

World Religions and Cults

by Rob Phillips



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Course Description and Objectives

Description

The apostle Paul urged believers to be on guard against those who preach “another Jesus ... a different spirit ... or a different gospel” (2 Cor. 11:4 HCSB). This 8-week course will provide an introduction to world religions and cults and survey Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Saints (Mormonism), The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah’s Witnesses), Scientology and Christian Science. It also will explore ways believers can share their faith with followers of world religions and cults.

Objectives

Participants in World Religions and Cults will:

- Learn the biblical response to the question, “How can 4.5 billion people be wrong?”
- Receive an overview of world religions and cults.
- Learn about the leading false belief systems in the world today.
- Gain insights into witnessing effectively to members of false religions and cults.

Notes:

How can 4.5 billion people be wrong?

We are beginning an 8-week study of world religions and cults. Our stand will be on the truth of Jesus' words in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Is this view narrow-minded, outdated, or even bigoted, as some suggest? Quite the contrary. The words Christ speaks are "spirit" and "life" (John 6:63). To disregard them is perilous. Yet many do.

According to Adherents.com, there are 6.6 billion people in the world today. Among these are 1.5 billion Muslims, 1.1 billion nonreligious people, 900 million Hindus, nearly 400 million Buddhists, 7 million Baha'is, and millions of adherents to countless other faiths. The Web site also says there are 2.1 billion "Christians," a broad category that includes Catholics and Protestants, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, and so-called "nominal" Christians.

If the exclusive claims of Jesus are true – and I believe they are – and even if everyone who claims to be a Christian really is, then 4.5 billion people still stand outside the kingdom of heaven. By all appearances, these people are sincere. They want to know the truth, and many believe they have found it. How can 4.5 billion people be wrong? Every Christian can answer this question by understanding the Biblical descriptions of those who do not know Christ.

A Godly purpose

Our purpose in this study is not to condemn anyone or to assume God's role as sovereign judge of the universe; rather, it is to compare the teachings of some of the world's major religions and cults with biblical, historical Christianity so that we might be more effective in praying for and witnessing to the lost, and wiser in our ability to discern false doctrines. Every person, regardless of his or her religious beliefs, is precious in the eyes of God and is someone for whom Christ died. Our attitude as we study these false religious systems should be one of humility, love, and grace.

A look at 2 Cor. 11:1-4

The words of the apostle Paul are clear: Those who are not grounded in the Word of God are subject to deceptive teachings about "another Jesus ... a different spirit ... a different gospel" (2 Cor. 11:4 HCSB). Every world religion and every cult that we study professes belief in Jesus and has an exalted place for Him in its theology. But without exception, each of these belief systems fails to correctly answer the key question Jesus asked in Matt. 16:15: "Who do you say that I am?"

How can 4.5 billion people be wrong?

In his classic book *The Kingdom of the Cults*, the late Dr. Walter Martin tells about a training program held by the American Banking Association. Each year the ABA sends hundreds of bank tellers to Washington to teach them to detect counterfeit money. Writes Martin:

It is most interesting that during the entire two-week training program, no teller touches counterfeit money. Only original passes through his hands. The reason for this is that the American Banking Association is convinced that if a man is thoroughly familiar with the original, he will not be deceived by the counterfeit bill, no matter how much like the original it appears. It is the contention of this writer that if the average Christian would become familiar once again with the great foundations of his faith, he would be able to detect those counterfeit elements so apparent in the cult systems, which set them apart from Biblical Christianity (pp. 16-17).

This is a great lesson for us. Even though we will spend some time looking at the history and teachings of major world religions and cults, our focus should be on the truth of the Word of God. Then it won't matter what the counterfeit religions are; we'll be able to identify them and lovingly steer their proponents toward the truth.

The state of the lost

Back to our earlier question: If we believe Jesus is the only way of salvation, and if so many people reject that belief, how can so many people be wrong? The answer lies in what the Bible teaches about the state of those who don't know Christ. Specifically, the Bible says the unbeliever is:

- Natural (vs. spiritual) – a man or woman who regards the things relating to God’s Spirit as foolishness (1 Cor. 2:14)
- Blinded in his or her mind by Satan (2 Cor. 4:3-4)
- Bound by Satan (2 Tim. 2:26)
- Alienated from God (Eph. 4:18)
- An enemy of God (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21)
- Condemned (John 3:18)
- In spiritual darkness (Acts 26:18; Eph. 5:8; Col. 1:13; 1 Peter 2:9)
- Spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-2)

What hope exists for these 4.5 billion people? As we speak to them about the things we have seen and heard (Acts 4:20), the Holy Spirit must do the necessary work of convincing them of their need for Christ (see John 16:7-11). As we learn to share our faith with unbelievers, we must remind ourselves that winning the lost requires patience, perseverance, a clear understanding of scripture, and above all the work of the Spirit.

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“But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your minds may be corrupted from a complete and pure devotion to Christ. For if a person comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you had not received, or a different gospel, which you had not accepted, you put up with it splendidly!” (2 Cor. 11:3-4 HCSB)

The words of the apostle Paul are clear: Those who are not grounded in the Word of God are subject to deceptive teachings about “another Jesus … a different spirit … a different gospel” – three distinctive markers that help us identify false prophets. Whether they are Muslim prophets like Muhammad, or self-proclaimed messiahs like the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, these false teachers invariably promote an unbiblical view of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Gospel.

The Bible cautions us to beware of false messiahs, false prophets and false teachers who “disguise themselves as servants of righteousness” and promote “doctrines of demons” (see Matt. 24:24; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:3-4). But before we go deeper, let’s define some key terms.

Defining our terms

False religion. From a New Testament perspective, a false religion is any system of belief that opposes the central teachings of the Christian faith. While all cults of Christianity are false religions, not all false religions are cults, because not all religions claim to be Christian. Islam, for example, is a false religion but not a cult, because Islam does not claim to be Christian.

Cult. A cult is a religious organization whose members claim to be Christians, and who use the Bible and Christian terms, yet who deny the central beliefs of historical Christianity. Simply put, a cult is a counterfeit form of Christianity.

Heresy. This may be defined as a teaching strongly opposed to the doctrines of historical Christianity, for example the denial of Christ’s deity, full humanity, virgin birth, or bodily resurrection.

Sect. A sect is an otherwise orthodox group having established its own identity and teachings distinct from the group to which it belongs. In Jesus’ day for example, the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes were sects of Judaism.

Another Jesus, a different spirit, a different gospel

Every Christian can identify false belief systems by asking three important questions: 1) Who is Jesus? 2) Who is the Holy Spirit? and 3) How am I saved? As we place the teachings of God’s Word against the teachings of Islam, Mormonism, the Jehovah’s Witnesses and other false religious systems, let’s remind ourselves of some key biblical truths that address these crucial questions.

How to Identify false Teachers

Key truths about the real Jesus

Jesus is:

- The eternal Son of God, without beginning or end
- God / deity
- Co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit
- Virgin born
- The God-Man / fully divine and fully human
- Sinless in His humanity
- Our substitute through His sacrificial death on the cross
- Alive, having been raised physically from the dead
- The only way of salvation
- Seated today in heaven as our Mediator and Intercessor
- Coming visibly and physically one day in power and great glory
- The One who will judge all people and to whom, one day, all creatures will bow

Ontps.

Key truths about the real Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is:

- The eternal Spirit, without beginning or end
- God / deity
- Personal (not an impersonal force)
- Co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son
- The Author of Scripture
- The One who convicts the lost of their need for Christ
- The One who regenerates believing sinners, causing them to be made spiritually alive
- The One who indwells, seals and sanctifies believers, and who places them positionally into the Body of Christ
- The Giver of spiritual gifts
- God's down payment /guarantee of our home in heaven

Key truths about the real Gospel

- All people are sinners
- Sin separates us from holy God, resulting in spiritual and physical death and, ultimately, eternity apart from God in hell
- People are incapable of saving themselves
- Christ died on the cross for our sins and, as our Substitute, paid our sin debt in full
- Christ was buried and rose physically from the dead
- His finished work at Calvary conquered sin and death for us
- As a result, salvation is by God's grace through faith – not by works
- Salvation is God's gift – and everlasting, unbreakable, covenant relationship with Him

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An exhortation from John the apostle

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to determine if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. But every spirit who does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist; you have heard that he is coming, and he is already in the world now. You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. (1 John 4:1-4 HCSB)

The Bible not only warns believers about false prophets; it describes them graphically as:

- Ravaging wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15; see also Acts 20:29)
- Deceitful workers (2 Cor. 11:13)
- Springs without water, mists driven by a whirlwind (2 Peter 2:17)
- Dreamers who defile their flesh, despise authority, and blaspheme glorious beings (Jude 1:8)
- Liars (Rev. 2:2)
- Antichrists (1 John 2:18)

How do we define a false prophet? Simply put, *a false prophet is one who preaches, teaches, or foretells events contrary to the Word of God – sometimes claiming God as his or her source*. As believers, we can guard our hearts from the teachings of false prophets by obeying three commands of the apostle John:

1. Do not believe every spirit. Kenneth Wuest's translation of 1 John 4:1 puts it this way: "Stop believing every spirit." The term "spirit" refers to those who claim to have divine gifts for service, according to Vine's Expository Dictionary. We should beware. Jesus warns us of miracle-working false messiahs and false prophets (Matt. 24:24). Paul says Satan masquerades as an angel of light, and his followers disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:14-5). Paul further cautions against "deceitful spirits" and "the teachings of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). And he warns that the time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine, but turn aside to myths (2 Tim. 4:3-4). We should be like the Bereans who greeted Paul and Silas. Acts 17:11 says "they welcomed the message with eagerness and *examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so*" (emphasis mine).

2. Test the spirits. The Word of God is the yardstick by which all truth claims must be measured. Here are a few markers. True prophets:

- Are 100 percent accurate when they speak in the Lord's name (Deut. 18:21-2)
- Exalt God, not themselves or false gods (Deut. 13:1-4)
- Tell the whole truth, not tickle the ears (Ezek. 13:22-3; 2 Tim. 4:3-4)
- Proclaim salvation by grace through faith (Gal. 1:8-9)
- Set lifestyle examples (2 Peter 2:1-3)

How to Identify false Teachers

3. Know the Spirit of God. In his first epistle, John challenges the views of the “antichrists” about the identity of Jesus. The most important question Jesus ever asked – and the question upon which every person’s eternal destiny hangs – is, “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt. 16:15). Peter answered correctly, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!” (Matt. 16:16). Believers need to know who the real Jesus is. Indeed, He is:

- The eternal Son of God, Creator and sovereign Lord (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16-18; 2:9-10; Heb. 1:3)
- Virgin born (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25)
- Full deity and full humanity in His incarnation (John 1:14)
- Sinless Savior whose death paid our sin debt (1 Cor. 15:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:21)
- Raised and ascended in the flesh; seated at the right hand of the Father as our Mediator and Intercessor; and returning Lord who will appear visibly and physically one day (John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 4:15-16; Rev. 19:22)

John's words are simple and effective. Christians are people of faith – not a blind, ignorant faith, but a reasonable faith based on the evidence God has given us in creation, Scripture, and in the Person of His Son. While there have always been false prophets, and while there will continue to be those who fleece the flock rather than feed it, we can guard our hearts – and protect our families and our churches – from false teachings if we follow John's commands: Don't believe every spirit (that is, every person claiming divine gifting); test the spirits (according to Scripture); and know the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit's teaching about the real Jesus as revealed in the Bible).

Ontps.

Hinduism: An Overview

Hinduism is the world's oldest living organized religion. With an estimated 850 million followers, it is the third largest religion behind Christianity and Islam. Founded in India beginning as early as 2500 B.C., Hinduism is most prevalent in that country, where an estimated 785 million people engage in Hindu practices. Hindus also are found in significant numbers in Bangladesh, Nepal (where it is the state religion), Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and other countries. There are an estimated 1.5 million Hindus in North America.

According to some sources, the word "Hinduism" comes from the Indus River, which flows through modern-day Pakistan. Hinduism has no single founder. It began as a polytheistic and ritualistic religion with simple rituals. Over time, the rituals became more complex so that it was necessary to create a priestly class. During this time, the *Vedas* were written to give the priests instructions for performing the rituals; eventually the priests became mediators with the gods, which gave them control over people's lives. Around 600 B.C., the people revolted. The form of Hinduism that resulted emphasized internal meditation as opposed to external rituals.



Between 800 B.C. and 300 B.C. the *Upanishads* – also called the *Vedanta*, or the end of the *Vedas* – was written. Roughly the Hindu equivalent of the Christian New Testament, the *Upanishads* teaches that behind the many gods stands one Reality known as *Brahman*, an impersonal force. Later, Hinduism developed the concept of a personified *Brahman* known as *Ishvara*. According to Hindu tradition, *Ishvara* became known to humanity through the three manifestations of *Brahman*: *Brahma* (the Creator); *Vishnu* (the Preserver), and *Siva* (the Destroyer). *Ishvara* became even more personified through 10 mythical incarnations of *Vishnu* called *avatars*, who took on the form of animals or persons. Beyond the principal deities and the avatars it is estimated that there are 330 million other gods in Hinduism.

Besides Hinduism's different concepts of God, the religion also may be divided along the lines of whether the physical universe is real or illusory. The nondualists (*advaita*) see *Brahman* alone as real and the world as an illusion. "Qualified nondualists" say the universe is extended from the Being of *Brahman*. And dualists (*dvaita*) see *Brahman* and the universe as distinct realities. Throughout history, Hinduism has spawned three other religious movements: Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism.

Hindu deity in a temple in Mauritius.

Hinduism: An Overview

Basic Beliefs

Although Hinduism is complex and diverse, most Hindus hold these beliefs in common:

- The impersonal nature of *Brahman*. Hindus see ultimate reality, *Brahman*, as an impersonal oneness that is beyond all distinctions, including personal and moral distinctions.
- The unity of *Brahman* and *Atman*. Most followers believe that their true selves (*atman*) are extended from and are one with *Brahman*. “Just as the air inside an open jar is identical to the air surrounding that jar, so our essence is identical to that of the essence of *Brahman*” (*The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*, p. 88).
- The law of *karma*. This is the moral equivalent of the natural law of cause and effect. The effects of our actions follow us throughout the present lifetime and into the next lifetime. Humanity’s main problem is that we are ignorant of our divine nature. We have forgotten that we are extended from *Brahman* and so we have mistakenly attached ourselves to the desires of our separate selves, or egos, and thereby to the consequences of our actions.
- Reincarnation (*samsara*). This is the seemingly endless cycle of life, death and rebirth. We reap in this lifetime the consequences of the deeds of previous lifetimes. A person’s *karma* determines the kind of body he or she will receive in the next life, whether human, animal or insect.
- Liberation (*moksha*). The goal of Hinduism is to be free of the cycle of life, death and rebirth. This liberation is attained by realizing that the concept of self is an illusion and that only the undifferentiated oneness with *Brahman* is real. Hinduism offers at least three paths to enlightenment: *karma marga* (the way of action and ritual); *jnana marga* (the way of knowledge and meditation); and *bhakti marga* (the way of devotion). When enlightenment is reached, the individual self loses its separate identity and is merged into the universal self, or *Brahman*.

Hinduism generally is viewed by the West as a **polytheistic** religion – one that worships multiple deities – but this is not necessarily accurate. Others view Hinduism as **monotheistic** because it recognizes one supreme God, *Brahman*. Still others see the religion as **Trinitarian** because *Brahman* is simultaneously visualized as one god with three persons: *Brahma* (the Creator who continues to create new realities); *Vishnu*, or *Krishna* (the Preserver who sustains these new creations); and *Shiva* (the Destroyer). Strictly speaking, most forms of Hinduism are **henotheistic**, meaning they recognize a single deity and see other gods and goddesses as manifestations of *Brahman*.

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The Hindu Scriptures

The earliest of the Hindu scriptures are the *Vedas* (*Veda* means “knowledge”): *Rig Veda*, *Sama Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, and *Atharva Veda*. Each *Veda* is divided into four parts: the *Mantras*, or basic verses or hymns sung during the rituals; the *Brahmanas*, or the explanation of the verses; the *Araṇyakas*, which are reflections on their meaning; and the *Upanishads*, or mystical interpretations of the verses.

Besides these primary scriptures are secondary ones known as *smṛiti*, or “remembered.” Included in these are the *Ramayana* (Rama’s way) and *Mahabhrata* (the great story), which includes the most popular of all Hindu scriptures, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the main character of which is *Krishna*. Other *smṛiti* scriptures include the *Vedangas*, or codes of law; the *Puranas*, the genealogies and legends of the gods; the *Darshanas*, philosophical writings; the *Sutras*, rules of ritual and social conduct; and the *Tantras*, writings on attaining occult power.

Hindu Worship

Hinduism has no single creed and recognizes no final truth. The extensive collection of scriptures allows a diverse belief system. Simply put, Hinduism has a pagan background in which the forces of nature and human heroes are personified as gods and goddesses who are worshiped with prayers and offerings.

Hindu worship is varied and features color symbolism, offerings, fasting and dance. Most Hindus worship an image of their chosen deity, with chants (*mantras*), flowers and incense. Worship tends to be individualistic rather than congregational.

Hinduism may be divided into Popular Hinduism, characterized by the worship of gods through offerings, rituals and prayers; and Philosophical Hinduism, the complex belief system that requires the study of ancient texts, meditation and yoga.

Paths to Moksha

The goal of Hinduism is to liberate oneself from *samsara*, the seemingly endless cycle of life, death and rebirth, and be reunited with *Brahma*. This “salvation” is known as *moksha* and there are three paths that may be pursued to attain it:

- *Dharma*, or the path of works. A person has a set of specific social and religious obligations that must be fulfilled. For example, he must follow his caste occupation, marry within his caste, eat or not eat certain foods, and produce and raise a son who can make a sacrifice to his ancestors as well as perform other duties. By fulfilling these responsibilities, the person on the path of works may obtain a better reincarnation in the next life and, perhaps, after thousand of reincarnations, achieve *moksha*.
- *Inana*, the path of knowledge. This is a more difficult path and involves self-renunciation and meditation. This aesthetic path is open to men only in the higher castes. It most often includes the practice of *yoga*, an attempt to control one’s

Hinduism: An Overview

consciousness through posture, breath control and concentration.

- **Bhakti**, the path of passionate devotion. This is the most popular way to achieve *moksha*. A devotee may choose any of the 330 million gods, goddesses or demi-gods in the Hindu pantheon and passionately worship that god. In practice, almost all Hindus who follow this path worship *Vishnu* or *Shiva*. The most popular god is *Vishnu*, who has appeared as *avatars* (saviors, the incarnation of deity) in the form of a giant turtle, as Gautama Buddha and as Rama and Krishna, two important Hindu heroes. *Shiva* is popular as well. Rituals performed by his devotees are similar to the worship of the Canaanites, whom God commanded the Israelites to destroy.

The Caste System

Around 500 B.C. a social hierarchy known as the caste system was established. One Hindu hymn tells how four castes of people came from the head, arms, thighs and feet of *Brahma*, the creator god. The four castes were the Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors and nobles); Vaisyas (merchants and artisans); and Shudras (slaves). Each caste was then subdivided into hundreds of subcastes. Only the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas were allowed to take full advantage of the Hindu religion, but the Shudras were forbidden from hearing the *Vedas* or using them to find salvation.

Even lower in status were the Untouchables who, until the 20th century, were considered outside the caste system and were treated as subhuman. They did the dirtiest work, drank polluted water, wore tattered clothing and were denied property, education and dignity. When India became a nation in 1947, the government officially outlawed discrimination against Untouchables. Today, the caste system has lost much of its power in urban areas but remains virtually unchanged in some rural parts of the country.

The Mark on the Forehead

The colored dot often seen on the forehead of Hindus is called by a number of names, including bindi. It is a sign of piety and symbolizes the third eye – the one focused inward toward God. Both men and women wear the bindi, although the practice among men is going out of style. Today, many women wear dots that match the color of their saris.

