

CHRISTIANITY AND SEVEN WORLD RELIGIONS

BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

John 1:1-14, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Ephesians 2:8-9

Christians believe in one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit. The Old and New Testament Bible are the verbally inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, and is the divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life. Christians believe that Jesus was both fully God and fully man – a divine mystery. Salvation is by God's grace — not by works or good deeds — and is received through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection, for the forgiveness of sins.

Key Beliefs

- God eternally exists in three persons: Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit
- Jesus is both fully God and fully man, dying on the cross as a substitute for sinners and rising from the dead
- Salvation is through grace by faith in Jesus, for the forgiveness of our sins

MORMONISM

Joseph Smith is the founder of Mormonism, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). Mormons believe that God the Father was once a man but "progressed" to godhood, and worthy members may one day become exalted to godhood themselves. They believe that Jesus is a separate "god" from the Father, conceived by sexual relations between Mary and God the Father. Mormons believe salvation is by works, including faithfulness to church leaders, Mormon baptism, tithing, and secret rituals. They cannot inherit eternal life without Mormon membership.

Key Beliefs

- There are many gods
- Jesus "progressed" to godhood through Mormon practices
- Salvation is through works and Mormon membership

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Jehovah's Witnesses believe in a one-person God called Jehovah, but they do not believe in the Trinity. The founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses was Charles Russell. They use all Watchtower publications as their key writings and believe that Jesus was not God. They believe that Jesus was Michael, the archangel, before he appeared on earth. To be saved, Jehovah's Witnesses must earn everlasting life by door-to-door work, with salvation being limited to 144,000 anointed people.

Key Beliefs

- God is called Jehovah
- Jesus was Michael, an archangel, but is not God
- Salvation is through works and is limited to 144,000 people

NEW AGE

New Age is a combination of Eastern mysticism, Hinduism, and paganism. The beliefs vary, but mainly center around the idea that everything and everyone is God. Instead of God being a personal being, New Age thinkers say that God is an impersonal force or principle, not a person. In New Age theology, Jesus is not God and not a Savior, but a spiritual model and guru that "tapped" into divine power the way anyone can. They believe Jesus did not rise physically from the dead but rose into a higher spiritual realm. In order to be saved, people must offset bad karma with good karma by tapping into supernatural power through meditation, self-awareness, and spirit guides.

Key Beliefs

- God is an impersonal force or principle, not a person
- Jesus is a spiritual guru but not God
- Salvation is through offsetting bad karma with good karma

ISLAM

Founded by Muhammad, Islam is a religion that believes that Allah is one and absolutely unique. Muslims reference their holy book, the Qur'an, as divinely inspired and revealed to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. They do affirm the biblical Torah, Psalms, and Gospels but believe that Jews and Christians have corrupted the original texts. Muslims believe that Jesus was not God, but instead a respected Prophet sent by Allah. They believe Jesus was not crucified and did not rise from the grave. In order to be saved in Islam, your good deeds must outweigh your bad deeds. The word Islam means "to submit" (to god). Muslim means "one who submits to god".

Key Beliefs

- The one true god is Allah
- Jesus was not God, but a respected prophet sent by Allah
- Salvation is through your good deeds outweighing your bad deeds

JUDAISM

Judaism started with Abraham in 2000 BC. Jews believe that there is one God, but do not believe that Jesus was the son of God or in the Trinity, as Christians do. The Tanakh (Old Testament) and the Torah (first five books of the Bible) are the guiding Scriptures for Jews, with other teachings depending on the branch. In Judaism, Jews believe that Jesus was not the Messiah, son of God, or that He rose from the dead. Repentance, prayer, and obeying the law are necessary for Salvation.

Key Beliefs

- There is only one God (Yahweh)
- Jesus was not the Messiah and did not rise from the dead
- Salvation is through works of the law

HINDUISM

Hindus believe that God is "The Absolute" – a universal spirit or Brahman. Hindus do not have a prophet or founder. Everyone is a part of God (Brahman), but most are unaware of it. Some notable writings for Hindus are the Vedas and Bhagavad Gita. According to Hindus, Jesus was a teacher, guru, or avatar – one of many sons of God. They believe Jesus' death did not atone for sins and he did not rise from the dead. To be saved in Hinduism, one must be released from the cycles of incarnation, which can take many lifetimes.

Key Beliefs

- There are many gods
- Jesus was a good teacher and guru, but He did not rise from the dead
- Salvation is through incarnation

BUDDHISM

Buddhism was founded by Gautama Siddhartha (also known as Buddha). Buddha did not believe in the existence of God. Buddhists writings comprise the "Tripitakas": Sutta, Vinaya (discipline), and Abhidhamma (doctrine). Buddhists today view Jesus as an enlightened teacher but not God. To be saved in Buddhism, one must reach Nirvana, which is to eliminate all desires or cravings and, in this way, escape suffering. The Eightfold Path is a system to free them from desiring anything, eventually reaching nonexistence.

Key Beliefs

- Buddhism does not believe in a supreme god or deity
- Jesus was an enlightened teacher, but not God
- Salvation is through reaching Nirvana by eliminating all desires and cravings