

Christianity, Cults & Religions

How to Become a Christian: The Bible says God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16) God loves you and wants a relationship with you. Here are God's promises:

- A. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, 1 John 1:10)
- B. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. (Acts 16:31, John 1:12)
- C. If you Confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9, Ephesians 2:8,9)

If you have come to believe in Jesus as the Son of God and your risen Savior after reading this pamphlet, please write to us at the address below and we will send you some free information about following Jesus Christ.

What Others Groups May Teach About Jesus and the Bible Response:

- Jesus was not God. (See verses D, I, U, Y)
- Jesus was created by God (See verses J, M, U)
- There are three separate gods: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not one God in three persons. (A, B, J, Z)
- Jesus is not necessary because there is no sin. (F, O, P, R)
- Jesus was not raised bodily from the dead. (C, R, S)
- Jesus was a great prophet, but not God. (H, J, V)
- There are many ways to God, not just one. (F, K, X)
- Jesus is not necessary because people must pay for their own sins. (L, P, Q, T)
- Jesus died for sins, but people can't be saved unless they obey all of the teachings of the church. (K, Q, T)
- Jesus is God, but less than God the Father. (H, K, V)
- Jesus was just a man. (J, E)
- Jesus is not the only son of God (F, G, Z)
- Jesus will never come again. (N, W)

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|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| A. Deut. 6:4 | H. John 5:17-18 | P. Rom. 6:23 |
| Isa. 43:10 | John 5:23 | Q. Rom. 10:3-10 |
| Isa. 44:6-8 | I. John 8:56-58 | R. 1 Cor. 15:1-8 |
| B. Matt. 28:18-19 | J. John 10:30-38 | S. 1 Cor. 15:12-23 |
| 1 Peter 1:2 | Isa. 7:14 | T. Eph. 2:8,9 |
| C. Luke 24:36-53 | Matt. 1:18 | U. Col. 1:15-20 |
| D. John 1:1-5 | K. John 14:6-7 | V. Col. 2:9-10 |
| John 1:6-18 | L. John 17:2,3 | W. 1 Thess. 4:13-18 |
| E. John 2:18-22 | M. John 17:5 | X. 1 Tim. 2:5,6 |
| F. John 3:14-17 | N. Acts 1:11 | Y. 1 Tim. 3:16 |
| G. John 3:36 | O. Rom 3:23-30 | Z. Heb. 1:1-14 |
| | 1 John 1:8-10 | |

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Also available: *Denominations Comparison* pamphlet (Stock #439X), *Christianity, Cults and the Occult* pamphlet and wall chart, and PowerPoint® presentation that compare Christian groups and occult practices.



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Key Person or Founder, Date, Location

Key Writings

Who is God?

Who is Jesus?

Who is the Holy Spirit?

How to Be Saved

What Happens After Death

Other Facts, Beliefs, or Practices

Biblical Christianity

Jesus Christ. Founded about AD 30-33, in the Judean province of Palestine (Israel today), under the Roman Empire. Followers of Jesus Christ became known as Christians.

The Bible, written originally in Hebrew and Aramaic (Old Testament), and Greek (New Testament).

The one God is Triune (one God in three Persons, not three gods): Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Often the title "God" designates the first Person, God the Father. God is a spiritual being without a physical body. He is personal and involved with people. He created the universe out of nothing. He is eternal, changeless, holy, loving, and perfect.

Jesus is God, the second Person of the Trinity. As God the Son, He has always existed and was never created. He is fully God and fully man (the two natures joined, not mixed). As the second Person of the Trinity, He is coequal with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. In becoming man, He was begotten through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus is the only way to the Father, salvation, and eternal life. He died on a cross according to God's plan, as full sacrifice and payment for our sins. He rose from the dead on the third day, spiritually and physically immortal. For the next 40 days He was seen by more than 500 eyewitnesses. His wounds were touched and He ate meals. He physically ascended to Heaven. Jesus will come again visibly and physically at the end of the world to establish God's kingdom and judge the world.

The Holy Spirit is God, the third Person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is a person, not a force or energy field. He comforts, grieves, reproves, convicts, guides, teaches, and fills Christians. He is not the Father, nor is he the Son, Jesus Christ.

Salvation is by God's grace, not by an individual's good works. Salvation must be received by faith. People must believe in their hearts that Jesus died for their sins and physically rose again, which is the assurance of forgiveness and resurrection of the body. This is God's loving plan to forgive sinful people.