The Sacred Cow

The cow is considered sacred in Hinduism. She is symbolic of abundance, the sanctity of all life, and the earth that gives much while asking nothing in return. The cow is respected as a matriarchal figure for her gentle qualities and for providing milk and related products to people who consume a mostly vegetarian diet. The reverence for cows may be found throughout Hinduism's major texts.

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Q&A: Hinduism in America

Q1 What is Hinduism?

A1 Simply put, Hinduism is the beliefs and practices common to India. Hinduism is difficult to define because it has neither founder nor fixed canon. But it does have a number of common themes:

- Pantheism – the belief that all is God and God is all
- Polytheism – a belief in many lesser gods (about 330 million of them)
- Reliance on occult rituals and practices

Q2 How did Hinduism originate?

A2 Hinduism began from a body of conflicting and contradictory literature called the *Vedas* between 1500-1200 B.C. Hindus claim that this literature was revealed supernaturally by the Hindu gods. The four *Vedas* are the *Rigveda*, *Samaveda*, *Yajurveda*, and *Arthurveda*. These are divided into two parts: the “work” portion (polytheistic ritual) and the “knowledge” part (philosophical speculation). The Hindu *rishis* or *seers* are said to have received these revelations as divine communication from the gods.

Q3 How does Indian Hinduism compare with American Hinduism?

A3 Hinduism in India pervades the entire culture, while in America is it part of the larger religious culture.

The rampant idolatry of Hinduism in India (thousands of temples, etc.) is not a prevalent in the United States.

Hinduism in America is “secularized” or “Christianized” for Western consumption. Its teachings pervade the New Age Movement.

Q4 How has Hinduism become “secularized” or “Christianized” in America?

A4 It has influenced tens of millions of Americans. For example:

- Transcendental Meditation (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi) has more than 3 million graduates in the U.S.
- The New Age Movement incorporates Hindu teachings. A popular New Age “bible” – *A Course in Miracles* – basically is a Christianized form of the religious philosophy taught by most Hindu gurus in America.
- Werner Erhard and his controversial “est” and “The Forum” seminars have more than a million graduates.
- Mary Baker Eddy’s Christian Science and Charles and Myrtle Fillmore’s Unity School of Christianity were influenced by Hinduism.
- Yoga, meditation, altered states of consciousness, “enlightenment” and other such practices are Hindu in origin.

Hinduism in America

Q5 What is the dominant Hindu belief in America?

A5 Vedanta, or “the End of Vedas.” It has given organized and systematic form to the teaching of the Upanishads. Since the texts are contradictory and impossible to interpret uniformly, several schools have arisen.

The dominant school is *Advaita* or “non-dual” school. It teaches that there is only one impersonal God called Brahman. Brahman alone is real; everything else is a dream of Brahman, or an illusion. As part of its “sport” or “play,” Brahman exuded the physical universe as a part of himself but then “covered” it with what is called *maya* or illusion. At the same time, Brahman exists within or beneath this illusion. That’s why it is the goal of Hinduism to go inward to discover that one’s true nature is Brahman. Hinduism aims to reveal one’s inward divine nature by “contacting” Brahman through occult practice.

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Q6 What are the common practices of Hinduism in America today?

A6 There are several, including:

- Altered states of consciousness – hypnosis, shamanism, lucid dreaming, drug states, meditation, etc. These are supposed to lead to “enlightenment” but instead they open the mind to demonic influence.
- Yoga and meditation. True yoga has one specific goal: unite the person to Brahman through experiences of mystical consciousness. To put it bluntly, the very goal of yoga is to destroy the person (who is only a false self, an illusion) so that the impersonal Brahman (the alleged Real Self) may be experienced.
- The goal of attaining “enlightenment” – the realization of one’s inner nature as God.
- Occultism – astrology, magic, sorcery, necromancy, development of psychic abilities, shamanistic practices, etc. (see Deut. 18:10-12)

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Hindu Theology in America

Q1 What does Hinduism teach about God?

A1

- God is an impersonal divine essence called Brahman.
- Everything is God or part of God (pantheism).
- Brahman can be neither known nor worshipped. He is, according to Hindu teachings, “an impersonal, omnipresent being who cannot be called a knowing being....He cannot be called a thinking being, because that is a process of the weak only. He cannot be called a reasoning being, because reasoning is a sign of weakness. He cannot be called a creating being, because none creates except in bondage.”

Q2 What does Hinduism teach about man?

A2

- Outwardly, man is an illusion. But inwardly, his true nature is one with Brahman. “Atman is Brahman” means the individual human soul, atman, is one divine essence with Brahman.
- Rahneesh explains: “As you are, you are God.” This sounds a lot like the mantra of Mormonism: “As man is, God once was. As God is, man may become.”

Q3 What does Hinduism teach about Jesus?

A3

The biblical Jesus is either ignored or ridiculed – or even condemned as a false Christ. Hindu leaders call him “a mental case” ... “a salesman” ... and among the “range of idols from wood and stone to Jesus and Buddha.”

Q4 What does Hinduism teach about salvation?

A4

Hinduism defines salvation as 1) the realization of our own Godhood; 2) the progressive “working out” of that realization throughout our life; and 3) the final merging with the impersonal God Brahman. The process may require millions of lifetimes as we strive to earn our own salvation by working off our “karma” (unenlightened thoughts and actions) in accordance with Hindu requirements.

Q5 What does Hinduism teach about life after death?

A5

The basic teaching of Hinduism concerning the afterlife involves a belief in reincarnation, the idea that we have many lifetimes to perfect ourselves, to work off our “karma” until we finally merge back into Brahman.

Comparing Christianity and Hinduism

Comparing Christianity and Hinduism**What the Bible says about God:**

There is one true and living God, who exists as three distinct, co-equal, co-eternal persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Deut. 6:4; John 20:28; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 13:13; 1 Peter 1:2).

What Hinduism says about God:

God (Brahman) is the one impersonal, ultimate, and unknowable spiritual reality. Sectarian Hinduism personalizes Brahman as Brahma (creator), Vishnu (preserver), and Shiva (destroyer). Hindus claim there are 330 million gods. Belief in astrology, evil spirits and curses is common.

What the Bible says about Jesus:

He is the virgin-born Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:35). He is the eternal God, the Creator, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit (John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-20; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-13). Jesus died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3), rose physically from the dead (Matt. 12:38-40; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:4-8; 1 Peter 1:18-21) and is coming back physically and visibly one day (Matt. 24:29-31; John 14:3; Titus 2:13; Rev. 19:11-16).

What Hinduism says about Jesus:

Jesus was a teacher of Hinduism, a guru of the past whom Christians greatly misunderstand. He was neither the unique God-man nor our Savior. In fact, many modern Hindu leaders ignore, ridicule or condemn Jesus as a false Messiah, describing Him as “a mental case ... a fanatic ... a fascist ... a salesman” (Rajneesh). He also is called a “false idol” and “a perversion of the truth” (Da Free John).

What the Bible says about salvation:

Christ’s death at Calvary completely paid our sin debt so that salvation comes by grace alone through faith in the person and work of Jesus (John 3:16, 5:24; Rom. 4:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; 1 John 1:7).

What Hinduism says about salvation:

There is no clear concept of salvation in Hinduism. *Moksha* – freedom from infinite being and selfhood, and final realization of the truth – is the goal of existence. The paths to *moksha* are *dharma marga*, or the way of works; *inana marga*, or the way of knowledge; and *bhakti marga*, or the way of love and devotion. Hindus hope one day to get off the cycle of reincarnation. The illusion of personal existence will end and they will become one with the impersonal God.

What the Bible says about the Bible:

The Bible is the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God, and is His sole written authority for all people (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

What Hinduism says about the Bible:

The essence of Hinduism is not to be found in the Bible, but in writings such as the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabhrada*, *Vedangas*, *Puranas*, *Darshanas*, *Sutras* and *Tantras*.

Comparing Christianity and Hinduism

What the Bible says about man:

God created man in His image – with a human spirit, personality and will. A person's life begins at conception and is everlasting, but not eternal; that is, our lives have no end, but they did have a distinct beginning (Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 139:13-16).

What Hinduism says about man:

The eternal soul (*atman*) of man is a “spark” of Brahman mysteriously trapped in the physical body. Many reincarnations are required before the soul may be liberated from the body. The physical body is an illusion (*maya*) with little permanent value. Bodies generally are cremated at death, and the eternal soul goes to an intermediate state of punishment or reward before rebirth in another body.

What the Bible says about sin:

Sin is a violation of God's perfect and holy standards. All humans are sinners (Rom. 3:10) and are under the curse of sin – spiritual and physical death (Gen. 2:17, 3:17-19; Rom. 3:23). Only faith in Christ and His work on our behalf frees us from sin and its consequences (John 3:16, 5:24; Eph. 2:8-9).

What Hinduism says about sin:

Hindus have no concept of rebellion against a holy God since God (Brahman) is impersonal and unknowable. Ignorance of unity with Brahman, desire, and violation of *dharma* (one's social duty) are humanity's problems.

What the Bible says about death:

Physical and spiritual deaths come upon all people as a consequence of their sin (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:1). A person becomes spiritually alive when he or she is “born again” by the Spirit of God (John 3:3-6; Eph. 2:1-5). At physical death, our souls and spirits separate from our bodies [which go into the grave to await resurrection and final judgment] and enter an everlasting state of blessedness [for those born again] or torment [for those who die in their sins] (Luke 16:19-31; 2 Cor. 5:8).

What Hinduism says about death:

Death is the freeing of the soul (*atman*) from the body. The *atman* goes to an intermediate state of reward or punishment as it awaits rebirth in another body. The cycle of death and rebirth goes on indefinitely until the *atman* reaches *moksha*, in which the illusion of personal existence ends and the soul becomes one with the impersonal God.

What the Bible says about heaven and hell:

Hell is a place of everlasting conscious existence, where the unbeliever is forever separated from God (Matt. 25:46; Luke 16:19-31; Rev. 14:9-11, 20:10). As for Heaven, all believers have God's promise of a home in Heaven, will go there instantly upon physical death, and will return with Christ from Heaven to earth one day (Luke 16:19-31; John 14:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:8; Rev. 19:11-16).

What Hinduism says about heaven and hell:

Neither heaven nor hell exists in the biblical sense. Since reality is but an illusion, the goal of man is to achieve *moksha*, ending the cycle of reincarnation so the soul becomes one with the impersonal God. There is no eternal reward or punishment; however, an individual's present life is determined by the law of *karma* – actions, words and thoughts in previous lifetimes.

Buddhism: An Overview

Buddhism: An Overview

With about 365 million followers (920,000 in the United States), Buddhism is the fourth largest religion in the world (after Christianity, Islam and Hinduism). Buddhism was founded in northern India by the first known Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, a prince who lived about 563-483 B.C.

Siddhartha Gautama

Traditional belief is that he was born a prince. His father, Suddhodana, was king of the Sakyas clan; his mother was named Maya. Miraculous stories are associated with his birth, including reports that he emerged from his mother's side without causing her any pain, and that at birth he stood up, took seven steps, and announced that he would be the "chief of the world." He was given the name Siddhartha Gautama. Siddhartha means "one who has achieved his aim."

Prophecy said he would be a great king if he stayed home, but a savior of mankind if he left. His father wanted his son to succeed him as king so he kept him confined to the palace. But the son wanted to see the world. His father ordered the streets cleared and cleansed, but Siddhartha Gautama saw the "Four Passing Sights," which were experienced either while on chariot rides or through visions:

- A frail old man
- An emaciated, diseased and depressed man
- A funeral procession with grieving family members
- A monk begging for food (but serene)

The passing sights so impressed the prince that he left his wife, child, luxurious lifestyle, and future role as leader of his people in order to seek truth. He became a pauper and wandered from place to place seeking wisdom. He tried meditation, then breath control and intense fasting. He realized that neither the extremes of hedonism nor mortification of the flesh would lead to enlightenment. He determined that a better path to achieve the state of nirvana – a state of liberation from suffering – was to pursue the "Middle Way" through moderation and meditation.



Trio of Buddha statues

One night, at age 35, he was in deep meditation beneath a large tree when he began to experience spiritual breakthroughs. He developed the ability to recall the events of previous lives in detail. He was able to see how the good and bad deeds of

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one lifetime bore consequences in the next life. Finally, he learned that he had progressed beyond the “spiritual defilements” of craving, desire, hatred, hunger, thirst, exhaustion, fear, doubt and delusions. “With this experience, he became a Buddha, someone who has ‘awakened’ from the dream of ignorance and whose wisdom has ‘blossomed’ like a flower,” writes Boston University’s Malcolm David Eckel in the *Course Guidebook* to The Teaching Company’s *Great World Religions: Buddhism*. “He also achieved the state or the goal that Buddhists call *nirvana*, which means ‘to extinguish’ or ‘to blow out.’ A Buddha is someone who has understood the causes of suffering and has ‘blown them out,’ meaning that he no longer suffers from the ignorance and desire that feed the fire of death and rebirth” (pp. 8-9).

He spent the rest of his life sharing what he had learned. He was no longer Siddhartha Gautama but the Buddha, or enlightened one. He wandered around northeast India for decades, teaching all who would listen, and died at the age of 80. He left no successor, believing that the Dharma (his teachings), plus the Vinaya (his code of rules for monks and nuns) would be adequate guides. More than 200 years later, a council of Buddhist monks collected his teachings and the oral traditions of the faith into written form, called the *Tripitaka*.

Basic Description of Buddhism

From the time of Gautama to the present day, Buddhism has grown from a tiny religious community in northern India into a movement that now spans the globe. According to Boston University's Eckel, "Although Buddhism plays the role of a 'religion' in many cultures, it challenges some of our most basic assumptions about religion. Buddhists do not worship a God who created and sustains the world. They revere the memory of a human being, Siddhartha Gautama, who found a way to be free from suffering and bring the cycle of rebirth to an end. For Buddhists, this release from suffering constitutes the ultimate goal of human life" (p. 3).

“Buddhism was founded as a form of atheism that rejected more ancient beliefs in a permanent, personal, creator God (Ishvara) who controlled the eternal destiny of human souls,” according to the North American Mission Board’s belief bulletin on Buddhism. “Buddhism is an impersonal religion of self-perfection, the end of which is death (extinction) – not life.” The essential elements of the Buddhist belief system are summarized in the **Four Noble Truths**:

1. Life is full of suffering (*dukkha*).
2. Suffering is caused by craving (*samudaya*).
3. Suffering will cease only when craving ceases (*nirodha*).
4. Following the Eightfold Path will end suffering (*magga*).

The Eightfold Path consists of:

1. Right understanding of the Four Noble Truths.
2. Right thinking; following the right path in life.
3. Right speech – no lying, criticism, condemnation, gossip, etc.
4. Right conduct by following the Five Precepts (do not kill; do not steal; do not lie; do not misuse sex; do not consume alcohol or drugs).

Buddhism: An Overview

5. Right livelihood; support yourself without harming others.
6. Right effort; promote good thoughts, conquer evil thoughts.
7. Right mindfulness; become aware of your body, mind, and feelings.
8. Right contemplation; meditate to achieve a higher state of consciousness.

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Types of Buddhism

After Gautama's death, Buddhism eventually died out in India but became established in Sri Lanka. From there, it expanded across Asia and evolved into three main forms:

Theravada Buddhism. Also called Southern Buddhism, it began in the 3rd century B.C. as Buddhist missionaries left India for Sri Lanka. In the Pali language the word "Theravada" means "the Doctrine of the Elders" or the "Ancient Doctrine." The Theravada school bases its practices and doctrines exclusively on the Pali canon. Theravada Buddhism now dominates all the Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia except Vietnam.

Mahayana Buddhism. The word means "Great Vehicle." It emerged as a reform movement in the Indian Buddhist community around the beginning of the Common Era and eventually spread to China, Tibet, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. Mahayana texts claim to be the teaching of the Buddha himself, delivered to a special assembly of bodhisattvas, or "future Buddhas," from which other Buddhist practitioners were excluded. A bodhisattva does not attempt to go straight to nirvana but returns to this world to help others along the path.

Vajrayana (Tantra) Buddhism. The word means "Diamond Vehicle." This form of Buddhism shares the basic concepts of Mahayana, and is thought by some to be a part of Mahayana, but also includes a vast array of spiritual techniques designed to enhance the Buddhist practice. Two major subschools are Tibetan Buddhism and Shingon Buddhism. By harnessing certain psycho-physical energy, the practitioner may achieve Buddhahood in one lifetime.

One other form of Buddhism that should not escape our attention is **Zen Buddhism**, a branch of Mahayana Buddhism that has become widely known in the west. There are no sacred scriptures. The teachings of Buddhism are transmitted from mind to mind and do not need to be explained in words. Zen actually developed 1,000 years after the death of the Buddha. "Look within, you are the Buddha," it teaches, stressing finding your own way through self effort. Central to Zen is the practice of Zazen – sitting in Zen meditation under the guiding hand of a master (roshi).

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Key Beliefs

Doctrines of Buddhism include:

- Nothing in life is permanent (anicca)
- Individual selves do not truly exist (anatta)
- All is determined by an impersonal law of moral causation (karma)
- Reincarnation is an endless cycle of continuous suffering, and the goal of life is to break out of this cycle by finally extinguishing the flame of life and entering a permanent state of pure nonexistence (nirvana)

The Buddha taught that there are five ways people attach themselves to the world and to self:

- Matter (*rupa*). Physical matter, sights, odors, sounds, etc. – our physical existence – make up the illusion of You.
- Sensation (*vedana*). When material elements in the world bump into each other in the human body, sensations arise. Happiness and sadness are in this category because they are the effects of material causes.
- Perception (*samjna*). The Buddha said perception is recognizing physical or mental functions – e.g. recognizing a certain sound as the sound of music. A person has no control over their perceptions; they are reflexes resulting from “matter” and “sensations.”
- Formation of mind (*samskara*). When you direct your mind towards a particular thought/action, you experience a “mental formation.” For example, when you hear music you may decide to turn up the volume. Mental formations also include concentration, desire, hate, jealousy, etc. There is no You controlling these mental formations; there are just the formations themselves.
- Consciousness (*vijnana*). This is simply an “awareness” (not “perception”) of the presence and characteristics of a thing. Consciousness is the awareness of sound, whereas perception identifies the sound as the sound of music.

The Buddha taught that the sum of these five parts does not make up a greater whole called the Self. All that exists are the parts. The Buddha wanted to remove the notion of Self because he believed the idea of the Self is the root of all suffering. Since there is no soul or You, there is no reincarnation. Buddha instead taught rebirth. Rebirth does not involve getting a new body for an old soul (as in Hinduism). Instead it is the continuation of the Five Aggregates in a long chain of cause and effect.

Professor Eckel explains it this way: “What do Buddhists mean when they say that there is ‘no self?’ In traditional Buddhism, ‘no self’ means that there is no permanent identity to continue from one moment to the next. If there is no permanent identity, what makes up the human personality? The answer to this question is: five ‘aggregates,’ from material form (*rupa*) to consciousness (*vijnana*). These five aggregates are only momentary, but they group together to give the illusion of permanence, like the flow of a river or the flame of a candle” (p. 13).

Buddhism: An Overview

Buddhism does not share most of the core beliefs of historical Christianity, including:

- Creation of mankind in innocence and the subsequent fall of humanity into sin
- A worldwide flood in the days of Noah
- A God-man Savior who was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died a sacrificial death, was raised physically from the dead and ascended into heaven
- Salvation achieved by grace through faith – or even through works or sacraments.
- Everlasting life in heaven or hell after death
- The future return of a Savior to the earth
- The future end of the world as we know it

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Comparing Christianity and Buddhism

What the Bible says about God:

There is one true and living God, who exists as three distinct, co-equal, co-eternal persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Deut. 6:4; John 20:28; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 13:13; 1 Peter 1:2). God is personal and is to be the only object of worship (Ex. 20:2-3; Isa. 43:10, 44:6; Matt. 4:10).

