	Focus on this life; ancestor veneration	Spiritual immortality for some; often vague	Rebirth until Nirvana	Eternal life in heaven or separation from God in hell (Heb 9:27; John 14:2–3)
Problem in Life	Disorder due to a lack of virtue	Conflict with the natural way	Suffering caused by desire	Sin separates us from God (Rom 6:23)
Solution	Moral reform, proper relationships	Align with Dao	Eliminate desire	Forgiveness through Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Rom 5:8)
View of God	Does not focus on God	Impersonal force	Generally, denies a personal God	One personal, loving, eternal God (Jer 31:3; John 3:16)