Believers go to be with Jesus. After death, all people await the final Judgment. Both saved and lost people will be resurrected. Those who are saved will live with Jesus in Heaven. Those who are lost will suffer the torment of eternal separation from God (Hell). Jesus' bodily resurrection guarantees believers that they, too, will be resurrected and receive new immortal bodies.

Group worship, usually in churches. No secret rites. Baptism and Lord's Supper (Communion). Active voluntary missionary efforts. Aid to those in need: the poor, widows, orphans, and downtrodden. Christians believe that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah promised to Israel in the Old Testament (Tanakh). Jesus said His followers would be known by their love for one another.

Jehovah's Witnesses (Watchtower Bible & Tract Society)

Charles Taze Russell (1852–1916), later Joseph F. Rutherford (1869–1942). Began 1879 in Pennsylvania. Headquarters in Brooklyn, New York.

All current Watchtower publications, including the Bible (*New World Translation* only), *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*. Watchtower and Awake! magazines.

One-person God, called Jehovah. No Trinity. Jesus is the first thing Jehovah created.

Jesus is not God. Before he lived on earth, he was Michael, the archangel. Jehovah made the universe through him. On earth he was a man who lived a perfect life. After dying on a stake (not a cross), he was resurrected as a spirit; his body was destroyed. Jesus is not coming again; he “returned” invisibly in 1914 in spirit. Very soon, he and the angels will destroy all non-Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Impersonal “holy spirit” is not God, but rather an invisible, active force from Jehovah.

Be baptized as Jehovah’s Witnesses. Most followers must earn everlasting life on earth by “door-to-door work.” Salvation in heaven is limited to 144,000 “anointed ones.” This number is already reached.

The 144,000 live as spirits in heaven. The rest of the righteous, “the great crowd,” live on earth, and must obey God perfectly for 1,000 years or be annihilated.

Known as the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. Meet in “Kingdom Halls” instead of churches. Active members encouraged to distribute literature door-to-door. Once a year, Lord’s Evening Meal (communion); only “anointed” ones may partake. Do not observe holidays or birthdays. Forbidden to vote, salute the flag, work in the military, or accept blood transfusions.

Founder

Writings

God

Jesus

H.S.

Salvation

Death

Other Beliefs

Mormonism (Latter-day Saints)

Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805–1844), founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) in 1830 in New York. Headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The *Book of Mormon*; *Doctrine and Covenants*; *Pearl of Great Price*; the Bible (King James Version only or Smith’s “Inspired Version”); authoritative teachings of Mormon prophets and other LDS “general authorities.”

God the Father was once a man, but “progressed” to godhood. He has a physical body, as does his wife (Heavenly Mother). No Trinity. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three separate gods. Worthy men may one day become gods themselves.

Jesus is a separate god from the Father (Elohim). He was created as a spirit child by the Father and Mother in Heaven, and is the “elder brother” of all men and spirit beings. His body was created through sexual union between Elohim and Mary. Jesus was married. His death on the cross does not provide full atonement for all sin, but does provide everyone with resurrection.

The “holy spirit” is different from the “Holy Ghost.” The “holy spirit” is not God, but is an influence or electricity-like emanation from God (or “light of Christ”).

Resurrected by grace, but saved (exalted to godhood) by works, including faithfulness to church leaders, Mormon baptism, tithing, ordination, marriage, and secret temple rituals. No eternal life without Mormon membership.

Eventually nearly everyone goes to one of three separate heavenly “kingdoms,” with some achieving godhood. Apostates and murderers go to “outer darkness.”

No alcohol, tobacco, coffee, or tea. Baptism on behalf of the dead. Two-year missionary commitment encouraged. Door-to-door proselytizing. Secret temple rituals available only to members in good standing. Extensive social network. People of African ancestry were not granted full access to Mormon priesthood and privileges until 1978.

Unification Church

Sun Myung Moon (b. 1920). Founded “Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity” 1954 in South Korea. Current headquarters in New York City.

Divine Principle by Sun Myung Moon, considered the “Completed Testament.” *Outline of the Principle, Level 4*, and the Bible. (The Bible is “not the truth itself, but a textbook teaching the truth.”)

God is both positive and negative. God created the universe out of himself; the universe is God’s “body.” God does not know the future, is suffering, and needs man (Sun Myung Moon) to make Him happy. No Trinity.