What Buddhism says about God:

Buddhists do not worship a God who created and sustains the world. Theravada Buddhism considers the concept of God irrelevant; it is basically atheistic. Mahayana Buddhism worships the Buddha as a god, along with other gods. Other forms of Buddhism add shamanism and elements of the occult.

What the Bible says about Jesus:

He is the virgin-born Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:35). He is the eternal God, the Creator, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit (John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-20; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-13). Jesus died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3), rose physically from the dead (Matt. 12:38-40; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:4-8; 1 Peter 1:18-21) and is coming back physically and visibly one day (Matt. 24:29-31; John 14:3; Titus 2:13; Rev. 19:11-16).

What Buddhism says about Jesus:

Jesus was a great religious teacher who may have achieved enlightenment. Even so, he was one among many and therefore not unique.

What the Bible says about salvation:

Christ's death at Calvary completely paid our sin debt so that salvation comes by grace alone through faith in the person and work of Jesus (John 3:16, 5:24; Rom. 4:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

What Buddhism says about salvation:

The goal of life is to achieve *nirvana*, or the cessation of suffering.

What the Bible says about the Bible:

The Bible is the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God, and is His sole written authority for all people (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

What Buddhism says about the Bible:

The authoritative writings for Buddhists are the *Sutras* and the *Tripiṭaka* (The Three Baskets). The Bible contains good teaching but is not authoritative.

Comparing Christianity and Buddhism

What the Bible says about man:

God created man in His image – with a human spirit, personality and will. A person's life begins at conception and is everlasting, but not eternal; that is, our lives have no end, but they did have a distinct beginning (Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 139:13-16).

What Buddhism says about man:

Buddhists embrace the concept of *anatta* (no self). In traditional Buddhism, “no self” means there is no permanent identity to continue from one moment to the next. The human personality is made up of five *skanda* (parts), which are only momentary, but they group together to give the illusion of permanence, like the flow of a river or the flame of a candle.

What the Bible says about sin:

Sin is a violation of God's perfect and holy standards. All humans are sinners (Rom. 3:10) and are under the curse of sin – spiritual and physical death (Gen. 2:17, 3:17-19; Rom. 3:23). Only faith in Christ and His work on our behalf frees us from sin and its consequences (John 3:16, 5:24; Eph. 2:8-9).

What Buddhism says about sin:

There is no such thing as sin against a supreme being. The human condition is suffering, caused by attachment to things and the cravings / desires accompanying the attachment.

What the Bible says about death and the afterlife:

Physical and spiritual deaths come upon all people as a consequence of their sin (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:1). A person becomes spiritually alive when he or she is “born again” by the Spirit of God (John 3:3-6; Eph. 2:4-5). At physical death, our souls and spirits separate from our bodies [which go into the grave to await resurrection and final judgment] and enter an everlasting state of blessedness [for those born again] or torment [for those who die in their sins] (Luke 16:19-31; 2 Cor. 5:8).

Hell is a place of everlasting conscious existence, where the unbeliever is forever separated from God (Matt. 25:46; Luke 16:19-31; Rev. 14:9-11, 20:10). As for Heaven, all believers have God's promise of a home in Heaven, will go there instantly upon physical death, and will return with Christ from Heaven to earth one day (Luke 16:19-31; John 14:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:8; Rev. 19:14).

What Buddhism says about death and the afterlife:

Buddhists believe the cycle of death and rebirth, known as *samsara*, has been going on since time without beginning. Their goal is to end this cycle by attaining *nirvana*, a state of being that is realized through eliminating desire. *Nirvana* comes at two moments: at awakening or enlightenment, and at *parinirvana*, when the fire of personality finally flickers out (final death).

The path to *nirvana* is divided into eight categories of disciplines that are meant to avoid bad *karma* that leads to difficult and dangerous forms of rebirth.

There is no heaven or hell as understood by Christians.

Islam: An Overview

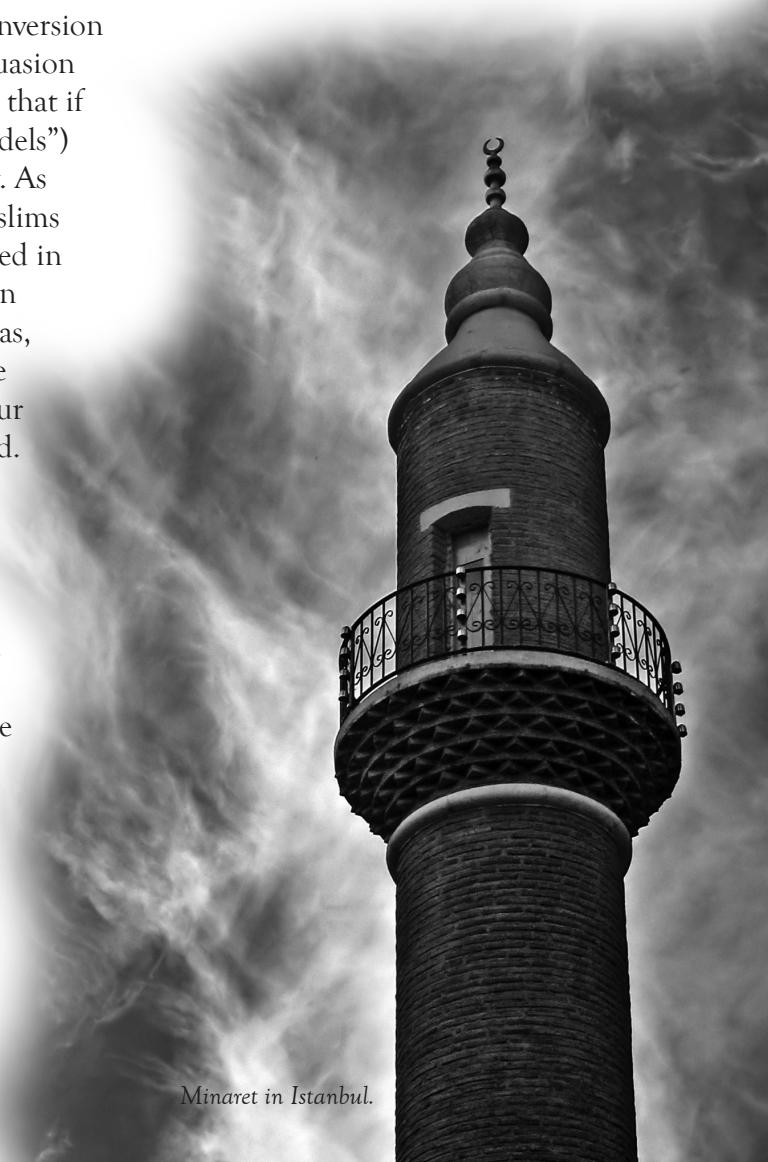
Islam is the youngest and fastest-growing major world religion. It was founded by Arabian visionary Muhammad (570-632 AD), who was born in the city of Mecca in Arabia. Muhammad claimed he received supernatural revelations from God through the angel Gabriel. These revelations were written down by others and compiled into a book called the Koran (or *Qur'an*). Islam today is comprised of two main schools: the majority Sunni school and the minority Shi'ite school. In addition, there are millions of Muslim mystics called Sufis. Islam is the second-largest religion in the world (behind Christianity) with about 1.5 billion followers. Interestingly, the four nations with the largest number of Muslims today are all outside the Middle East – Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India.

Purpose

The ultimate goal of Islam is to subjugate the world and then rule it according to Islamic law. Islam claims to be the restoration of true monotheism and thus supersedes both Judaism and Christianity. Islamic law teaches that conversion may be achieved through persuasion or subjugation, but some hold that if these fail, unbelievers (or “infidels”) may be eliminated if necessary. As such, hostility toward non-Muslims is accepted and even encouraged in some Islamic cultures, based on passages from the Koran such as, “O, true believers, take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends. They cannot be trusted. They are defiled – filth.”

Islam's Beginnings

Islam began with the supernatural visions and revelations that Muhammad claimed he received from God through the angel Gabriel. Because Muhammad could neither read nor write, he claimed to have memorized these revelations and ordered his followers to write them down. These writings became Islam's holy book, the Koran.



Minaret in Istanbul.

Islam: An Overview

Muhammad at first feared his revelations came from a *jinn*, or evil spirit, but later he accepted their source as divine and taught that he alone was the true recipient of Allah's truth.

Muhammad was born in the Arabian city of Mecca in 570 A.D. Mecca was an important economic center, serving as a resting place for trading caravans. But it was also an important religious city because the *Ka'bah* was located there. The *Ka'bah* is a cubic structure that in the days of Muhammad housed 360 deities. Each Arabian tribe selected its own deity and came to Mecca each year to pay homage to its god. Muhammad's monotheistic preaching threatened the economic and religious livelihood of Mecca and set him against his own tribe. He and about 100 Muslim families were forced to flee to Medina, a city 200 miles north of Mecca. Muslims look to the year of Muhammad's flight, 622 A.D., as the beginning of the Muslim calendar. In 630, Muhammad and his army returned and took control of Mecca. He personally destroyed the idols in the *Ka'bah* and within a year succeeded in unifying the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula under Islam. Muhammad died in 632 A.D. without appointing a successor.

The Sects of Islam

The two major sects of Islam, Sunni and Shi'ite, originally were established after Muhammad's death in a dispute over who should serve as his successor, or *caliph*. The Sunni Muslims insisted that Muhammad's successor be elected, while the Shi'ite Muslims felt he should be of Muhammad's blood line, which would have meant that Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, would have become *caliph*. The Sunnis prevailed and today account for about 80 percent of the Muslim population. Sunnis and Shi'ites differ in other ways as well:

- **Authority.** Sunnis emphasize the authority of the written traditions, which include the Koran and the *Sunna* (“custom”), from which they derive their name. They also receive guidance from a consensus of elders (*ulama*), who base their decisions on Islam’s writings. Shi’ites look more toward human authority. Initially, they believed Allah spoke through the *Imam*, roughly the equivalent of the Catholic Pope. In the ninth century, however, the twelfth *Imam*, known as the *Mahdi*, became hidden; Shi’ites today await his return, much as Christians await the return of Christ.
- **Civil and religious power.** Sunnis believe there should be a separation between civil and religious authorities, while Shi’ites believe the religious authorities should exercise both political and religious power. Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeini, for example, was a Shi’ite leader.

There is another significant sect of Islam known as Sufism, which is mystical in nature. Minor sects include the Wahhabis (primarily in Saudi Arabia), the Druze (mostly in Lebanon, Syria and northern Israel), the Alawites (mainly in Syria), and the Ahmadiyas (primarily in Pakistan). Beyond this, Islam has been influential in the founding of two other religions: Sikhism and Baha'i.

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Source of Authority

Muslims believe Allah has revealed many written works, including the Old and New Testaments. But these revelations ended with the Koran (*Qur'an*, "recitations"), which supersedes all others. For all practical purposes, Muslims accept only the Koran as the Word of God. They believe Allah's earlier revelations in the Bible have been corrupted by Christians and therefore are not trustworthy, except as interpreted by the Koran. Sunni Muslims, as mentioned above, also place strong emphasis on the *Sunna*, which includes the *Hadith*, in which the sayings and conduct of Muhammad and his companions are recorded.

Basic Beliefs

Every Muslim must hold to six articles of faith:

- Faith in Allah. The central doctrine of Islam is that God is one and that no one may be associated with his deity. To associate someone, like Jesus, with Allah by calling Him God's Son is to commit the unpardonable sin of *shirk* (see Surah 4:48).
- Belief in angels like Gabriel, whom they claim transmitted the Koran to Muhammad. Each person has two angels assigned to him or her – one to record the person's good deeds and the other to record the person's evil deeds. Muslims also believe in evil spirits called *jinn*, from which we get the word “genie.”
- Acceptance of the Koran. Four high-ranking prophets were given books by divine revelation. Moses was given the *Tawrat* (Torah); David, the *Zabur* (his Psalms); Jesus, the *Injil* (Gospel); and Muhammad, the Koran. Muslims teach that only the Koran has been preserved in perfection; Jews and Christians have corrupted the rest.
- Acceptance of Islam's prophets, with Muhammad as the greatest. The Koran says Allah has sent prophets to every nation, proclaiming the truth of the one true God. In all, 124,000 prophets have been sent. Most are unknown, but many include biblical characters such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Jonah, John the Baptist, and Jesus. Muhammad is the only prophet who is for all time; he is called “Seal of the Prophets.”
- Belief in predestination – that is, everything that happens, good and evil, is pre-destined by Allah's will.
- Preparation for the Day of Judgment, in which each person's good and evil works will be measured, resulting in heaven or hell. Only Allah knows – and has predetermined – who will go to heaven and who will go to hell. Hell is not an eternal place of torment, but a place where evil is purged from its inhabitants.

Islam: An Overview

Religious Duties

Every Muslim must practice at least five fundamental religious duties. These are known as the Pillars of Religion, and they are:

- The confession of faith or *Shahada*: “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.” Sincerity in voicing the confession is essential. If a Muslim repudiates the *Shahada* it nullifies his or her hope of salvation.
- Prayer (*Salat*). Muslims must recite 17 cycles of prayer each day. These cycles usually are spread over five times while the supplicant faces Mecca – dawn, noon, midafternoon, dusk, and two hours after sunset. The noon service on Friday is the only time Muslims are expected to gather together at the mosque. Muslims wash themselves ceremonially before praying; this is called ablution or *wudu*.
- Observing *Ramadan*, a month of fasting throughout the daylight hours to commemorate the first revelation of the Koran to Muhammad. During the day, Muslims must refrain from food, drink, smoke, and sexual relations. After sundown, all of these pleasures may be enjoyed until sunrise the next day.
- Almsgiving or *Zakat*. Muslims are required to give 2.5 percent of their currency, plus other forms of wealth, as determined by a complicated system that purifies their remaining wealth.
- Pilgrimage, or *Hajj*, to Mecca, Muhammad’s place of birth. Every Muslim who is physically and financially able must make this trek at least once in his or her lifetime. Pilgrims must wear white garments to eliminate all class distinctions. The process of visiting several sacred sites usually takes more than a week.
- A sixth religious duty is sometimes associated with these: *Jihad*, or Muslim holy war. When the situation warrants it, this duty requires Muslims to go to war to defend Islam against “infidels.” Anyone who dies in a holy war is guaranteed everlasting life in heaven and is considered a martyr for Islam.

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Muslim worshipers kneel on prayer carpets outside Id Kah Mosque in Xinjiang province in western China.

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Are God and Allah the same?

While many people assume that Muslims and Christians worship the same God, differing only in the name upon which they call, this simply is not true. The God of the Koran and the God of the Bible do share some similarities, but the differences are profound. Following are some similarities and differences highlighted by *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*:

Similarities

- Both are One.
- Both are transcendent Creators of the universe.
- Both are sovereign.
- Both are omnipotent.
- Both have spoken to humanity through messengers or prophets, through angels, and through the written word.
- Both know in intimate detail the thoughts and deeds of men.
- Both will judge the wicked.

Differences

- Allah is a singular unity, while God is a compound unity who is one in essence and three in persons (Matt. 28:19; John 10:30; Acts 5:3-4).
- Allah is not a father and has begotten no sons (Surahs 19:88-92; 112:3), but God exists in an eternal relationship as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Through the Koran, Allah broke into history through a word that is written, but the God of the Bible broke into history through the Word who is a person (John 1:1, 14; Col. 1:15-20; Heb. 1:2-3; 1 John 1:1-3; 4:9-10).
- “Allah loves not those that do wrong” (Surah 3:140), and neither does he love “him who is treacherous, sinful” (Surah 4:107), but the God of the Bible “proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).
- The standard of judgment for Allah is the Koranic teaching that our good deeds must outweigh our bad deeds (Surahs 7:8-9; 21:47), but the standard of the God of the Bible is complete perfection as measured by the holy character of God Himself (Matt. 5:48; Rom. 3:23).
- Allah provided a messenger, Muhammad, who warned of Allah’s impending judgment (Surahs 2:119; 5:19; 7:184, 188; 15:89-90) and who declared that “No bearer of a burden can bear the burden of another” (Surahs 17:15; 35:18). But God provided a sinless Savior who took our sins upon Himself and bore God’s wrath in our place (Matt. 20:28; 26:28; Luke 22:37; John 3:16; 10:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; 1 Thess. 5:9-10).

Jesus vs. Isa

Jesus vs. Isa (the Jesus of the Koran)

*When comparing Jesus and Isa,
we can see a clear difference by exploring three questions:*

Who is He?

<u>Jesus</u>	<u>Isa</u>
Virgin born; conceived by Holy Spirit (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:35).	Virgin born; created in womb of Mary by Allah; creation similar to Adam's (Surah 3:59; 19:20-22; 21:91).
Son of God (Matt. 3:17; John 10:30).	Son of Mary (called by this name 23 times in Islamic scriptures; for example, Surah 34:45). Allah is not a father and has no sons or daughters; to say so is <i>shirk</i> , the unpardonable sin (see Surah 19:88-92; 112:3).
Eternal (John 8:58; John 17:5).	Created from dust, as Adam was (Surah 3:59).
Co-equal, co-eternal with the Father, Holy Spirit (John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-20; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-13).	Only a man, a prophet. It is <i>shirk</i> , the unpardonable sin, to ascribe deity to Jesus. Allah is not Triune (Surah 4:171; 5:73, 116).
God (John 1:1; John 10:30).	Not God (Surah 5:17, 72-3, 75). Jesus was an apostle of Allah (Surah 4:171); a messenger only (Surah 5:75; 19:30).
Greater than any man (Matt. 12:42).	A great prophet; not as great as Muhammad. Jesus was a worshiper of Allah (Surah 3:51; 9:30).
Messiah / Christ (Matt. 16:16-7; John 20:31).	Messiah only to the Jews; will proclaim Islam and establish it on the earth at his return.
The way, truth, and life (John 14:6).	Preached the truth (of Islam).
Savior of the world (Luke 2:11; John 4:42; Acts 5:31).	Prophet of Allah; human messenger.
Sinless (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15).	Righteous; obedient to Allah, as all prophets were (Surah 3:45, 49; 4:158).

What Did He Do?

<u>Jesus</u>	<u>Isa</u>
Became flesh, retaining His deity; adding humanity (John 1:14).	Was only flesh. Created from dust by Allah (Surah 3:59).
Called God His Father (John 5:18; 8:54; 20:17).	Called Allah his Lord and worshiped him (Surah 5:75).
Performed miracles to demonstrate His authority as Messiah and to provide a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven (John 2:11; Acts 2:22).	Performed miracles as “signs from the Lord” (Surah 3:49; 5:110).
Died on the cross for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21).	Did not die on the cross. Opinions vary as to what happened to him (he hid while one of his companions died in his place; Allah made Judas Iscariot to look like Jesus and take his place; Simon of Cyrene took Jesus’ place). Atonement for sins not necessary (Surah 17:15; 35:18).
Rose physically from the dead (Matt. 12:38-40; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:4-8; 1 Peter 1:18-21).	Did not die.
Ascended into heaven after His resurrection and is seated at the Father’s right hand (Matt. 26:64; Mark 16:19; Acts 7:55-6).	Called into heaven by Allah at the time Christians say he was crucified. Opinions vary as to whether he remains in heaven today or was sent back to earth, where he died a natural death.
Will return physically and visibly one day to establish His earthly kingdom (Matt. 24:30-1; Rev. 19:11-21).	Will return one day to proclaim Islam and establish Islam on earth. Will defeat Antichrist, kill all pigs, break all crosses, and establish 1,000 years of righteousness. Some expand on this and say he will then die and be buried beside Muhammad.

What Difference Does It Make?