Jesus was a perfect man, not God. He is the son of Zechariah, not born of a virgin. His mission was to unite the Jews behind him, find a perfect bride, and begin a perfect family. The mission failed. Jesus did not resurrect physically. The second coming of Christ is fulfilled in Sun Myung Moon, who is superior to Jesus and will finish Jesus’ mission.

The Holy Spirit is a feminine spirit who works with Jesus in the spirit world to lead people to Sun Myung Moon.

Obedience to and acceptance of the True Parents (Moon and his wife) eliminate sin and result in perfection. Those married by Moon and his wife drink a special holy wine containing 21 ingredients (including the True Parents’ blood).

After death one goes to the spirit world. There is no resurrection. Members advance by convincing others to follow Sun Myung Moon. Everyone will be saved, even Satan.

Also known as “Family Federation for World Peace and Unification.” Mass marriages, based on different racial backgrounds, arranged and performed by Moon. Members believe that Jesus bows down to Sun Myung Moon and that Moon is the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and the Lamb of God. Contact with spirits of the dead accepted.

Founder

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H.S.

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Other Beliefs

Christian Science

Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910). Founded 1875 in Massachusetts. Current headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts.

Science and Health, With Key to the Scriptures; *Miscellaneous Writings*; *Manual of the Mother Church*; and other books by Mrs. Eddy. The Bible (not as reliable). *Christian Science Journal*, *Christian Science Sentinel*, and other official periodicals.

According to Mrs. Eddy, God is an impersonal Principle of life, truth, love, intelligence, and spirit. God is all that truly exists; matter is an illusion.

Jesus was not the Christ, but a man who displayed the Christ idea. (“Christ” means perfection, not a person.) Jesus was not God, and God can never become man or flesh. He did not suffer and could not suffer for sins. He did not die on the cross. He was not resurrected physically. He will not literally come back.

Holy spirit is defined as the teaching of Christian Science. Impersonal power.

Humanity is already eternally saved. Sin, evil, sickness, and death are not real.

Death is not real. Heaven and hell are states of mind. The way to reach heaven is by attaining harmony (oneness with God).

Members use Christian Science “practitioners” (authorized professional healers who “treat” supposed illnesses for a fee) instead of doctors. Healing comes through realizing one cannot really be sick or hurt and that the body cannot be ill, suffer pain, or die (matter is an illusion). Attracts followers by claims of miraculous healing. Publishes *Christian Science Monitor* newspaper.

Unity School of Christianity

Charles (1854–1948) and Myrtle (1845–1931) Fillmore. Founded 1889 in Kansas City, Missouri. Headquarters in Unity Village, Missouri.

Unity magazine. *Lessons in Truth, Metaphysical Bible Dictionary*, the Bible (not as reliable, interpreted with “hidden” meanings).

Invisible impersonal power. “God” is interchangeable with “Principle,” “Law,” “Being,” “Mind,” “Spirit.” God is in everything, much as the soul is in the body. No Trinity. The spirit is reality; matter is not.

Jesus was a man and not the Christ. Instead, he was a man who had “Christ Consciousness.” “Christ” is a state of perfection in every person. Jesus had lived many times before and was in search of his own salvation. Jesus did not die as a sacrifice for anyone’s sins. Jesus did not rise physically and will never return to earth in physical form.

The Holy Spirit is the law of God in action, “the executive power of both Father and Son.” A “definite” thought in the mind of man.

By recognizing that each person is as much a Son of God as Jesus is. There is no evil, no devil, no sin, no poverty, and no old age. A person is reincarnated until he learns these truths and becomes “perfect.”

Death is a result of wrong thinking. One moves to a different body (reincarnation) until enlightenment. No literal heaven or hell.

Worship services in Unity churches. Counseling and prayer ministry (“Silent Unity”) by phone and mail. It is reported that Unity receives millions of prayer requests annually. Unity devotionals, such as *Daily Word*, are used by members of other religious groups and churches. Millions of pieces of literature are printed each year.

Scientology

Founded by L. Ron Hubbard (1911–1986). Founded 1954 in California. Current headquarters in Los Angeles, California.

Dianetics: *The Modern Science of Mental Health* and others by Hubbard. *The Way to Happiness*.

Does not define God or Supreme Being, but rejects biblical description of God. Everyone is a “thetan,” an immortal spirit with unlimited powers over its own universe, but not all are aware of this.