<u>Jesus</u>	<u>Isa</u>
Sin is humanity's problem and results in spiritual and physical death (Rom. 3:10, 23; 5:12; 6:23).	People are not fallen by nature. Sin is not humanity's problem; ignorance of the teachings of Islam is the problem.
Christ's finished work on the cross provides forgiveness of sin and eternal life by God's grace through faith (John 3:16; 5:24; Rom. 4:4-5; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7).	Allah would never let his prophet die in such a way. Forgiveness of sins and eternal life are achieved by submitting to Allah and performing good deeds; atonement is not needed (Surah 11:114; 17:15; 35:18).
Jesus is the only way of salvation (John 14:6; Rom. 3:24-26).	Jesus was only a man – a good man, a prophet, and a worshiper of Allah (Surah 3:51; 19:30).
Salvation is offered freely to all (Rom. 10:13).	Allah forgives whom he pleases and punishes whom he pleases; from mankind's perspective, our eternal destiny is fatalistically determined (Surah 11:114).
Believers are eternally secure based on the promise of God to save us and the power of God to keep us saved (John 5:24; 10:28; 1 Peter 1:3-5).	Jihad is the only eternal security (Surah 3:157).
God deals graciously with people; worship is never forced (Matt. 11:28-30).	Worship may be forced upon people (Surah 2:193; 9:29).

Comparing Christianity and Islam

What the Bible says about God:

There is one true and living God, who exists as three distinct, co-equal, co-eternal persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. While the Bible is clear that there is one God (Deut. 6:4), the Scriptures also call the Father, Son and Holy Spirit God (e.g., John 20:28; Acts 5:3-4), and in some places the three persons of the Godhead are depicted together (Matt. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 13:13; Eph. 1:3-14; 1 Peter 1:2). God is personal, knowable, approachable, and loves all people.

What Islam says about God:

The one true God is Allah. He is a distant God, unknowable and unapproachable. He does not love all people, only those who do well. He is the author of evil as well as good since he predestines all things. He is not triune but singular, and no partner is to be associated with him. To associate a person to Allah – such as by calling Jesus the Son of God – is to commit the unpardonable sin known as *shirk*.

What the Bible says about Jesus:

He is the virgin-born Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:35). He is the eternal God, the Creator, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit (John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-20; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-13). Jesus died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3), rose physically from the dead (Matt. 12:38-40; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:4-8; 1 Peter 1:18-21) and is coming back physically and visibly one day (Matt. 24:29-31; John 14:3; Titus 2:13; Rev. 19:11-16).

What Islam says about Jesus:

He was one of God's prophets or messengers, but inferior to Muhammad, who brought Allah's final revelations to man. The Koran denies that Jesus is the Son of God, and any Muslim who believes in the deity of Jesus has committed the one unforgivable sin called *shirk* – a sin that will send that person to hell. Muslims do believe Jesus is the Messiah, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life and is coming back one day – to establish Islam throughout the earth. They do not believe He died on the cross, but was called to heaven by Allah.

What the Bible says about the Bible:

The Bible is the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God, and is His sole written authority for all people (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

What Islam says about the Bible:

The Bible is corrupted and untrustworthy. Islam claims the Koran is the literal Word of God, received supernaturally by Muhammad from the angel Gabriel. It supersedes the Bible, which also was given by Allah. The Koran does assert, however, that the teachings of the Koran are in harmony with those of the Bible: "We have sent down to thee the book (the Koran) with the truth, confirming the Book (the Bible) that was before it, and assuring it." Yet the Koran and the Bible clearly contradict in countless ways. For example, the Koran teaches a unitarian God; the Bible, a Trinitarian God. The Koran says Jesus was just a man; the Bible, that He was and is God incarnate. The Koran stresses salvation by works; the Bible, salvation by grace through faith in Christ.

Comparing Christianity and Islam

What the Bible says about salvation:

Christ's death at Calvary completely paid our sin debt so that salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus (John 3:16, 5:24; Rom. 4:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

What Islam says about salvation:

The Koran teaches, "The true religion with God is Islam." This means salvation is achieved only through submission to the teachings of Islam. Forgiveness is based on good works and Allah's choice of mercy. The Muslim's chances for heaven are good if he or she: 1) accepts the Muslim God Allah and his apostle Mohammad; 2) does good works and all that is required of him by Allah; and 3) is predestined to Allah's favor. Islam teaches that Christ was neither crucified for our sins nor resurrected; therefore salvation cannot possibly be attained through faith in Christ. [According to Islamic tradition, Jesus was called into heaven and Judas was crucified in His place.] In short, the Muslim concept of salvation is Allah's predestination. The Koran teaches, "All things have we created after a fixed decree ..." Further, "God leads astray whomsoever He will; and He guides whomsoever He will."

What the Bible says about sin:

Sin is the violation of God's perfect and holy standards. All people are sinners (Rom. 3:10, 23) and are under the curse of sin – spiritual and physical death (Gen. 2:17, 3:17-19; Rom. 6:23). Only faith in Christ and His work on our behalf frees us from sin and its consequences (John 3:16, 5:24; Eph. 2:8-9).

What Islam says about sin:

Sin is lack of obedience to Allah. Man is sinful by act only, not by nature. Original sin is viewed as a "lapse" by Adam. Man is not really "fallen" in his sin nature; he is merely weak and forgetful. The most serious sin is that of *shirk*; for example, considering God as triune. Sin is thought of in terms of rejecting right guidance. It can be forgiven through repentance. No atonement is necessary.

What the Bible says about heaven and hell:

Hell is a place of everlasting conscious existence, where the unbeliever is forever separated from God (Matt. 25:46; Luke 16:19-31; Rev. 14:9-11, 20:10). As for heaven, all believers have God's promise of a home in heaven, will go there instantly upon physical death, and will return with Christ from heaven to earth one day (Luke 16:19-31; John 14:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:8; Rev. 19:11-16).

What Islam says about heaven and hell:

Muslims believe in heaven and hell. Allah predetermines the eternal destiny of each person, and the hope of salvation for the Muslim is based on works, although no Muslim has the absolute assurance of heaven. Islam teaches its followers to prepare for the Day of Judgment, in which each person's good and evil works will be measured, resulting in heaven or hell.

Judaism: An Overview

Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people. It is based on the principles of the Tanakh (Old Testament) and the Talmud (a record of rabbinic discussions about law, ethics, custom and history). The history of Judaism begins with the covenant between God and Abraham, in which God establishes the Jews as His chosen people and promises them future blessings, including a large population and land. Most significantly, the Jews are the people through whom the entire world would be blessed (in the coming of the Messiah). Judaism is one of the oldest religious traditions still in practice today. Jewish history and beliefs have influenced other religions including Christianity, Islam, and the Baha'i faith.

Jewish Texts

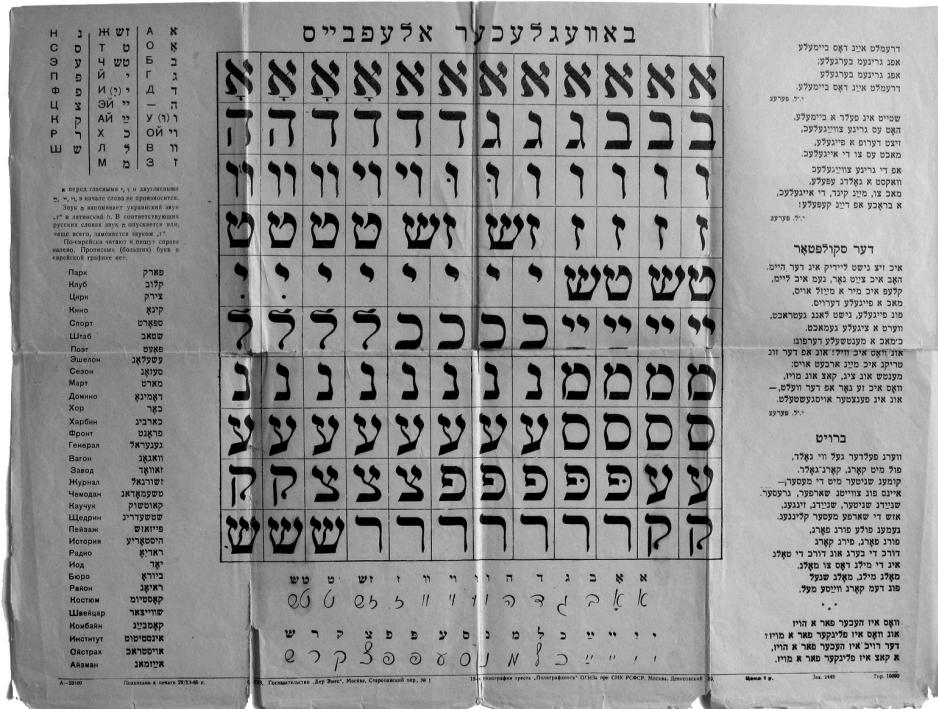
The Tanakh corresponds to the Old Testament and is composed of three parts:

- *Torah* (law) – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
- *Nevi'im* (prophets) – Joshua, Judges, Samuel (2), Kings (2), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi.
- *Ketuvim* (writings) – Ruth, Chronicles (2), Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations and Daniel.

The Talmud comes mainly from two sources:

- *Mishnah* – containing hundreds of chapters, including series of laws from the Hebrew Scriptures.
- *Gemara* – including comments from hundreds of rabbis from 200-500 A.D. explaining the Mishnah with additional historical, religious, legal and other material.

Hebrew alphabet



Judaism: An Overview

Basic Jewish Beliefs

The closest thing to a creed in Judaism is the 13 articles formulated by rabbi and scholar Moses Maimonides, who lived from 1135-1204 A.D.

1. God alone is Creator.
2. God is one and unique.
3. God is incorporeal (without material existence).
4. God is eternal – the first and the last.
5. Prayer is to be directed to God alone and to no other.
6. The words of the prophets are true.
7. Moses was the greatest of the prophets, and his prophecies are true.
8. The Written Torah (first five books of the Bible) and the *Oral Torah* (teachings now contained in the *Talmud* and other writings) were given by Moses.
9. There will be no other *Torah*.
10. God knows the thoughts and deeds of men.
11. God will reward the good and punish the wicked.
12. The Messiah will come.
13. The dead will be resurrected.

Some additional beliefs found commonly among Jews are:

- Jesus was a great moral teacher; or, Jesus was a false prophet or an idol of Christianity.
- The Jews are God's chosen people; that is, God selected Israel to receive and study the Torah, to worship God alone, to rest on the weekly Sabbath, and to celebrate the festivals.
- The 613 commandments found in Leviticus and other books of the Torah regulate all aspects of Jewish life.
- The Ten Commandments form a brief synopsis of the Law.
- The Messiah will arrive in the future and gather Jews once more into the land of Israel. There will be a general resurrection of the dead at that time, and the Jerusalem Temple, destroyed in 70 A.D., will be rebuilt.
- Boys reach the status of Bar Mitzvah on their 13th birthday. Girls reach Bat Mitzvah on their 12th birthday. Following these milestones, males and females can sign contracts, testify in religious courts, and marry (although the Talmud recommends 18 to 24 as the proper age for marriage).

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Jewish Practices

Jewish practices include:

- Observation of the weekly Sabbath.
- Strict discipline, according to the Law, which governs all areas of life.
- Regular attendance by Jewish males at synagogue.
- Celebration of the annual festivals including: Passover, Rosh Hashanah (New Year), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), Sukkoth (Feast of Booths), Hanukkah (Feast of Lights), Purim (Feast of Lots), and Shavout (Feast of Weeks).

Main Forms of Judaism

There are five main forms of Judaism in the world today:

- **Orthodox** – the oldest, most conservative, and most diverse form of Judaism. Modern Orthodox, Chasidim and Ultra Orthodox Jews share a basic belief in the Jewish Law, even though they differ in their outlooks on life. They attempt to follow the original form of Judaism as they see it. Every word of the sacred texts is considered inspired.
- **Reform** – a liberal group including many North American Jews. The movement started in the 1790s in Germany. Reform Jews follow the ethical laws of Judaism but allow the individual to decide whether to follow dietary and other traditional laws. They use modern forms of worship. Many of their rabbis are females.
- **Conservative** – a movement that began in the mid-nineteenth century in response to the Reform movement. It is a mainline movement midway between Orthodox and Reform.
- **Humanistic** – a very small group composed mainly of atheists and agnostics who regard man as the measure of all things.
- **Reconstructionist** – a small, liberal movement started as an attempt to unify and revitalize the religion. It rejects the concept that Jews are a unique people whom God favors.

It's important to note what some call a sixth – and growing – form of Judaism: **Messianic Judaism**. These Jews believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah. Culturally and ethically they are Jews, but they have embraced Christianity. Some prefer to be called Hebrew Christians, Jewish Christians, or simply believers.

Judaism: An Overview

Moshiach: The Messiah

Traditional Judaism holds to a foundational belief in the eventual coming of the moshiah – the Messiah (Hebrew) or Christ (Greek). Jews teach that the Messiah will be a great political leader descended from King David (Jer. 23:5). He will be well-versed in Jewish law and observe its commandments (Isa. 11:2-5). In addition, he will be a charismatic figure who inspires others; a great military leader who wins battles for Israel; and a great judge who makes righteous decisions (Jer. 33:15). But above all, he will be a human being who is in no way divine. It is believed that in every generation a person is born with the potential to be the Messiah.

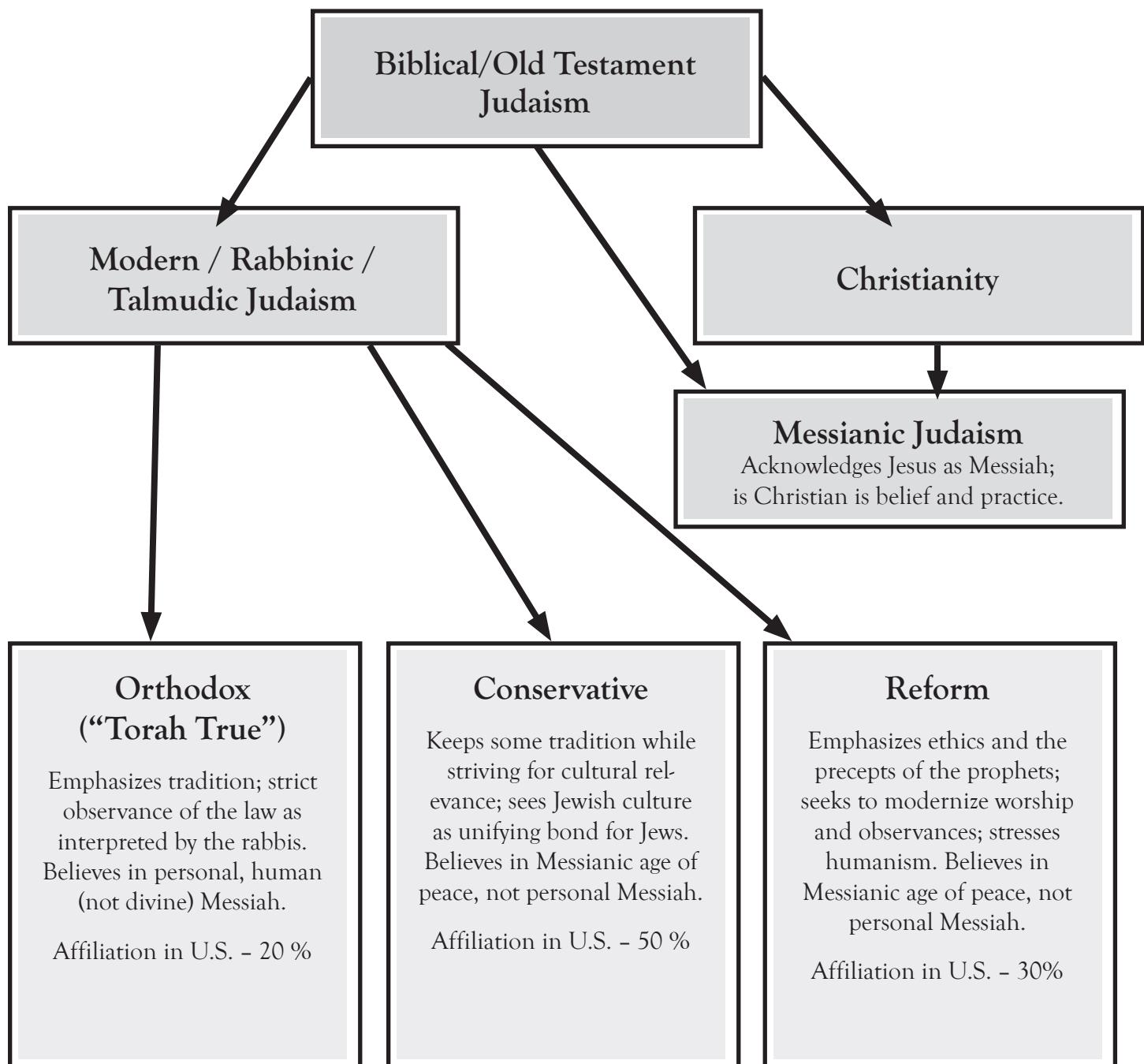
Though many have claimed to be the Messiah – Jesus of Nazareth (1st century), Shimeon ben Kosiba (2nd century), and Shabbatai Tzvi (17th century) to name a few – Jews claim all of them died without fulfilling the Messiah's mission, which involves:

- Bringing about the political and spiritual redemption of the Jewish people by restoring the Jews' homeland and capital city (Isa. 11:11-12; Jer. 23:8; 30:3; Hosea 3:4-5).
- Establishing a government in Israel that is the center of all world government (Isa. 2:2-4; 11:10; 42:1).
- Rebuilding the temple and reestablishing its worship (Jer. 33:18).
- Restoring the religious court system of Israel and establishing Jewish law as the law of the land (Jer. 33:15).

Before the time of the Messiah, there will be war and suffering (Ezek. 38:16). After he comes, the world will enter a period known as *Olam Ha-Ba*, or the world to come, or the Messianic Age, characterized by peaceful coexistence among people, and even animals (Isa. 2:4). Jews will return from their exile among the nations to Israel (Isa. 11:11-12; Jer. 23:8; 30:3; Hosea 3:4-5). The whole world will acknowledge God and worship Him according to the Jewish religion (Isa. 2:3; 11:10; Micah 4:2-3; Zech. 14:9). Sin will cease (Zeph. 3:13). Sacrifices will continue to be brought to the temple, but these will be limited to thanksgiving offerings because there will be no necessity for sin offerings.

Jews do not believe that Jesus was the *moshiach*. They argue that he did not fulfill the mission of the Messiah as described above.

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Judaism and Christianity: Sister Religions

Comparing Judaism and Christianity

Comparing Judaism and Christianity**What the Bible says about God:**

There is one true and living God, who exists as three distinct, co-equal, co-eternal persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Deut. 6:4; John 10:30; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 13:13; 1 Peter 1:2). God is personal and is to be the only object of worship (Ex. 20:2-3; Isa. 43:10, 44:6; Matt. 4:10).

What the Bible says about Jesus:

He is the virgin-born Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:35). He is the eternal God, the Creator, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit (John 1:1-14, 10:30; Col. 1:15-20; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-13). Jesus died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3), rose physically from the dead (Matt. 12:38-40; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:4-8; 1 Peter 1:18-21) and is coming back physically and visibly one day (Matt. 24:29-31; John 14:3; Titus 2:13; Rev. 19:11-16).

What the Bible says about man:

God created man in His image – with a human spirit, personality and will. A person's life begins at conception and is everlasting, but not eternal; that is, our lives have no end, but they did have a distinct beginning (Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 139:13-16).

What the Bible says about sin:

Sin is a violation of God's perfect and holy standards. All humans are sinners (Rom. 3:10) and are under the curse of sin – spiritual and physical death (Gen. 2:17, 3:17-19; Rom. 3:23, 6:23). Only faith in Christ and His work on our behalf frees us from sin and its consequences (John 3:16, 5:24; Eph. 2:8-9).

What Judaism says about God:

There is one God who is Creator, Deliverer, and Lord of history. He exists in absolute singularity (Deut. 6:4) and therefore is not triune, nor does He exist as more than one distinct person. He is somewhat less personal and more abstract than the God of Christianity.

What Judaism says about Jesus:

Judaism rejects Jesus as the Messiah because he did not fulfill the required prophecies, which include worldwide peace, the return of all Jewish exiles to Israel, the cessation of sin, and the acknowledgement of God and the worship of God according to the Jewish religion. Some Jews see Jesus as a humble but insignificant prophet; others, as a fraud; still others as a pagan idol.

What Judaism says about man:

God created man in His image (Gen. 1:26-28). Man does not inherit original sin. Therefore, mankind basically is good, free, and self-determining.

What Judaism says about sin:

Sin is seen virtually as criminal behavior. Therefore, most Jews do not see themselves as sinners. Ignorance of God's law, or refusal to keep the law according to rabbinic tradition, not sin, is man's biggest problem.

What the Bible says about salvation:

Christ's death at Calvary completely paid our sin debt so that salvation comes by grace alone through faith in the person and work of Jesus (John 3:16, 5:24; Rom. 4:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7).

What Judaism says about salvation:

The solutions to man's problem – which is either ignorance of God's law, or refusal to keep the law according to rabbinic tradition – are education and greater effort applied to living moral and disciplined lives. Repentance, good deeds, and prayer take the place of sacrifice.

What the Bible says about the Bible:

The Bible is the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God, and is His sole written authority for all people (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

What Judaism says about the Bible:

The Hebrew Bible (*Tanakh*, or the "Old Testament"), as interpreted by rabbinic tradition, is man's guide. In practice, rabbinic tradition is more authoritative than Scripture.

What the Bible says about death and the afterlife:

Physical and spiritual deaths come upon all people as a consequence of sin (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:1). A person becomes spiritually alive when he or she is "born again" by the Spirit of God (John 3:3-6; Eph. 2:4-5). At physical death, our souls and spirits separate from our bodies [which go into the grave to await resurrection and final judgment] and enter an everlasting state of blessedness [for those born again] or torment [for those who die in their sins] (Luke 16:19-31; 2 Cor. 5:8).

What Judaism says about death and the afterlife:

Jews hold a range of views:

- Orthodox Jews believe in reward in heaven (Garden of Eden) or punishment in hell.
- Conservative Jews hold to a vague view of the afterlife.
- Reform Jews deny the existence of life beyond the grave.

Hell is a place of everlasting conscious existence, where the unbeliever is forever separated from God (Matt. 25:46; Luke 16:19-31; Rev. 14:9-11, 20:10). As for Heaven, all believers have God's promise of a home in Heaven, will go there instantly upon physical death, and will return with Christ from Heaven to earth one day (John 14:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:8; Rev. 19:14).

Mormonism: An Overview

Mormonism: An Overview

As the official version of the story goes, in 1820, 14-year-old Joseph Smith, Jr., had a vision in which God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him. Caught up in the Protestant revivalism of his day, Smith inquired as to which of the Christian denominations he should join. None of them, he was told, because they were all “wrong and corrupt.” Rather, God would use Smith to reinstate the true church, which had been in apostasy since the death of the apostles.

Thus began the saga of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, which today is the largest and fastest-growing cult (form of counterfeit Christianity) in the world, increasing at an average rate of 300,000 converts a year – as many as 75 percent of whom may be former Protestants, according to author Fritz Ridenour (*So What’s the Difference: A Look at 20 Worldviews, Faiths and Religions and How They Compare to Christianity*, p. 130).

Today the LDS Church, headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, boasts roughly 13 million members in more than 160 countries; about 6 million members reside in the United States. In addition, the church has more than 50,000 missionaries who spread the Mormon message around the world. Its current leader is Thomas S. Monson, 80, who, like founder Joseph Smith and subsequent presidents, is considered the church’s “prophet, seer, and revelator.”

The LDS Church initially stood in defiance of historical Christianity, claiming that after the death of the apostles the Christian church fell into “the great apostasy.” Joseph Smith taught that he alone was called to restore the true church and that the revelations God have him – particularly as recorded in *The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price* – would guide the church back to its historic foundation. In recent years, however, the LDS Church has minimized, refuted or re-interpreted many earlier teachings of its leaders – such as polygamy, the multiple marriages of Jesus, and the curse of African Americans – and has launched a concerted effort to promote Mormonism as mainstream Christianity. This leads some to ask legitimately whether the LDS Church can have it both ways. Either Mormonism is true and all other forms of Christianity are false, or the LDS Church is not really needed, since historic Christianity is true after all, despite Joseph Smith’s claims to the contrary.

Mormon leaders are exceptionally vague in their official statements about what the LDS church really believes. A



Salt Lake City, Utah

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visit to the church's official Web sites (www.lds.org and www.mormon.org) will frustrate any sincere inquirer who wants to know what Mormons really believe about the nature and character of God, the Trinity, the atonement, and man's potential for godhood. Of course, Web surfers can always click on the link for a free *Book of Mormon* and have Mormon missionaries deliver a copy personally to their door, although the answers these missionaries give likely will be as vague as those provided by their leaders.

A Brief History

After Joseph Smith's initial visit from Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in 1820, he allegedly saw the angel Moroni appear at his bedside in 1823 and tell him of golden plates on which was inscribed a record of the ancient American people. During his earthly life, Moroni had been a great warrior who lived among the Nephite people, descendants of Jews who fled Israel for North America around 600 B.C. Moroni's father, Mormon, commander in chief of the Nephites, had given the golden plates to his son, who added a few words of his own before hiding the plates in Hill Cumorah near Palmyra, New York. These plates featured "the fullness of the everlasting gospel." In 1827, after further visits from Moroni, Smith dug up the plates and began translating the "Reformed Egyptian" with the assistance of two special stones called "Urim" and "Thummim." The result was the *Book of Mormon*. By 1830 the book was published and Smith founded the "Church of Christ" (not affiliated with the Church of Christ denomination) with five of his followers.

From 1831 to 1844, Smith gained converts and established strongholds in Ohio, Missouri and Illinois. Wherever they went, Mormons attracted curiosity and even hostility, either because non-Mormons did not trust Smith or were suspicious of Mormon beliefs and practices. During this time, Smith continued to receive revelations. In 1835 he released *Doctrine and Covenants*, which would become “inspired Scripture” along with the *Book of Mormon*. By 1838 the Mormons had been driven from Missouri to Illinois, where they converted a swampy area on the banks of the Mississippi River into a thriving community called Nauvoo. It was here that Smith claimed to receive revelations concerning the Godhead, the origin and destiny of the human race, eternal progression, baptism for the dead, polygamy and other unique doctrines. The fourth “standard work” of Mormonism (after the King James Version of the Bible, the *Book of Mormon*, and *Doctrine and Covenants*), the *Pearl of Great Price*, was first compiled and published in 1851 and incorporated into the LDS canon in 1880.

Tensions in Nauvoo arose between Mormons and non-Mormons and came to a head when the local paper, the *Expositor*, published stories exposing the LDS practice of polygamy. Smith, who had risen to power as mayor of Nauvoo and "lieutenant general" of the 4,000-man Nauvoo legion, ordered the paper destroyed. For this, he was arrested and jailed in Carthage, Illinois. While awaiting trial, a mob of 200 attacked the jail and a gunfight ensued. Smith, using a six-shooter that had been smuggled into the jail, killed at least two attackers before he succumbed to gunshot wounds.

Mormonism: An Overview

Following Smith's death, Brigham Young emerged as successor and led a large number of Mormons west, where they settled in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake in 1847. Today, Salt Lake City is home to the LDS Church. But all LDS members did not follow Young west. Smith's widow, Emma, stayed behind in Illinois. Those who affirmed her son, Joseph Smith III, as the true successor helped found the "Reorganized Church," now called the Community of Christ and headquartered in Independence, Missouri.

Four Standard Works

Mormons recognize four written volumes as inspired and authoritative:

- The King James Version of the Bible – “as far as it is translated correctly.” This caveat enables Mormons to question the Bible’s veracity and authority. Joseph Smith made more than 600 “corrections” to its text. According to the Book of Mormon, the Bible is missing “plain and precious parts” (1 Nephi 13:26), which the other three standard volumes complete.
- The *Book of Mormon*, also called “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.” According to one of the church’s official Web sites (www.mormon.org), “By the power of God, Joseph Smith translated this book from an ancient record written on gold plates. The Book of Mormon is ‘a record of God’s dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas and contains, as does the Bible, the fullness of the everlasting gospel.’”
- *Doctrine and Covenants*. This volume features 138 revelations given to Mormon prophets, along with two “declarations.” Here, much of Mormon doctrine may be found, including teachings on the priesthood, baptism for the dead, exaltation (or godhood), and polygamy.
- *Pearl of Great Price*, which contains Smith’s religious history, the Articles of Faith, the Book of Abraham, and the Book of Moses.

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Basic Mormon Beliefs

“The first difference to grasp between the Mormon Church and biblical Christianity is one of semantics,” writes Fritz Ridenour in *So What’s the Difference?* “The Mormons use but have redefined many key terms employed by evangelical Christians – a definitive sign of a cult. Analysis of Mormon views, past and present, reveals that they dismiss, twist, change or add to all biblical doctrines, particularly revelation, the Trinity and salvation by grace alone through faith alone” (p. 131).

Here is a glimpse of several key doctrines of the Mormon Church:

One true church. Joseph Smith declared that all Christian denominations were false and apostate. Mormons teach that after the death of the apostles, all churches became heretical and no true saints existed until the LDS Church was established. Full salvation and “exaltation” (godhood) is found only in the LDS Church.

LDS president as living prophet, seer and revelator. Joseph Smith and his successors are considered the sole spokesmen and revelators of God through whom God's will is made known to the church. These revelations are considered authoritative, although some early revelations have been superseded by more recent ones; others are minimized by the church today; and still others, such as Smith's prophecy that the temple would be built in Independence, Missouri, in his lifetime, have not been fulfilled.

Mormon scripture. Mormons accept “four standard works” – The King James Version of the Bible (“as far as it is translated correctly”); the *Book of Mormon*; *Doctrine and Covenants*; and *Pearl of Great Price*. In addition, LDS presidents may receive new revelations from God, and these become scripture.

God as an exalted man. Elohim, or Heavenly Father, is the god of this world. He was a man in prior existence, but by keeping the requirements of Mormonism, he was exalted to godhood and inherited his own universe. There are an infinite number of gods with their own worlds; these gods, too, once were men. The Father, Son and Holy Ghost are three separate and distinct Gods. The Father and Son have bodies of flesh and bone; the Holy Ghost is a “personage of spirit.”

Jesus is God's "Son." Jesus (also called Jehovah) was Elohim's firstborn spirit child in heaven. (Lucifer also was a spirit child, but his plan of redemption was rejected in favor of Jesus' superior plan.) Jesus was begotten by God through Mary in a "literal, full and complete sense" (Bruce McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, p. 67). Principally in the Garden of Gethsemane (and not on the cross), Jesus atoned for Adam's sin and guaranteed all people resurrection and immortality (salvation). Jesus visited the Israelites (ancestors of Native Americans) after his resurrection and established the true church among them. We are the spiritual younger brothers and sisters of Christ. Jesus was married at Cana in Galilee (John 2); in fact, He had numerous wives and fathered many children Himself.

Mormonism: An Overview

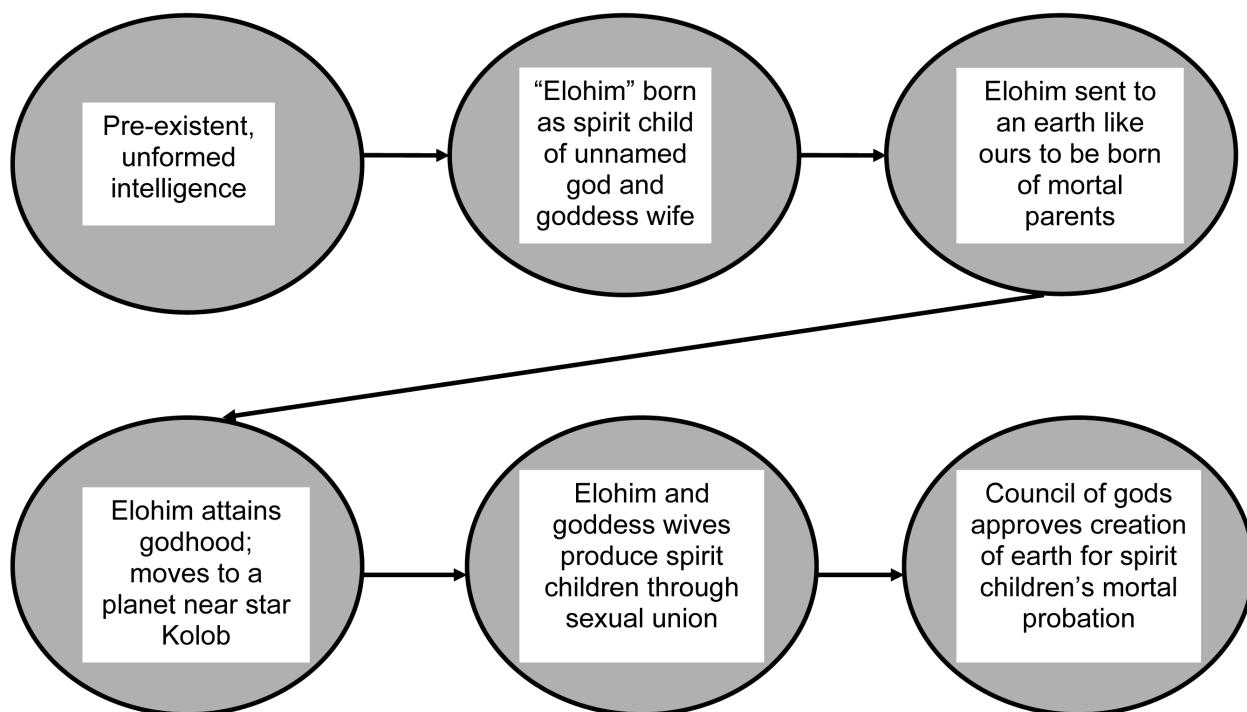
Humans are gods in embryo. Every person has the potential to become a god by keeping the requirements of Mormonism. A key phrase in Mormonism is, "As man is god once was, as god is man become." From a prior spirit existence in heaven, people may be born on earth in order to exercise freedom to choose good or evil and to have a body for the resurrection. By obeying Mormon teachings and performing required duties, worthy Mormon males may pass the celestial guards, bring their wives with them, and achieve a status similar to Elohim. In the resurrection, faithful Mormons receive exaltation (godhood) and will have authority over their own world.

Salvation by works. When Mormons say people are “saved” by grace through faith, they mean “resurrection.” In this sense, virtually all people will be saved. To achieve the highest tier of the highest level of heaven, Mormons must exercise faith in the god of Mormonism, in Christ, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; exercise repentance; and be baptized in the LDS Church. Additionally, they must keep the “Word of Wisdom” by abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine; tithe to the church; attend weekly meetings; support the Mormon prophet; do temple works; and be active in their support of the church. “Full salvation” or “exaltation” (godhood) is only available through the LDS Church.

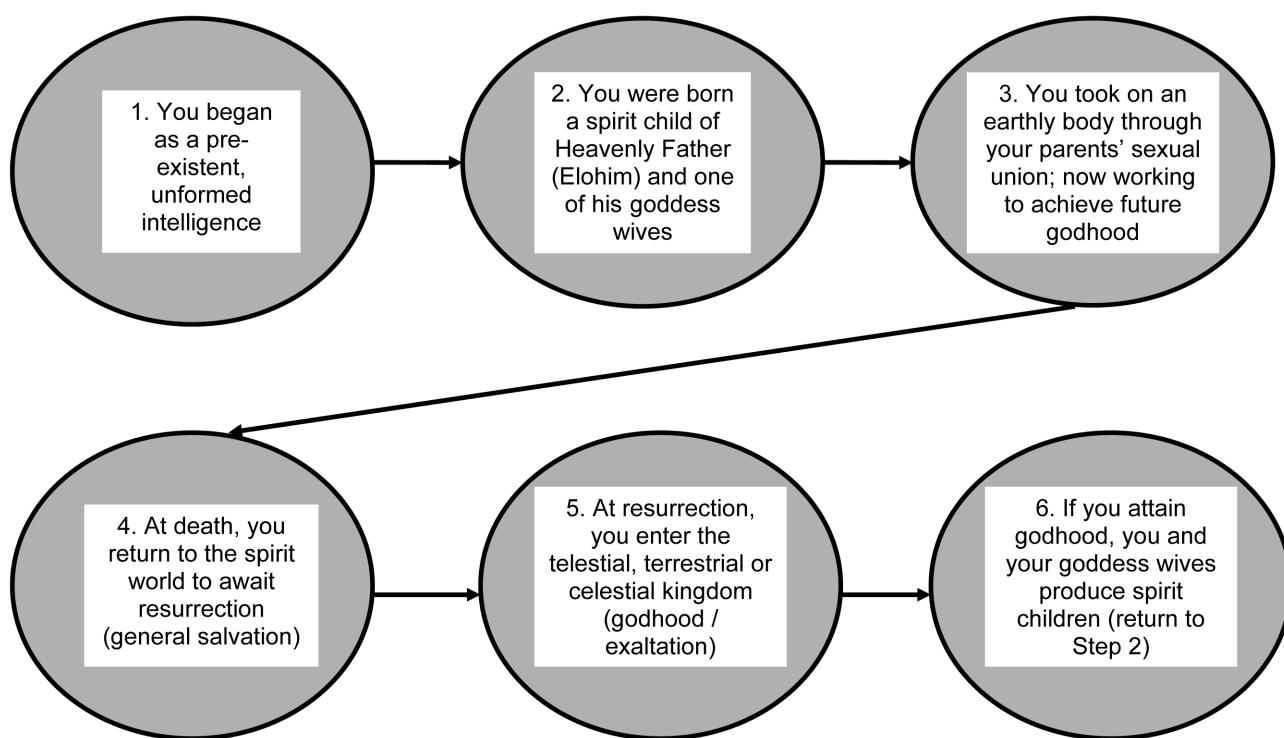
Eternal progression. All people, as well as all gods, have existed eternally. There are four stages in “eternal progression” through which people may pass: 1) eternally existing intelligence; 2) pre-mortal spirit; 3) mortal probation; 4) resurrection and eternal life in one of six places: outer darkness; the celestial kingdom (lowest level of heaven); the terrestrial kingdom (next-highest level of heaven); or the celestial kingdom, consisting of three levels, the highest of which is exaltation/godhood.