Jesus is rarely mentioned in Scientology. Jesus was not the Creator, nor was he an “operating thetan” (in control of supernatural powers, cleared from mental defects). Jesus did not die for sins.

The Holy Spirit is not part of this belief.

No sin or need to repent. Salvation is freedom from reincarnation. One must work with an “auditor” on his “engrams” (hang-ups) to achieve the state of “clear,” then progress up the “bridge to total freedom.”

Hell is a myth. People who get clear of engrams become operating thetans.

Members observe birth of Hubbard and anniversary of publication of *Dianetics*. Controversy follows the group worldwide. *Time* magazine and *Reader’s Digest* have published damaging exposés. Organizations related to Scientology include Narconon, Criminon, Way to Happiness Foundation, WISE, Hubbard College of Administration, Applied Scholastics.

Wicca

No one person. Roots in 19th-century Britain. Partly inspired by Margaret Murray (1862–1963) and organized by Gerald Gardner (1884–1964) in the 1930s to 1950s.

No holy books; however, many groups use *The Book of Shadows*, first compiled by Gardner and later expanded by him and by other leaders. Other popular works include *A Witches’ Bible* and *The Spiral Dance*.

The supreme being is called the Goddess, sometimes the Goddess and God, or goddess and horned god (“Lord and Lady”). The Goddess can be a symbol, the impersonal force in everything, or a personal being. Wiccans can be pantheists, polytheists, or both.

Jesus is either rejected altogether or sometimes considered a spiritual teacher who taught love and compassion.

The Holy Spirit is not part of this belief. However, some Wiccans may refer to “Spirit” as a kind of divine energy.

Wiccans do not believe that humanity is sinful or needs saving. It is important for Wiccans to honor and work for the preservation of nature (which they equate with the Goddess).

The body replenishes the earth, which is the Goddess’s wish. Some Wiccans are agnostic about life after death, others believe in reincarnation. Some believe in a wonderful place called Summerland.

Wiccans practice divination and spell-casting, with most rituals performed in a circle. Many Wiccans are part of a coven (local assembly), though many are “solitary.” Covens meet for ritual and seasonal holidays, including the eight major holidays (such as Vernal Equinox, Summer Solstice, and Beltane). Wicca is an occultic “nature religion,” not Satanism.

New Age

Based on Eastern mysticism, Hinduism, and paganism. Popularized in part by actress Shirley MacLaine (b. 1934) in the 1980s and 1990s. Beliefs vary.

No holy book. Use selected Bible passages; *I Ching*; Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist writings; and Native American beliefs. Writings on astrology, mysticism, and magic.

Everything and everyone is God. God is an impersonal force or principle, not a person. People have unlimited inner power and need to discover it.

Jesus is not the one true God. He is not a savior, but a spiritual model, and guru, and is now an “ascended master.” He was a New Ager who tapped into divine power in the same way that anyone can. Many believe he went east to India or Tibet and learned mystical truths. He did not rise physically, but “rose” into a higher spiritual realm.

Sometimes a psychic force. Man is divine and can experience psychic phenomena such as contacting unearthly beings.

Need to offset bad karma with good karma. Can tap into supernatural power through meditation, self-awareness, and “spirit guides.” Use terms such as “reborn” for this new self-awareness.

Human reincarnations occur until person reaches oneness with God. No eternal life as a resurrected person. No literal heaven or hell.

Can include yoga, meditation, visualization, astrology, channeling, hypnosis, trances, and tarot card readings. Use of crystals to get in harmony with God (Energy), for psychic healing, for contact with spirits, and for developing higher consciousness or other psychic powers. Strive for world unity and peace. Emphasis on holistic health.

Islam

**Key Person or Founder,
Date, Location**

Muhammad (570–632) is the final “seal” of many prophets sent by Allah (God). The Islamic calendar began in AD 622, when Muhammad fled Mecca. Main sects: Sunni, Shi’ite.

Key Writings

Qur’an (Koran) was revealed to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. The biblical Law of Moses, Psalms of David, and Gospel of Jesus (the *Injil*) are accepted in the Qur’an, but Muslim scholars teach that Jews and Christians have corrupted these original revelations.

Who is God?

God (Allah) is One. The greatest sin in Islam is *shirk*, or associating anything with God. Many Muslims think that Christians believe in three gods and are therefore guilty of *shirk*. Human attributes such as fatherhood cannot be associated with God.