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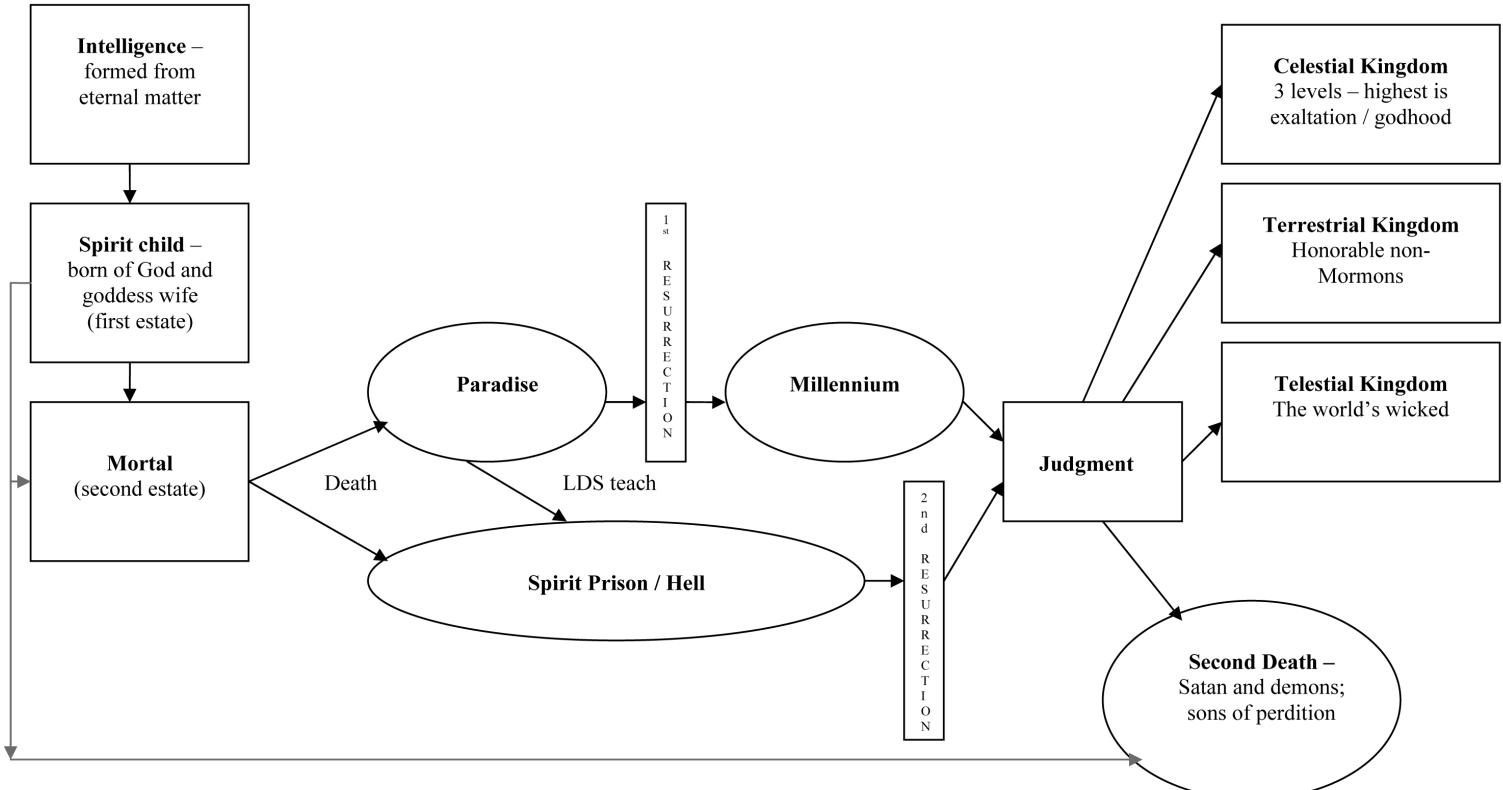
How God Became God
According to the LDS Church



God's Plan for Your Exaltation (godhood)
According to the LDS Church



Mormonism: An Overview

The Mormon Doctrine of Eternal Progression

Comparing Christianity to Mormonism

“For if a person comes and preaches another Jesus ... or you receive a different spirit ... or a different gospel ...” (2 Cor. 11:4)

What the Bible Says About Jesus:

1. He is the virgin-born Son of God, conceived by the Holy Ghost (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:34-5).

What Mormonism Says About Jesus:

“Jesus was not the son of Joseph, nor was He begotten by the Holy Ghost. He is the Son of the Eternal Father!” (Ezra Taft Benson, *Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 7. Quoted in the *Ensign*, April 1997, p. 15)

“God the Father became the literal father of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only person on earth to be born of a mortal mother and an immortal father.” (*Gospel Principles*, p. 64)

“Jesus is the only person who had our Heavenly Father as the father of his body.” (Joseph F. Smith, *Family Home Evening Manual*, pp. 125-26)

“Jesus Christ is the Son of Elohim both as spiritual and bodily offspring; that is to say, Elohim is literally the Father of the spirit of Jesus Christ and also of the body in which Jesus Christ performed His mission in the flesh.” (James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, pp. 466-67)

“Let it not be forgotten, that He is essentially greater than any and all others, by reason (1) of His seniority as the oldest or first born; (2) of His unique status in the flesh as the offspring of a mortal mother and of an immortal, or resurrected and glorified, Father ...” (James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, p. 426).

[Satan is a created – and fallen – angel].

“Long before you were born a program was developed by your creators.... The principal personalities in this great drama were a Father Elohim, perfect in wisdom, judgment, and person, and two sons, Lucifer and Jehovah.” (Spencer W. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, pp. 32-33)

Comparing Christianity to Mormonism

What the Bible Says About Jesus:

2. Jesus did not marry.

3. Jesus is the foundation of the true church (Matt. 16:18; Acts 4:11-12; Col. 1:18).

What Mormonism Says About Jesus:

“The appointment of Jesus to be the Savior of the world was contested by one of the other sons of God. He was called Lucifer ... this spirit-brother of Jesus desperately tried to become the Savior of mankind.” (Milton R. Hunter, *The Gospel through the Ages*, p. 15)

“Both the scriptures and the prophets affirm that Jesus Christ and Lucifer are indeed offspring of our Heavenly Father and, therefore, spirit brothers.... Both Jesus and Lucifer were strong leaders with great knowledge and influence. But as the First-born of the Father, Jesus was Lucifer’s older brother.” (Jess L. Christensen, *A Sure Foundation: Answers to Difficult Gospel Questions*, pp. 223-24. This teaching also appears in other Mormon publications.)

“Jesus was the bridegroom at the marriage of Cana – We say it was Jesus Christ who was married, to be brought into relation whereby he could see his seed.” (Orson Hyde, apostle, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 2, p. 82)

“From the passage in the forty-fifth Psalm, it will be seen that the great Messiah who was the founder of the Christian religion, was a Polygamist.... the Messiah chose to take upon himself his seed; and by marrying many honorable wives himself, show to all future generations that he approbated the plurality of Wives under the Christian dispensation, as well as under the dispensations in which His Polygamist ancestors lived.” (Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, p. 172)

Joseph Smith: “I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him, but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet.” (*History of the Church*, Vol. 6, pp. 408-9)

What the Bible Says About Jesus:

4. Jesus is the judge of all (John 5:22).
5. Jesus is the one who resurrects all (John 5:28-29).
6. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, the Creator, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit (John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-20; Phil 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-13).

What Mormonism Says About Jesus:

“No man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith ... Every man and woman must have the certificate of Joseph Smith, Junior, as a passport to their entrance into the mansion where God and Christ are.” (Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, p. 289)

Joseph Smith will receive the keys of the resurrection. “If we ask who will stand at the head of the resurrection in this last dispensation, the answer is – Joseph Smith, Junior, the Prophet of God. He is the man who will be resurrected and receive the keys of the resurrection, and he will seal this authority upon others, and they will hunt up their friends and resurrect them.” (Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 116)

A “council of the Gods” created the world. “In the beginning, the head of the Gods called a council of the Gods; and they came together and concocted a plan to create the world and people it ... In all congregations when I have preached on the subject of the Deity, it has been the plurality of Gods.” (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Vol. 6, pp. 308, 474)

“He [Jesus] is the Firstborn of the Father. By obedience and devotion to the truth he attained that pinnacle of intelligence which ranked him as a God, as the Lord Omnipotent, while yet in his pre-existent state.... Inasmuch, however, as Christ attained Godhood while yet in pre-existence, he too stood as a God to the other spirits.” (Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 129, 323)

What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit:

1. The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the triune Godhead (Matt. 3:16-17, 28:19-20).
2. The Holy Spirit is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son (Acts 5:3-4).

What Mormonism Says About the Holy Spirit:

Joseph Smith taught that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit “constitute three distinct personages and three Gods.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 370)

The Father has a body of flesh and bones. So does the Son. But the Holy Ghost is “a personage of spirit.” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 130:22)

Comparing Christianity to Mormonism

**What the Bible Says
About the Holy Spirit:**

3. The Holy Spirit and the Holy Ghost are two Biblical names for the same person.

4. The Holy Spirit/Holy Ghost is God (Acts 5:3-4).

**What Mormonism Says
About the Holy Spirit:**

“The Holy Ghost … is a personage distinct from the Holy Spirit. As a personage, the Holy Ghost cannot any more than the Father and the Son be everywhere present in person.” (John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, p. 76)

“The Holy Ghost is yet a spiritual body and waiting to take to himself a body as the Saviour did or as the gods before them took bodies.” (Joseph Smith, April 6, 1843; see *Discourses on the Holy Ghost* compiled by N.B. Lundwall, p. 73)

**What the Bible Says
About the Gospel of Jesus Christ:**

1. Christ’s death at Calvary paid our sin debt and purchased our salvation so that everlasting life is received by grace through faith in the Person and work of Jesus (John 3:16, 5:24; Rom. 4:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

**What Mormonism Says
About the Gospel of Jesus Christ:**

Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection made it possible for mankind to be resurrected, but “men will be punished for their own sins.” (*Article of Faith* #2 by Joseph Smith). Through the atonement of Christ “all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.” (*Article of Faith* #3 by Joseph Smith)

“There is *no salvation* outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” (Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 670)

“Baptism … is for the remission of sins … (and) is the gate to the celestial kingdom of heaven.” (Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 70)

There is “no salvation without accepting Joseph Smith … No man can eject that testimony without accepting most dreadful consequences, for he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1, p. 188)

Comparing Christianity to Mormonism

What the Bible Says About the Gospel of Jesus Christ:	What Mormonism Says About the Gospel of Jesus Christ:
<p>2. The Bible teaches that at death, man's eternal destiny is fixed in one of two places: heaven or hell (Luke 16:19-31).</p>	<p>A summary of Mormon teaching on grace and works:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The grace of God provides for resurrection from the dead • Works are necessary for a person to achieve exaltation, or goodhood • Salvation by grace alone is a pernicious doctrine • Perfection is an achievable goal <p>(Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson, <i>Mormonism 101</i>, p. 169)</p>
<p>3. All men are sinners by nature and by volition (Rom. 3:23, 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21-22).</p>	<p>Virtually all men are saved in “General Salvation ... meaning resurrection.” (<i>Contributions of Joseph Smith</i> by Stephen L. Richards, p. 5)</p>
<p>4. There is no second chance for salvation after death (Heb. 9:27).</p>	<p>Then, based on works, all men will spend eternity in one of three levels of heaven – telestial, terrestrial or celestial. A few “sons of perdition” will not be saved/resurrected.</p> <p>More specifically, Mormonism teaches that a person is destined for one of six places after death:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outer darkness – reserved for Satan and his demons and the extremely wicked, including apostate Mormons • Telestial kingdom – the lowest of the three heavens; the wicked will spend eternity here • Terrestrial kingdom – the second of the three heavens; honorable people and “lukewarm” Mormons will live here • Celestial kingdom – the highest of the three heavens consisting of three separate levels; the top level is where Mormons hope to be exalted
	<p>There is no such thing as original sin. All men are gods in embryo. “God and man are of the same race, differing only in their degrees of advancement.” (Apostle John Widtsoe, <i>Rational Theology</i>, p. 61)</p> <p>Mormons may be baptized on behalf of the dead for their salvation. “If a man cannot enter the kingdom of God without baptism, then the dead must be baptized.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, <i>Doctrines of Salvation</i>, Vol. II, p. 141)</p>

Comparing Christianity to Mormonism

What the Bible Says About the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

5. Once a person is justified, his or her salvation is eternally secure, based on the finished work of Christ at Calvary and the faithfulness of God (John 5:24, 10:27-30; Rom. 4:21, 8:28-39; Heb. 7:25, 10:14; 1 Peter 1:1-5).
6. Each individual is a uniquely created person whose beginning came at the moment of conception; after death, that person retains his or her personhood and spends eternity in heaven or hell.

What Mormonism Says About the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

Believers must do works to earn a level of heaven and risk losing their position in that heaven if they are not faithful in service. For example, failure to marry in an LDS church will “damn” persons so that their eternal progression will be stopped short of godhood. (See *Doctrine and Covenants 132:16-20*)

Each individual has four stages of life (eternal progression): 1. Eternally existing intelligence. 2. Pre-mortal spirit born by procreation of God and one of his wives. 3. Mortal probation (present life on earth). 4. Post-mortal status that depends on works done in this life. Eternity is spent in one of three heavens: celestial (almost everyone makes it at least this far); terrestrial (good and religious folk make it here); and celestial (only Mormons who have fulfilled the proper requirements make it into one of this heaven's three levels).

Notes:

Jehovah's Witnesses: An Overview

Some 50 years after Joseph Smith claimed to be visited by God the Father and Jesus Christ, an event that launched the Mormon Church, another teenage boy began an inconspicuous Bible study in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, in 1870. The result was the establishment of a second major worldwide cult in the 19th century, known today as the Jehovah's Witnesses. Officially known by several names – The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, and the International Bible Students Association – the Jehovah's Witnesses today boast more than 6.6 million active participants (known as "publishers") in more than 230 countries, with nearly 100,000 Kingdom Halls, one of the largest publishing operations in the world, and an aggressive door-to-door "preaching" ministry.

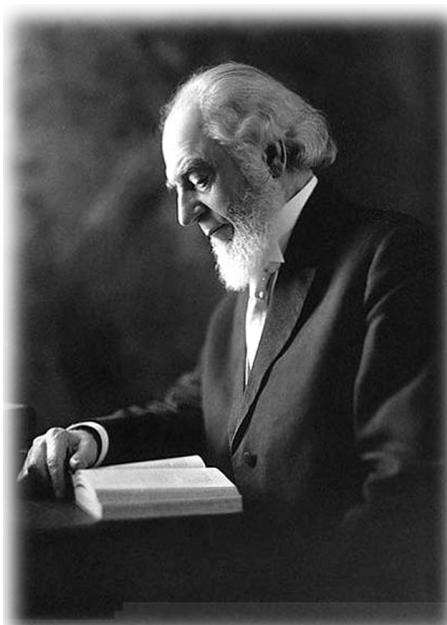
A Brief History

It all began with Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916). As a teenager he rejected many of the views taught in his Congregational church, particularly the doctrines of hell and the Trinity, which he found unreasonable. Influenced by Adventists, who assured him there is no eternal punishment and who focused on the return of Christ, he

formed his own Bible study and began to develop his unique theology. In 1879, Russell began publishing his own magazine, eventually known as *The Watchtower*, predicting that the battle of Armageddon would take place in 1914, at which time Jehovah would destroy all earthly governments, end the "Gentile times" and establish His kingdom on earth. Russell believed and taught that Jesus had returned to earth invisibly in 1874.

By 1896 Russell had founded the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. In 1908 he moved his headquarters from Pennsylvania to Brooklyn, New York, where it remains today, along with a massive printing operation, an apartment building, offices, and a Bible school. When the First World War began in 1914, Russell claimed his prophecy of Armageddon was on the verge of being fulfilled, but he died a failed prophet two years later.

Joseph F. Rutherford, legal advisor to Russell's organization, became its new president in 1917. He set a new date of 1925 for Armageddon, but when it didn't happen, the charismatic and domineering Rutherford backed away from his prediction, claiming that his followers misunderstood him. Undaunted, he changed the name of the society to the Jehovah's Witnesses, taken from Isaiah 43:10, in part to distance his followers from splinter groups forged by former, disillusioned members. He also escalated the aggressive door-to-door "preaching" that distinguishes Jehovah's Witnesses today. In fact, Jehovah's Witnesses log more than 1.2 billion hours of "preaching" door-to-door each year. In an effort to rapidly increase membership, he



Charles Taze Russell

Jehovah's Witness: An Overview

proclaimed that only 144,000 people would make it to heaven. When Watchtower ranks swelled beyond this number, Rutherford announced that everyone who had become a Witness before 1935 would go to heaven (the “little flock”), while everyone who joined after 1935 would be among the “great crowd” who would not go to heaven but could live in an earthly paradise after Armageddon and the Millennium.

Rutherford died in 1942. His successor, Nathan Knorr, was less flamboyant than Rutherford and changed Watchtower policy so that all publications from that point forward were released anonymously. Under his direction, the society issued a new Armageddon dating system, teaching that Jesus had not returned invisibly in 1874, as Russell had taught, but in 1914. Further, the generation that had been alive in 1914 would not "pass away" (see Matt. 24:34) before Armageddon would occur – an "absolutely final" date of 1975. Knorr died in 1977 with the final battle yet to be waged.

Frederick Franz became the next president. While he would not permit the society to set any more dates for Armageddon, he insisted that persons alive in 1914 would witness this cataclysmic event. He died in 1992 at age 99. Successor Milton G. Henschel discarded the entire end-times scenario in favor of “new light” that made the “generation” of Matt. 24:34 apply to any generation that sees the signs of Christ’s return. Don Adams heads the organization today – a society that remains prolific in its publications and aggressive in its evangelism. *The Watchtower*, a semimonthly magazine that instructs the society’s members in faith and practice, is published in 158 languages with a circulation of more than 21 million. *Awake!*, designed for non-members, reaches 18 million readers in 81 languages. The society’s official Web site may be found at www.watchtower.org.

Basic Jehovah's Witness Beliefs

Jehovah's Witnesses acknowledge that Charles Taze Russell was "the prime mover of the group" (official Web site), but seek to distance themselves from him and his teachings. Unfortunately, Jehovah's Witnesses today still cling to Russell's main false teachings: a denial of the Trinity; a denial of the deity of Christ and His bodily resurrection; a denial of the Holy Spirit's deity and personality; a denial of hell as a place of everlasting punishment; and more.

Here is a glimpse of several key Jehovah's Witnesses doctrines:

God's name is Jehovah; He is not triune. No other names must be used to depict the one true and living God. Jehovah is a "spirit being," invisible and eternal, but He has a spiritual body and is not omnipresent (*Insight*, vol. 1, pp. 969-970). Neither Jesus nor the Holy Spirit is God; the Trinity is strenuously denied.

Jesus is Jehovah's first created being. Jesus had three periods of existence. In His pre-human existence he was called "God's only begotten Son" because Jehovah created him directly. He then used Jesus to create all other things. He also had the personal name Michael the Archangel. The second stage of Jesus' life was on earth as

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Jehovah's Witness: An Overview

Notes:

Jehovah transferred his life from heaven to the womb of Mary. Jehovah's Witnesses are adamant that this was not an incarnation. Jesus became Messiah at his baptism, was executed on a torture stake, and his humanity was annihilated. He then began the third stage of his life, being raised an immortal spirit who returned to heaven once again as Michael the Archangel. He returned invisibly to earth, but now rules from heaven, and "very soon now, he will manifest his rulership over our troubled earth" (Knowledge, p. 41).

Jesus is not God. Jehovah's Witnesses teach a type of polytheism with a doctrine of "two gods." They say Jehovah is the Almighty God who created Jesus, and Jesus is the mighty god who created everything else. This is simply a modern version of an ancient heresy. Arius, a pastor's assistant in Alexandria, Egypt, taught that Christ was a created being. He captured a strong following, which necessitated the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325.

Jesus rose spiritually, not physically, from the dead. Jehovah's Witnesses claim that Christ was raised from the dead as a spirit who only appeared to have a body. What the disciples saw after Christ's death was Jesus' "re-created body." Because in Watchtower reasoning the body and soul of an individual become extinct at death, God must re-create the "life pattern" of a person, and He does so by retrieving the life pattern from His memory.

The "holy spirit" is not God. Jehovah's Witnesses teach that the spirit is an "invisible act or force" that Jehovah uses to inspire His servants to accomplish His will. Put simply, the "holy spirit" is like electricity, according to Watchtower reasoning.

Christ's death did not provide full atonement. Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus was a "ransom to God for Adam's sin." By this, they mean that Jesus (Michael the Archangel in human form) was a fair exchange for Adam's sin. As such, he made it possible for all people to be saved by obedience to Jehovah. Christ died on a torture stake, not a cross. After lying in death for parts of three days, Jehovah re-created him as a mighty spirit person.

Salvation is by faith and obedience. Requirements for salvation are "exercising faith in Jesus' ransom sacrifice," baptism by immersion, active association with the Watchtower society, righteous conduct, and absolute loyalty to Jehovah. There is no assurance of salvation, only hope for a resurrection.