Who is Jesus?

Jesus (*Isa* in Arabic) is one of the most respected of over 124,000 prophets sent by Allah. Jesus was sinless, born of a virgin, and a great miracle worker, but not the Son of God. His virgin birth is like Adam’s creation. Jesus is not God, and God is not Jesus. He was not crucified. Jesus, not Muhammad, will return for a special role before the future judgment day, perhaps turning Christians to Islam.

**Who is the
Holy Spirit?**

Allah has or is a spirit. Muslims reject the biblical concept of the Trinity.

How to Be Saved

Humans are basically good, but fallible and need guidance. The balance between good and bad deeds determines eternal destiny in paradise or hell. Allah’s mercy may tip the balances to heaven, as his will is supreme.

**What Happens
After Death**

Resurrection of bodies. Fear of eternal torment is a prevalent theme of the Qur’an. Paradise includes a garden populated with *houris*, maidens designed by Allah to provide sexual pleasures to righteous men.

**Other Facts,
Beliefs, or
Practices**

Followers are called Muslims. Go to mosque for prayers, sermons, counsel. Holy efforts to spread Islam (*jihad*). Five pillars of Islam: Confess that Allah is the one true God and that Muhammad is his prophet. Pray five times daily facing Mecca. Give alms (money). Fast during the month of Ramadan. Make pilgrimage to Mecca (once in a lifetime).

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Nation of Islam

Founded by Wallace D. Fard (1891–?) in Detroit in 1930, but led by Elijah Muhammad (1897–1975) since 1934. Current head is Louis Farrakhan (born 1933). Headquarters in Chicago, Illinois.

Publicly, the Holy Qur'an is authoritative and the Bible is quoted often, but *Message to the Blackman in America, Our Saviour Has Arrived*, and other books by Elijah Muhammad supply its distinctive views. Current teachings are in *The Final Call* newspaper and speeches of Minister Farrakhan.

Officially, there is one God, Allah, as described in the Qur'an. But Elijah Muhammad's teachings are also true: God is a black man, millions of Allahs have lived and died since creation, collectively the black race is God, and Master Fard is the Supreme Allah and Saviour.

Officially, Jesus is a sinless prophet of Allah. Privately, Jesus was born from adultery between Mary and Joseph, who was already married to another woman. Jesus was not crucified, but stabbed in the heart by a police officer. He is still buried in Jerusalem. Prophecies of Jesus' return refer to Master Fard, Elijah Muhammad, or to Louis Farrakhan.

The Holy Spirit is not significant to their belief, but is generally regarded as the power of God or as the angel Gabriel who spoke to the prophet Muhammad.

People sin, but are not born sinful; salvation is through submission to Allah and good works. Older beliefs still held: Fard is the saviour, salvation comes from knowledge of self and realizing that the white race are devils who displaced the black race.

There is no consciousness or any spiritual existence after death. Heaven and Hell are symbols. Statements about the resurrection refer to awakening "mentally dead" people by bringing them true teachings.

Farrakhan's public messages coexist with earlier, esoteric doctrines. Elijah Muhammad's older views (such as polytheism, God as the black race, Master Fard as Allah incarnate, whites as devils bred to cause harm) are still distributed, but public preaching now focuses on Islamic themes (one eternal God, non-racial emphasis) with frequent use of the Bible.

Founder

Writings

God

Jesus

H.S.

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Death

Other Beliefs

Bahá'í World Faith

Siiyyid 'Alí-Muhammad, "the Báb" (1819–1850) and Mírzá Husayn-'Alí, "Bahá'u'lláh" (1817–1892). Founded 1844 in Iran. Headquarters in Haifa, Israel.

Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, including *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* ("Most Holy Book") and *Kitáb-i-Iqán* ("Book of Certitude"). The Bible, interpreted spiritually to conform to Bahá'í theology.

God is an unknowable divine being who has revealed himself through nine "manifestations" (religious leaders), including Adam, Moses, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, and Bahá'u'lláh. No Trinity.

Jesus is one of many manifestations of God. Each manifestation supersedes the previous, giving new teachings about God. Jesus, who superseded Moses, was superseded by Muhammad, and most recently by the greatest, Bahá'u'lláh ("Glory of Allah"). Jesus is not God and did not rise from the dead. He is not the only way to God. Jesus has returned to earth in the form of Bahá'u'lláh.