There are two classes of saved people. Only 144,000, known as the "Anointed Class," will go to heaven at death to rule with Jesus. Most Jehovah's Witnesses hope to be among the "other sheep" or "great crowd" who will not go to heaven but live forever in Paradise on earth after Armageddon and the Millennium.

Hell is mankind's common grave. The body and soul cease to exist at death, say Jehovah's Witnesses. When Jehovah raises them from the dead one day, the righteous will populate paradise on earth (the 144,000 "Anointed Class" are the only people in heaven). Apparently, the wicked will have a second chance for life, but if they

Jehovah's Witness: Key Mistranslations

don't measure up, they will be annihilated, ceasing to exist forever. Jehovah's Witnesses deny the biblical teaching that hell is a place of conscious, everlasting separation from God.

Key Mistranslations of the New World Translation

New World Translation

Matthew 25:46

And these will depart into **everlasting cutting-off**, but the righteous ones into everlasting life.

Other Translations

Matthew 25:46

"And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (HCSB)

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. (KJV)

"These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (NASB)

John 1:1

In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was **a god**.

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (HCSB)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (KJV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (NASB)

John 8:58

Jesus said to them: "Most truly I say to you, Before Abraham **came into existence, I have been.**"

John 8:58

Jesus said to them, "I assure you: Before Abraham was, I am." (HCSB)

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. (KJV)

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." (NASB)

New World Translation

Acts 20:28

Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed you overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with **the blood of his own [Son]**.

Colossians 1:17

Also, he is before all **other** things and **by means of him all [other] things were made to exist** ...

Colossians 2:9

... because it is in him that all **the fullness of the divine quality** dwells bodily.

Other Translations

Acts 20:28

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood. (HCSB)

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (KJV)

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (NASB)

Colossians 1:17

He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together. (HCSB)

And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. (KJV)

He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. (NASB)

Colossians 2:9

For in Him the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily... (HCSB)

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. (KJV)

For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form ... (NASB)

Jehovah's Witness: Key Mistranslations

New World Translation**Titus 2:13**

... while we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifestation of the great God and of [the] Savior of us, Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 1:8

But with reference to the Son: "God is your throne forever and ever, and [the] scepter of your kingdom is the scepter of uprightness."

Other Translations**Titus 2:13**

... while we wait for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. (HCSB)

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ... (KJV)

... looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus ... (NASB)

Hebrews 1:8

... but about the Son: **Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of Your kingdom is a scepter of justice.** (HCSB)

But unto the Son *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom. (KJV)

But of the Son *He says*, "YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM. (NASB)

Comparing Christianity and the Jehovah's Witnesses

What the Bible Says About the Bible:

The Bible is the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God, and is His sole written authority for all people (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

What Jehovah's Witnesses Say About the Bible:

The *New World Translation* is the official Jehovah's Witnesses translation. It essentially strips out key doctrines such as the deity of Christ and salvation by grace alone through faith.

The Bible is authoritative only when interpreted by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, because only the Watch Tower Society receives divine illumination as to its true meaning.

During the era of founder Charles Taze Russell, it was stated that his *Studies in the Scriptures* were necessary to understand the Bible accurately: “They are not mere comments on the Bible, but they are practically the Bible itself ... if anyone lays the ‘Scripture Studies’ aside ... and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness.” (*The Watchtower*, Sept. 15, 1920)

What the Bible Says About God:

There is one true and living God, who exists as three distinct, co-equal, co-eternal persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Deut. 6:4; John 10:30; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 13:13; 1 Peter 1:2).

What Jehovah's Witnesses Say About God:

The Christian God is, in fact, the devil, according to Charles Taze Russell: “The clergy’s God is plainly not Jehovah but the ancient deity, hoary with the iniquity of the ages – Baal, the Devil Himself.” (*Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 7, p. 410)

“The obvious conclusion is, therefore, that Satan is the originator of the trinity doctrine.” (*Let God Be True*, p. 101)

Comparing Christianity and the Jehovah's Witnesses

What the Bible Says About God:

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are described as deity using similar terms: **Omniscient** (Matt. 9:4; Rom. 11:33; 1 Cor. 2:10); **God** (John 10:30; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Peter 1:2); **Lord** (Luke 2:11; Rom. 10:12; 2 Cor. 3:17); **almighty** (Gen. 17:1; Rom. 15:19; Rev. 1:8); **truth** (John 7:28; 1 John 5:6; Rev. 3:7); **eternal** (Ps. 90:2; Micah 5:2; Heb. 9:14); **powerful** (Jer. 32:17; Matt. 28:18; Luke 1:35; Rom. 15:19; Heb. 1:3; 1 Peter 1:5).

What Jehovah's Witnesses Say About God:

“Jehovah” is the only name by which God rightly may be called.

“... the Bible plainly states that in his prehuman existence, Jesus was a created spirit being, just as angels were spirit beings created by God.... The fact is that Jesus is not God and never claimed to be.” (*Should You Believe in the Trinity?* pp. 14, 20)

“... it is logical to conclude that the holy spirit is the active force of God. It is not a person but is a powerful force that God causes to emanate from himself to accomplish his holy will.” (*Reasoning from the Scriptures*, p. 381)

What the Bible Says About Jesus:

He is the virgin-born Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:35). He is eternal God, the Creator, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit (John 1:1-3, 10, 14; 10:30; Col. 1:15-20; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-3).

What Jehovah's Witnesses Say About Jesus:

Jesus is the first creation of Jehovah; Jesus then made all “other” things. (See Col. 1:16 *New World Translation*)

“In other words, he was the first and direct creation of Jehovah God.” (*The Truth Shall Make You Free*, p. 47)

“... Jesus was conceived by a sinless, perfect Father, Jehovah God ... Jehovah took the perfect life of his only-begotten Son and transferred it from heaven to ... the womb of the unmarried girl Mary ... Thus God’s Son was conceived or given a start as a human creature ... Jesus’ birth on earth was not an incarnation.” (*From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*, pp. 126-27; *What Has Religion Done for Mankind?* p. 231)

“... the true Scriptures speak of God’s Son, the Word, as ‘a god.’ He is a ‘mighty god,’ but not the Almighty God, who is Jehovah.” (*The Truth Shall Make You Free*, p. 47)

What the Bible Says About Jesus:

Jesus rose physically from the dead (Matt. 12:38-40; 28:5-10; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:4-8; 1 Peter 1:18-21).

Jesus is coming back physically and visibly one day (Matt. 24:29-31; John 14:3; Titus 2:13; Rev. 19:11-14).

What Jehovah's Witnesses Say About Jesus:

“This firstborn from the dead was raised from the grave, not a human creature, but a spirit.” (*Let God Be True*, p. 276)

“Christ Jesus returns, not again as a human, but as a glorious spirit person.” (*Let God Be True*, p. 196)

“Some wrongfully expect a literal fulfillment of the symbolic statements of the Bible. Such hope to see the glorified Jesus coming seated on a white cloud where every human eye will see him ... Since no earthly men have ever seen the Father ... neither will they see the glorified Son.” (*Let God Be True*, p. 186)

“Jesus returned to earth in 1914, has expelled Satan from Heaven and is proceeding to overthrow Satan’s organization, establish the Theocratic Millennial Kingdom, and vindicate the name of Jehovah God. He did not return in a physical form and is invisible as the Logos.” (Walter Martin, summarizing the beliefs of Jehovah’s Witnesses in *Kingdom of the Cults*, p. 52)

What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the triune Godhead (Matt. 3:16-17, 28:19-20).

The Holy Spirit is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son (Acts 5:1-11).

What Jehovah's Witnesses Say About the Holy Spirit:

“... The holy spirit is the invisible active force of Almighty God that moves his servants to do his will.” (*Let God Be True*, p. 108)

“The Scriptures themselves unite to show that God’s holy spirit is not a person but is God’s active force by which he accomplishes his purpose and executes his will.” (*Aid to Bible Understanding*, p. 1543)

“As for the ‘Holy Spirit,’ the so-called ‘third Person of the Trinity,’ we have already seen that it is not a person, but God’s active force.” (*The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, p. 24)

Comparing Christianity and the Jehovah's Witnesses

**What the Bible Says
About the Gospel of Jesus Christ:**

Christ's death at Calvary paid our sin debt and purchased our salvation so that everlasting life is received by grace through faith in the Person and work of Jesus (John 3:16; 5:24; Rom. 4:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

Once believers are justified, their salvation is eternally secure based on the finished work of Christ at Calvary and the faithfulness of God (John 5:24; 10:27-30; Rom. 8:28-39; Heb. 7:25; 10:14; 1 Peter 1:1-5).

All who receive Christ by faith enter immediately and everlasting into Christ's kingdom (John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24; Rom. 10:9-10, 13).

**What the Bible Says
About Life After Death:**

At death, man's eternal destiny is fixed in one of two places: heaven or hell (Luke 16:19-31).

Hell is a place of everlasting conscious existence, where the unbeliever is forever separated from God (Matt. 25:46; Rev. 14:9-11; 20:10).

**What Jehovah's Witnesses Say
About the Gospel of Jesus Christ:**

"The atonement is a ransom paid to Jehovah God by Christ Jesus and is applicable to all who accept it in righteousness. In brief, the death of Jesus removed the effects of Adam's sin on his offspring and laid the foundation of the New World of righteousness including the Millennium of Christ's reign." (Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, p. 52)

"Those people of good will today who avail themselves of the provision and who steadfastly abide in this confidence will find Christ Jesus to be their 'everlasting Father.'" (*Let God Be True*, p. 121)

"We have learned that a person could fall away and be judged unfavorably either now or at Armageddon, or during the thousand years of Christ's reign, or at the end of the final test ... into everlasting destruction." (*From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*, p. 241)

"Who and how many are able to enter in (the Kingdom)? The Revelation limits to 144,000 the number that become a part of the Kingdom and stand on heavenly Mount Zion." (*Let God Be True*, p. 136)

**What Jehovah's Witnesses Say
About Life After Death:**

"... the claim of religionists that man has an immortal soul and therefore differs from the beast is not Scriptural." (*Let God Be True*, p. 68)

"Who is responsible for this God-defaming doctrine of a hell of torment? The promulgator of it is Satan himself. His purpose in introducing it has been to frighten the people away from studying the Bible and to make them hate God." (*Let God Be True*, p. 98)

"Hell is mankind's common grave." (Jehovah's Witnesses Official Web Site)

What the Bible Says About Life After Death:

All believers have God's promise of a home in heaven, will go there instantly upon physical death, and will return with Christ to earth one day (John 14:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:8; Rev. 19:11-16).

There is no opportunity for salvation beyond the grave (Luke 16:19-31; Heb. 9:27).

What Jehovah's Witnesses Say About Life After Death:

"The doctrine of a burning hell where the wicked are tortured eternally after death cannot be true, mainly for four reasons: (1) Because it is wholly unscriptural; (2) it is unreasonable; (3) it is contrary to God's love; and (4) it is repugnant to justice." (*Let God Be True*, p. 99)

"Would a loving God really torment people forever? ... The wicked, of course, are not literally tormented because, as we have seen, when a person is dead he is completely out of existence.... And it is also a lie, which the Devil spread, that the souls of the wicked are tormented ..." (*You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, pp. 81, 88-89)

Only 144,000 Jehovah's Witnesses, chosen by Jehovah, will be in heaven. The remaining faithful Witnesses, after an indefinite length of time in a state of soul sleep, will be raised to populate Paradise Earth.

"So this 'congregation of God' is made up of all Christians on earth who have the hope of heavenly life. In all, only 144,000 persons finally make up the 'congregation of God.' Today, only a few of these, a remnant, are still on the earth. Christians who hope to live forever on earth look for spiritual guidance from members of this 'congregation of the living God.'" (*You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, pp. 125-26)

"Many millions that have lived in centuries past and who were not Jehovah's Witnesses will come back in a resurrection and have an opportunity for life. Many now living may yet take a stand for truth and righteousness before the "great tribulation," and they will gain salvation. (Jehovah's Witnesses official Web site)

Scientology: An Overview

Scientology: An Overview

The Church of Scientology draws from Eastern philosophy, modern psychology, occult practices and science fiction. Founder L. Ron Hubbard (1911-1986) defined Scientology as “the Western anglicized continuance of many earlier forms of wisdom” including the Vedas, Taoism, Buddhism, Judaism, Gnosticism, early Greek civilization and the teachings of Jesus, Nietzsche and Freud. According to Hubbard, “Scientology has accomplished the goal of religion expressed in all Man’s written history, the freeing of the soul by wisdom.”

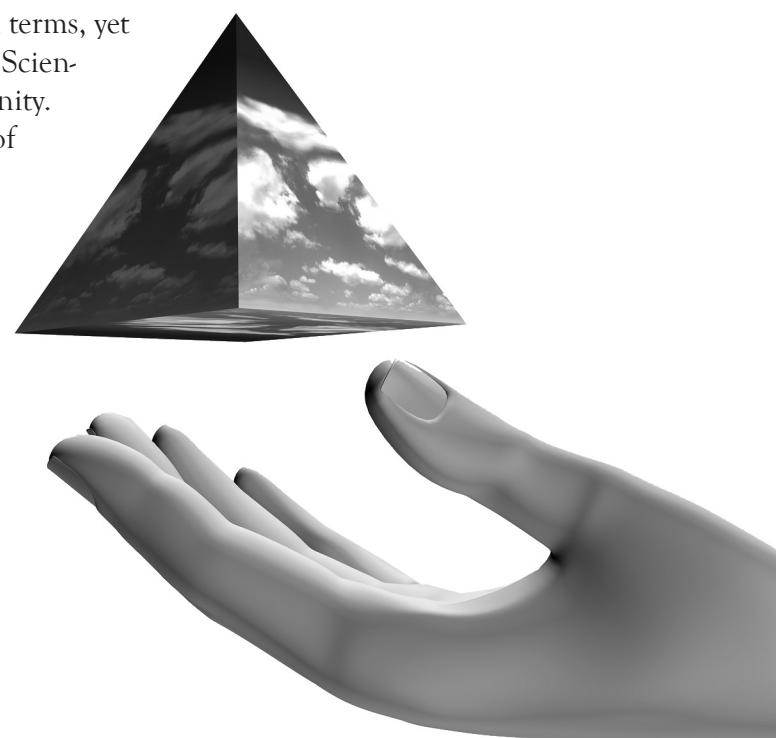
According to the organization’s official Web site (Scientology.org), “The word Scientology literally means ‘the study of truth.’ It comes from the Latin word ‘scio’ meaning ‘knowing in the fullest sense of the word’ and the Greek word ‘logos’ meaning ‘study of.’ Scientology is the study and handling of the spirit in relationship to itself, others and all of life.”

Scientology proclaims certain fundamental truths. Among them: “Man is an immortal, spiritual being. His experience extends well beyond a single lifetime. His capabilities are unlimited, even if not presently realized – and those capabilities can be realized. He is able to not only solve his own problems, accomplish his goals and gain lasting happiness, but also achieve new, higher states of awareness and ability” (Scientology.org).

Scientology does not claim to be a Christian organization, so it doesn’t fit into our definition of a cult (a religious organization whose members claim to be Christians, and who use the Bible and Christian terms, yet who deny the central beliefs of historical Christianity). Still, Scientologists would say their religion is compatible with Christianity. The church has no clear definition of the nature or person of God. Scientology literature rarely refers to a supreme being but occasionally uses the terms “Eighth Dynamic” or “infinity” and vaguely embraces pantheism (God is all; all is God).

Purpose

Scientology seeks to release human potential, free the soul and restore people to their original state as pure, immortal spirits. Within every human being is a *thetan*, an eternal spirit in bondage to matter. Through Scientology, *thetans* may be freed, returning to the glorious spiritual beings they once were.



Notes:

Source of authority

L. Ron Hubbard is the founder of Scientology. A prolific writer, he described his beliefs in more than 5,000 writings, including dozens of books and roughly 3,000 recorded lectures. The organization officially dubs his writings "scripture" and claims they are the only source for solving mankind's problems. Among his best-known works are *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*; *Dianetics Today*; and *The Church of Scientology*.

How Scientology works

Scientology claims that its counseling procedure, called "auditing," offers the only ultimate solution to mankind's problems. Auditing locates and solves *engrams*, or past traumatic experiences that inhibit true spiritual enlightenment. Scientology claims it can eventually free the human spirit from its bondage to the material world. Scientology stresses the development of psychic powers, out-of-body experiences and other occult practices.

Practice and teachings

Scientology uses “auditing” to unleash human potential. Auditing is an extensive examination of a follower’s present life as well as past lives. Experiences of extreme shock, pain or unconsciousness cause *engrams*, or sensory impressions, to be recorded in the unconscious mind. These mental pictures produce physical and emotional problems today and can be dislodged only through Scientology’s procedures. Scientology teaches that people are three-part beings: *thetan* (spirit), mind (analytical/conscious and reactive/subconscious), and body.

While *engrams* are recorded in the brain, they lay dormant until a similar incident stimulates them once again, causing conditioned behavior that is counterproductive to the person's well being. For example, if a boy falls off his red bicycle while learning to ride, he may fear all red bikes, or even all things red. In this way, claims Scientology, all people essentially are conditioned machines responding to the reactive/subconscious part of their minds. The church claims that through Dianetics or Scientology therapy we may expose our *engrams* and erase them, thus becoming "clear" and in control of our behavior.

“Dianetics could be said to be what the soul is doing to the body,” says Scientology.org. “It provides answers to the fundamental riddles of the mind with a thoroughly validated method that increases sanity, intelligence, confidence and well-being. It gets rid of the unwanted sensations, unpleasant emotions and psychosomatic ills that block one’s life and happiness.”

Scientology also teaches that through reincarnation people have been accumulating engrams for trillions of years. Each time a body dies, for example, the *thetan* must enter another body, but in so doing brings with him trillions of years of accumulated engrams. *Thetans*, therefore, are no longer free; they are in bondage to the material

Scientology: An Overview

universe. In order to resolve this problem, people must be whisked back mentally to experience again the damaging events of their past lives.

As Scientologists explain it, trillions of years ago *thetans* became bored, so they emanated mental universes in which to play. Soon they became so entranced by their own creation and were so conditioned by the manifestations of their thought processes that they lost all awareness of their true identity. In other words, *thetans* became trapped in MEST (matter, energy, space and time). To make matters worse, *thetans* accumulated countless *engrams* throughout trillions of years of existence. The final result was materially enslaved entities existing as mere stimulus-response machines. Scientology claims that it seeks to restore *thetans* to their original state as rulers of the heavens.

The aims of Scientology, according to the church, are a “civilization without insanity, without criminals and without war, where the able can prosper and the honest beings can have rights, and where man is free to rise to greater heights” (Scientology.org). L. Ron Hubbard beckons: “We welcome you to Scientology ... the most vital movement on Earth today.... Man suspects all offers of help. He has often been betrayed, his confidence shattered. Too frequently he has given his trust and been betrayed. We may err, for we build a world with broken straws. But we will never betray your faith in us so long as you are one of us. The sun never sets on Scientology.” The sun did set on Hubbard, however; he died in 1986.

Common terms

Auditing – Scientology's counseling method used to locate and erase *engrams*, or harmful impressions from the past, including former lives.

Clear – The state of a person who has completed auditing, liberated from all *engrams*.

Dianetics – L. Ron Hubbard's method of erasing *engrams* and their negative effects on the mind.

EMeter - An instrument developed by Hubbard and used in auditing sessions.

Engram – Unconscious mental image that has a negative effect on a person's life.

MEST – Acronym for matter, energy, space and time, all of which make up the physical universe and hold the *theta* captive.

Thetan – The immortal soul or spiritual being: the true identity of a person

Notes

Comparing Christianity and Scientology

What the Bible says about God:

There is one true and living God, who exists as three distinct, co-equal, co-eternal persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Deut. 6:4; John 1:1-3, 6:27, 20:28; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 13:13; 1 Peter 1:2).