Holy Spirit is divine energy from God that empowers every manifestation. "Spirit of Truth" refers to Bahá'u'lláh.

Faith in the manifestation of God (Bahá'u'lláh). Knowing and living by Bahá'u'lláh's principles and teachings.

Personal immortality based on good works, with rewards for the faithful. Heaven and hell are conditions, not places.

Bahá'í originated as an Islamic sect and is severely persecuted in Iran. Bahá'í teaches that all religions have the same source, principles, and aims. Stress on oneness and world unity. Regular local gatherings called "feasts," administrative meetings called "spiritual assemblies." "Universal House of Justice" in Haifa, Israel, is the ultimate governing body.

Judaism

Abraham of the Bible, about 2000 bc, and Moses in the Middle East. There are three main branches of Judaism—Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform—each with its own beliefs.

The Tanakh (Old Testament), and especially the Torah (first five books of the Bible). The Talmud (explanation of the Tanakh). Teachings of each branch. Writings of sages, such as Maimonides.

God is spirit. To Orthodox Jews, God is personal, all-powerful, eternal, and compassionate. To other Jews, God is impersonal, unknowable, and defined in a number of ways. No Trinity.

Jesus is seen either as an extremist false messiah or a good but martyred Jewish rabbi (teacher). Many Jews do not consider Jesus at all. Jews (except Messianic Jews and Hebrew Christians) do not believe he was the Messiah, Son of God, or that he rose from the dead. Orthodox Jews believe the Messiah will restore the Jewish kingdom and eventually rule the earth.

Some believe the Holy Spirit is another name for God's activity on earth. Others say it is God's love or power.

Some Jews believe that prayer, repentance, and obeying the Law are necessary for salvation. Others believe that salvation is the improvement of society.

There will be a physical resurrection. The obedient will live forever with God, and the unrighteous will suffer. Some Jews do not believe in a conscious life after death.

Meeting in synagogues on the Sabbath (Sabbath is Friday evening to Saturday evening). Circumcision of males. Many holy days and festivals, including Passover, Sukkoth, Hanukkah, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Purim. Jerusalem is considered the holy city.

Founder

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Jesus

H.S.

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Other Beliefs

Hinduism

No one founder. Many sects. Began 1800–1000 bc in India.

Many writings, including the Vedas (oldest, about 1000 bc), the Upanishads, and the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

God is "The Absolute," a universal spirit. Everyone is part of God (Brahman) like drops in the sea, but most people are not aware of it. People worship manifestations of Brahman (gods and goddesses).

Jesus Christ is a teacher, a guru, or an avatar (an incarnation of Vishnu). He is a son of God as are others. His death does not atone for sins and he did not rise from the dead.

The Holy Spirit is not part of this belief.

Release from the cycles of reincarnation. Achieved through yoga and meditation. Can take many lifetimes. Final salvation is absorption or union with Brahman.

Reincarnation into a better status (good karma) if person has behaved well. If one has been bad, he can be reborn and pay for past sins (bad karma) by suffering.

Some disciples wear orange robes, and have shaved heads. Many Hindus worship stone and wooden idols in temples. Some gurus demand complete obedience. Disciples meditate on a word, phrase, or picture. Yoga involves meditation, chanting, postures, breathing exercises. Foundation of New Age and Transcendental Meditation.

Hare Krishna (ISKCON)

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness, founded by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896–1977) in 1965 in New York, is based on Hindu teachings from 16th century AD.

Back to Godhead magazine. Prabhupada's translations of and commentaries on Hindu scriptures, especially *Bhagavad-Gita*, *As It Is*.

God is Lord Krishna. Krishna is a personal creator; the souls of all living things are part of him. ISKCON teaches that what Krishna does freely for his own pleasure (intoxication, sex outside of marriage) is prohibited to his devotees.

Jesus is not important to this group. He is usually thought of as an enlightened vegetarian teacher who taught meditation. He is not an incarnation of God. Some Krishna devotees consider Jesus to be Krishna. Others say he is a great avatar (teacher).

The Holy Spirit is not part of this belief.

Chanting Krishna's name constantly, total devotion to Krishna, worshipping images, and obeying the rules of ISKCON throughout many reincarnated lives, releases a follower from bad karma.

Those who are unenlightened continue in endless reincarnation (rebirth on earth) based on the sinful acts of a person's previous life.