What Scientology says about God:

The Supreme Being is purposely left undefined and does not become particularly relevant in Scientology theory or practice. God is variously referred to as “Nature,” “Infinity,” “the Eighth Dynamic,” “all Theta (life)” and so forth. Usually the individual Scientologist is free to interpret God in whatever way he or she wishes.

What the Bible says about Jesus:

He is the virgin-born Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:35). He is the eternal God, the Creator, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit (John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-20; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-13). Jesus died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3), rose physically from the dead (Matt. 12:38-40; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:4-8; 1 Peter 1:18-21) and is coming back physically and visibly one day (Matt. 24:29-31; John 14:3; Titus 2:13; Rev. 19:11-14).

What Scientology says about Jesus:

Jesus was a man who was not particularly enlightened. The Church invented him as the savior of the world. Some Scientologists classify him as an “Operating Thetan,” which means a person aware of his true nature and abilities.

What the Bible says about salvation:

Christ’s death at Calvary completely paid our sin debt so that salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus (John 3:16, 5:24; Rom. 4:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

What Scientology says about salvation:

Salvation is the enlightenment of the thetan as to his true nature and abilities.

What the Bible says about man:

God created man in His image – with a human spirit, personality and will. A person’s life begins at conception and is everlasting, but not eternal; that is, our lives have no end, but they did have a beginning (Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 139:13-16).

What Scientology says about man:

In his true nature, man is an eternal spirit being with divine powers (thetan).

What the Bible says about the Bible:

The Bible is the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God, and is His sole written authority for all people (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

What Scientology says about the Bible:

The Bible is one of the world’s religious searchings. But as far as Scientology practices are concerned, it is largely irrelevant.

Comparing Christianity and Scientology

What the Bible says about sin:

Sin is violation of God's perfect and holy standards. All humans are sinners (Rom. 3:10) and are under the curse of sin – spiritual and physical death (Gen. 2:17, 3:17-19; Rom. 3:23). Only faith in Christ and His work on our behalf frees us from sin and its consequences (John 3:16, 5:24; Eph. 2:8-9).

What Scientology says about sin:

Sin is merely falsehood or ignorance, and especially that which opposes Scientology. Man's fall was not into spiritual and physical death, but into matter and ignorance.

What the Bible says about death:

Physical death and spiritual death come upon all people as a consequence of their sin (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1). A person becomes spiritually alive when he or she is "born again" or "born from above" (John 3:3-6; Eph. 2:1-5). At physical death, our souls and spirits separate from our bodies [which go into the grave to await resurrection and final judgment] and enter an everlasting state of blessedness [for those born again] or torment [for those who die in their sins] (Luke 16:19-31; 2 Cor. 5:8).

What Scientology says about death:

Death is an inconsequential dropping of the body, which all thetans have experienced trillions of times.

What the Bible says about heaven and hell:

Hell is a place of everlasting conscious existence, where the unbeliever is forever separated from God (Matt. 25:46; Luke 16:19-31; Rev. 14:9-11, 20:10). As for Heaven, all believers have God's promise of a home in Heaven, will go there instantly upon physical death, and will return with Christ from Heaven to earth one day (Luke 16:19-31; John 14:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:8; Rev. 19:11-16).

What Scientology says about heaven and hell:

Heaven and hell are Christian myths, or mental implants from previous lives.

The Church of Christ, Scientist: An Overview

In *Love and Consequences*, author Margaret B. Jones details her gritty life as a half Native American, brought up in foster care, following foster brothers into Los Angeles gang life and selling drugs to eke out a living. Great story. Unfortunately, it's not true. In reality, Margaret "Peggy" Seltzer is from a wealthy white family and attended a private school. Her sister outed her after reading a story about Margaret and her book in *The New York Times*. The scandal, like previous literary hoaxes involving best-selling author James Frey (*A Million Little Pieces*) and others, easily could have been avoided if her publishers had conducted a simple background check.

Compelling stories attract attention. This is no less true in religion than in street life. Consider the story of Mary Baker Eddy. Born Mary Baker in 1821 to humble but strict Congregationalists, she was a sickly child given to fits of depression and extreme temper. She married at 22 only to see her husband die seven months later and leave her pregnant and emotionally unstable, depending from time to time throughout her life on morphine. After a second marriage, which ended in divorce, she married a third time at age 56 to Asa Eddy, who died five years later. This much



Mary Baker Eddy

The Church of Christ, Scientist: An Overview

is true. But the rest of the story of Mary Baker Eddy and the religion she founded – the Church of Christ, Scientist – mixes half truths and plagiarism. As Fritz Rid-enour explains in *So What's the Difference: A Look at 20 Worldviews, Faiths and Reli-gions and How They Compare to Christianity*, “Eddy is heralded as the discoverer and founder of Christian Science, but her claims to originality and truthfulness do not hold up” (p. 166).

For starters, her teachings borrow heavily from those of Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, a metaphysical healer from Maine who treated Eddy. In fact, Quimby used the term “Christian Science” years before Eddy adopted it. Her book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, the authoritative text of Christian Science, lifts passages almost verbatim from Quimby’s own writings, as well as from a dissertation by Dr. Francis Lieber. Modern historians further have proven that Eddy plagiarized other books. Even worse, Eddy’s claim of her own miraculous healing from a near-fatal fall was exposed as an incredible exaggeration – if not an outright falsehood – by her own physician. But perhaps most significantly, Eddy did not, and could not, heal as she claimed. In fact, she succumbed to medical care and medication for her various ailments in later years.

Despite all this, Eddy was a charismatic leader who founded the Church of Christ, Scientist in Boston in 1879. She displayed an uncanny ability to leverage Christian Science into a money making venture. Writes Walter Martin, “At death she had amassed several million dollars, of which not one cent was given to charity” (*Rise of the Cults*, p.80). Even so, her followers were loyal, numbering roughly 1 million by the time she died in 1910. Today, Christian Science is foremost of the mind-sciences family of religions that emerged from 19th century religious and intellectual fervor, including the adaptation of Hindu beliefs, the Transcendentalism of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, occult practices, experimentation with hypnotism, mental healings, and attempts to contact the dead and other spirits through séances. Christian Science today claims 2,000 churches in 60 countries and boasts 3,000 “practitioners,” or full-time healers. The organization is headquartered in Boston.

Notes

The Church of Christ, Scientist: An Overview

Notes:

Key teachings

Overview. “Christian Science has offered (to the followers of Mary Baker Eddy) a sanctuary from the preaching of the gospel of Christ, which points out the terrible reality of sin and evil in man’s nature and strips from the soul every vestige of self-righteousness. Mrs. Eddy’s religion, on the other hand, offers no such hazards, denying as it does the existence of evil, sin, sickness, and even death itself.... The theology of Christian Science prohibits any acceptance whatsoever of the vicarious atonement of our Lord, and blatantly denies eternal retribution for those who willfully reject Jesus Christ as ‘the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29)” (Walter Martin, *Rise of the Cults*, p. 76).

God. Christian Science rejects the idea of a personal, good and infinite God who is distinct from His creation. Eddy taught in *Science and Health* that God “is not a person. God is a principle.” The Trinity is redefined as life, truth, and love.

Jesus. Christian Science distinguishes between Jesus the man and the “Christ Principle.” The Bible, in contrast, makes it clear that there is no distinction between Jesus the man and His divine office as the Christ.

Creation. There is no reality to the physical world, according to the Christian Science worldview. It is all an illusion.

Man. Eddy taught that “man is not material; he is spiritual.” People are in fact divine spirits.

Sin, suffering, death. Since the physical world is not real, evil, sin, sickness and death are illusions of the mortal mind.

Salvation. Since sin and death are false beliefs (illusions), salvation involves overcoming the false idea that they exist with the realization of our divine spirit and mind.

Bible. Christian Science says the Bible must be interpreted through the higher and final revelation of Mary Baker Eddy’s *Science and Health*.

Death and the afterlife. Since God and man are immortal spirit, death also is only an illusion. It is a transition from the illusion of the material world to the ultimate reality of immortal spirit life.

Summary

Dr. Rick Cornish, in *5 Minute Apologist*, writes, “Like the cereal Grape-Nuts, which is neither grapes nor nuts, Christian Science is neither Christian nor science. It has nothing in common with Christianity, renouncing every major Christian doctrine, or science, which it rejects just as easily. This religious movement may be on the decline, but it still poses a threat to the spiritually unwary” (p. 295).

Comparing Christianity and the Church of Christ, Scientist

Comparing Christianity and the Church of Christ, Scientist**What the Bible says about God:**

There is one true and living God, who exists as three distinct, co-equal, co-eternal persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Deut. 6:4; John 1:1-3, 6:27, 20:28; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 13:13; 1 Peter 1:2).

What Christian Science says about God:

Christian Science teaches that “the theory of three persons in one God (that is, a personal Trinity or Triunity) suggests polytheism, rather than the one ever-present I AM.... Jesus Christ is not God, as Jesus himself declared, but is the Son of God” (*Science and Health*, pp. 256, 361). Eddy also denied that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, since God is an impersonal “principle.” The Trinity is redefined as life, truth, and love.

What the Bible says about Jesus:

He is the virgin-born Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:35). He is eternal, the Creator, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit (John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-20; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-13). Jesus died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3), rose physically from the dead (Matt. 12:38-40; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:4-8; 1 Peter 1:18-21) and is coming back physically and visibly one day (Matt. 24:29-31; John 14:3; Titus 2:13; Rev. 19:11-14).

What Christian Science says about Jesus:

Christian Science denies the deity of Christ: “Jesus Christ is not God, as Jesus himself declared, but is the Son of God” (*Science and Health*, p. 361). It also denies His virgin birth: “A portion of God could not enter man; neither could God’s fullness be reflected by a single man, else God would be manifestly finite, lose the deific character, and become less than God.... Jesus was the offspring of Mary’s self-conscious communion with God” (*Science and Health*, pp. 336, 29-30).

Christian Science minimizes Christ’s work at Calvary: “One sacrifice, however great, is insufficient to pay the debt of sin.... The material blood of Jesus was no more efficacious to cleanse from sin when it was shed upon ‘the accursed tree’ than when it was flowing in His veins.... One sacrifice, however great, is insufficient to pay the debt of sin” (*Science and Health*, pp. 23, 253).

Eddy taught, “If there had never existed such a person as the Galilean Prophet, it would make no difference to me” (*First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, pp. 318-19).

Finally, Christian Science denies that Jesus died and rose again: “His disciples believed Jesus to be dead while he was hidden in the sepulcher, whereas he was alive, demonstrating within the narrow tomb the power of Spirit to overrule mortal, material sense.... Jesus’ students ... learned that He had not died” (*Science and Health*, pp. 44-46).

What the Bible says about salvation:

Christ's death at Calvary completely paid our sin debt so that salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus (John 3:16, 5:24; Rom. 4:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

What Christian Science says about salvation:

Since sin and death are false beliefs (illusions), salvation involves overcoming the false idea that they exist with the realization of man's divine spirit and mind. "Man as God's idea is already saved with an everlasting salvation" (*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 261).

What the Bible says about man:

God created man in His image – with a human spirit, personality and will. A person's life begins at conception and is everlasting, but not eternal; that is, our lives have no end, but they did have a beginning (Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 139:13-16).

What Christian Science says about man:

People are divine spirits, or part of God. "God is the principle of man; and the principle of man remaining perfect, its idea or reflection – man – remains perfect" (*Science and Health*, p. 466). Eddy further taught, "Spirit is God, and man is His image and likeness. Therefore man is not material; he is spiritual" (*Science and Health*, p. 468).

What the Bible says about the Bible:

The Bible is the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God, and is His sole written authority for all people (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

What Christian Science says about the Bible:

Christian Science interprets the Bible in light of Eddy's writings, particularly *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. In addition, Eddy expressed some doubts about the textual reliability of the Bible: "a mortal and material sense stole into the divine record, with its own hue darkening to some extent the inspired pages" (*Science and Health*, p. 139).

What the Bible says about sin:

Sin is violation of God's holy standards. All humans are sinners (Rom. 3:10) and are under the curse of sin – spiritual and physical death (Gen. 2:17, 3:17-19; Rom. 3:23, 6:23). Only faith in Christ and His work on our behalf frees us from sin and its consequences (John 3:16, 5:24; Eph. 2:8-9).

What Christian Science says about sin:

Sin, along with death, disease and pain, are not real; they are merely illusions. "The only reality of sin, sickness, or death is the awful fact that unrealities seem real to human, erring belief.... They are not true, because they are not of God" (*Science and Health*, p. 472).

What the Bible says about death:

Physical and spiritual deaths come upon all people as a consequence of their sin (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1). People become spiritually alive when they are "born again" (John 3:3-6; Eph. 2:1-5). At physical death, our souls and spirits separate from our bodies [which go into the grave to await resurrection and final judgment] and enter an everlasting state of blessedness [for those born again] or torment [for those who die in their sins] (Luke 16:19-31; 2 Cor. 5:8).

What Christian Science says about death:

Death is an illusion. People, like God, are immortal spirit or mind and therefore do not die.

Comparing Christianity and the Church of Christ, Scientist

What the Bible says about heaven and hell:

Hell is a place of everlasting conscious existence where the unbeliever is forever separated from God (Matt. 25:46; Luke 16:19-31; Rev. 14:9-11, 20:10). As for Heaven, all believers have God's promise of a home in Heaven, will go there instantly upon physical death, and will return with Christ from Heaven to earth one day (Luke 16:19-31; John 14:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:8; Rev. 19:11-16).

What Christian Science says about heaven and hell:

Christian Science teaches that “the sinner makes his own hell by doing evil, and the saint his own heaven by doing right” (*Science and Health*, p. 266). “The advanced psychiatrist knows that this hell is mental, not material, and that the Christian has no part in it (*The first Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, p. 160). “Heaven is not a locality, but a divine state of Mind” (*Science and Health*, p. 291).

Notes:

Sharing Your Faith with People Who Don't Share Your Faith

Every Christian can successfully engage a Mormon or Jehovah's Witness at the door by following three biblical imperatives: be ready, be gracious, and be clear.



It's Saturday morning. You have a full day planned as you fix breakfast for the family. Suddenly, the doorbell rings. "I'll get it," you volunteer. As you open the door, two young men in white shirts and ties greet you. They smile, say good morning and ask if they can talk to you about something very important.

What should you do?

- a) Invite them in for pancakes
- b) Slam the door in their face
- c) Pretend you don't speak English
- d) Quote 2 John 10-11 to them
- e) Step outside and engage them in a brief conversation

The young men at your door are Mormons. They are from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Mormons, as well as Jehovah's Witnesses, often visit door to door. They are members of what may be called "cults" or counterfeit forms of Christianity, claiming to be orthodox in their faith but denying important Biblical truths, especially about Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Gospel (2 Cor. 11:3-4).

So what should you do about your uninvited guests?

1. Be ready.

- The apostle Peter urges us to "set apart the Messiah as Lord in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15).
- Be ready with your personal testimony, a simple narrative highlighting your life before Christ, how you came to know Christ and your life since receiving Christ.
- Be ready with a basic understanding of key Christian doctrines, particularly those regarding Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Gospel.
- Be ready with a basic understanding of the teachings of Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses and how they differ from those of historical Christianity (background information and comparison charts are available at www.oncdelivered.net).

Sharing Your faith

2. Be gracious.

- Consider the example of Jesus: “They were all speaking well of Him (Jesus) and were amazed by the gracious words that came from His mouth ...” (Luke 4:22).
- Consider Paul’s exhortation: “Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person” (Col. 4:6).
- Be nice. Smile and say good morning. Your kindness could surprise your uninvited guests, many of whom have been the victims of verbal assaults.
- Respect their sincerity. Your guests really believe they have the truth, and they want you to have it, too.
- Thank them for coming, for sharing their views, and for listening to yours.

Ontps.

3. Be clear.

- Have a clear head: “Keep a clear head about everything ...” (2 Tim. 4:5).
- Have a clear conscience: “Pray for us; for we are convinced that we have a clear conscience, wanting to conduct ourselves honorably in everything” (Heb. 13:18; see also Acts 24:16; 1 Tim. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3; 1 Peter 3:16).
- Have a clear resolve: “Now it is clear that no one is justified before God by the law, because the righteous will live by faith” (Gal. 3:11).
- Step outside. This puts you in control of how long the conversation lasts. Make it clear you will grant your guests limited time.
- Take control. Your visitors have a well rehearsed “sales pitch.” Don’t let them lead you through a series of questions you may not be prepared to answer. Instead, you might say, “I’d like to ask you a few questions.”
- Stay focused. Your questions could include: Who is Jesus, in your opinion? What did His death accomplish for you? What is mankind’s biggest problem, and what’s the solution? How does a person receive eternal life? Do you know for certain where you’ll spend eternity? How do you know that? Your questions should revolve around the person and work of Christ – and you should know the answers.
- Get personal. Tell your guests how you came to realize you were a sinner. Share your belief that Jesus died on the cross to pay your sin debt and rose physically from the dead. Emphasize your gratefulness to God that through Christ’s finished work on the cross you have eternal life – not by your works but by His grace.
- Do not agree to let them start a “Bible study” in your home. Instead, offer to trade a Christian booklet or New Testament for some of their literature.

Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses are working for their salvation. A smile, a kind word, and a testimony about your personal relationship with Jesus may just surprise them and plant a seed of God's love in their minds as they leave your doorstep.

Test Your Knowledge of World Religions and Cults

(Correct answers at the bottom of page 83)

1. Which of the following is not a Hindu scripture:

- a) Rig Veda
- b) Sama Veda
- c) Yajur Veda
- d) Darth Veda

2. True or false:

Islam is the second largest religion in the world - and one of the fastest growing.

3. True or false:

Buddhism has its roots in Hinduism but differs in many beliefs and practices.

4. The great dividing line between Judaism and Christianity is:

- a) Kosher foods
- b) The Sabbath
- c) Mel Brooks
- d) Jesus as Messiah

5. Who founded Scientology:

- a) Tom Cruise
- b) L. Ron Hubbard
- c) E. Buzz Miller
- d) Stephen Hawking

6. Which of the following religions is best summarized by the statement,

“As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become:”

- a) Hinduism
- b) Christian Science
- c) Mormonism
- d) Humanism

7. A cult is best described as:

- a) A blue oyster
- b) A dead-end street
- c) A garment for Scottish men
- d) Counterfeit Christianity

Test Your Knowledge

8. Muhammad taught that Jesus (circle all that apply):

- a) Was a great prophet
- b) Was born of a virgin
- c) Lived a sinless life
- d) Died on the cross
- e) Is coming back one day

9. The Jehovah's Witnesses deny (circle all that apply):

- a) Ever knocking on your door
- b) The deity of Christ
- c) The Trinity
- d) Conscious existence after death
- e) Eternal punishment for unbelievers in hell
- f) Jesus' invisible return in 1914

10. Who is Siddhartha Gautama?

- a) Master of the pan flute
- b) The explorer who discovered Guatemala
- c) The founder of Buddhism
- d) The real name of rapper Snoop Dogg

11. True or false:

Mary Baker Eddy, L. Ron Hubbard and Sun Myung Moon joined forces in 1984 to form what they claimed was “perfect Christianity.” They called their new organization the Unification Church of Christian Scientology.

12. According to Mormon history, which of the following Jewish tribes crossed the Atlantic and became the ancestors of the American Indians:

- a) The Lamanites
- b) The Jebusites
- c) The Parasites
- d) The Kung Pao Buckaroos

Recommended Resources

Web Sites

- www.4truth.net (North American Mission Board)
- www.carm.org (Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry)
- www.equip.org (Christian Research Institute)
- www.leestrobel.com (Investigating Faith with Lee Strobel)
- www.oncedelivered.net (Rob Phillips' Web site)
- www.reasonablefaith.org (William Lane Craig)

Antes:

World Religions and Cults

Notes:

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