Public chanting of Hare Krishna mantra, yoga, food offerings, soliciting donations. Vegetarian diet. No intoxicants, no gambling. Sex for procreation only. ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) attracts new members through feasts and Indian cultural programs. Followers are given new names, and often cut family ties.

Founder

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Other Beliefs

Transcendental Meditation (TM)

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (b. 1917). Founded 1955–1958 in India, based on Hinduism and karma yoga. Headquarters in the Netherlands. Also called World Plan Executive Council.

Hindu scriptures, including the *Bhagavad-Gita*. *Meditations of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi*, *Science of Being and the Art of Living*, other writings by the founder.

Each part of creation makes up "God" (Brahman). Supreme Being is not personal. All creation is divine; "all is one."

Jesus is not uniquely God. Like all persons, Jesus had a divine essence. Unlike most, he discovered it. Christ didn't suffer and couldn't suffer for people's sins.

The Holy Spirit is not part of this belief.

Humans have forgotten their inner divinity. Salvation consists of doing good in excess of evil in order to evolve to the highest state (final union of the self with Brahman) through reincarnation.

Reincarnation based on karma (reaping the consequences of one's actions) until loss of self into union with Brahman. No heaven or hell.

Mentally recite a mantra (word associated with a Hindu god). Meditate twice a day to relax and achieve union with Brahman. Maharishi University in Iowa offers advanced T.M. programs in "levitation" and "invisibility." Practices include yoga, Hindu astrology, use of crystals, and idol worship (offerings of flowers, fruit, and cloth for Maharishi's dead teacher, Guru Dev).

Buddhism

Gautama Siddhartha, (563–483 BC), also known as the Buddha ("Enlightened One"). Founded in modern-day Nepal and India as a reformation of Hinduism.

The *Mahavastu* ("Great Story," a chaotic collection covering the Buddha's life story), the *Jataka Tales* (550 stories of the former lives of the Buddha), the *Tripitaka* ("Three Baskets"), and the *Tantras* (as recorded in Tibetan Buddhism).

The Buddha himself did not believe in the existence of God. Others speak of the Buddha as a universal enlightened consciousness or as a god.

Jesus Christ is not part of the historic Buddhist worldview. Buddhists in the West today generally view Jesus as an enlightened teacher, while Buddhists in Asia believe Jesus is an *avatar* or a *Bodhisattva* (but not God).

The Holy Spirit is not part of this belief. Buddhists do believe in spirits, and some practice deity yoga and invite spirit possession.

Goal of life is *nirvana*, to eliminate all desires or cravings, and in this way escape suffering. The Eightfold Path is a system to free Buddhists from desiring anything.

Reincarnation. People do not have their own individual souls or spirits, but one's desires and feelings may be reincarnated into another person.

Eightfold path recommends right knowledge, intentions, speech, conduct, livelihood, right effort, mindfulness, and meditation. Some Buddhist groups talk about an "eternal Buddha" (life-force). Through the "Doctrine of Assimilation" the belief systems of other religions are blended into their form of Buddhism.

Founder

Writings

God

Jesus

H.S.

Salvation

Death

Other Beliefs

Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism

Nichiren Daishonin (1222–1282). Nichiren Shoshu sect founded in Japan in 1253. Soka Gakkai founded in 1930 by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944).

The *Lotus Sutra* (a sutra is a discourse of the Buddha as recorded by his disciples). *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, plus writings of Daisaku Ikeda.

There is no god in Nichiren Shoshu. Followers hold to a monistic worldview, believing that there is no separation between Creator and creature and that they are protected by Buddhist, Hindu, and Shinto gods that they regard as spiritual forces.

Jesus Christ is not part of this belief.

The Holy Spirit is not part of this belief.

Enlightenment, prosperity, and healing come from chanting *nam-myoho-enge-kyo*, a *mantra* (phrase) expressing devotion to the law of karma. Fulfilling worldly desires brings enlightenment, which can be achieved in one lifetime.

Repeated reincarnation until one awakens to one's Buddha nature, then enters nirvana (escaping the cycle of rebirth). Heaven and hell are two of ten states of existence. After death, one enters a suspended state called *Ku*.

Worship of a scroll called the *Gohonzon* by chanting *nam-myoho-enge-kyo* (roughly translated, "hail to the mystic law of cause and effect"). *Shakubuku* (literally, "the tearing and crushing of other faiths") is their form of proselytizing, which they believe helps them change their karma. Soka University is their main educational institution in the United States.