

Compare 20 Religions and Cults with Biblical Christianity

Christianity Cults & Religions

7th Edition

Side-by-side
comparison chart
of 20 groups

Jehovah's Witnesses
Mormonism
Unification Church
Christian Science
New Age
Wicca
Scientology
Islam
Bahá'í
Kabbalah Centre
Hinduism
Hare Krishna
Buddhism
and more...

Founder, date, location
Who is God?
Who is Jesus?
How to be saved
What happens after death?
Key writings
Other beliefs and practices

ROSE
PUBLISHING

Biblical Christianity

Key Person or Founder,
Date, Location

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.



Key Writings

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

Who is God?

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.

Who is Jesus?

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 the 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 eye-witnesses. 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.

Who is the
Holy Spirit?

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.

How to be Saved

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.

What Happens
after Death?

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.

Other Facts, Beliefs,
or Practices

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.

Islam

Founder	Founded in Mecca, Arabia by Muhammad (AD 570–632), considered the greatest man who ever lived and the last of more than 124,000 messengers sent by Allah (God). Main types: Sunni ("people of the tradition"), Shi'a ("party of Ali"), Sufi (mystics).
Writings	The Holy Qur'an (Koran), revealed to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. Essential commentaries are found in the <i>Sunnah</i> ("tradition"), composed of <i>Hadith</i> ("narrative") and <i>Sirah</i> ("journey"). The Qur'an affirms the biblical Torah, Psalms, and Gospels, but Jews and Christians have corrupted the original texts.
God	Allah is One and absolutely unique. He cannot be known. The greatest sin in Islam is <i>shirk</i> , or associating anything with Allah. Human qualities like fatherhood cannot be attributed to Allah. Many Muslims think that Christians believe in three gods and are therefore guilty of <i>shirk</i> .
Jesus	Jesus (<i>Isa</i> in Arabic) was not God or the Son of God. His virgin birth is likened to Adam's creation. He was sinless, a worker of miracles, and one of the most respected prophets sent by Allah. He was not crucified or resurrected. He, not Muhammad, will return to play a special role before the future judgment day, perhaps turning Christians to Islam.
Holy Spirit	"Holy spirit" can refer to Allah, to the angel Gabriel, or to a spirit used by Allah to give life to man and inspire the prophets.
Salvation	Humans are basically good, but fallible and need guidance. The balance between good and bad deeds determines one's destiny in paradise or hell. Allah may tip the balances toward heaven. One should always live with the fear of Allah and judgment day.
Death	Belief in bodily resurrection. One may pray for and seek favor for the dead before judgment day. Paradise includes a garden populated with <i>houris</i> , maidens designed by Allah to provide sexual pleasure to righteous men.
Beliefs/Other	Muslims meet in mosques for prayers, sermons, counsel. Emphasis on hospitality, developing a sense of community, and maintaining honor (or avoiding shame). <i>Shari'a</i> (Islamic law) governs all aspects of life in places where it is enforced. <i>Jihad</i> ("fight") may be used to refer either to one's inner struggle to obey God or to literal warfare. Muslims who convert to Christianity or other religions face persecution and possible death.



Comparing Sunni and Shi'a Islam

Adherents

Sunni: Over 1 billion worldwide

Shi'a: Estimated 170 million, primarily in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Azerbaijan, Bahrain



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Succession

Sunni: Muhammad's successors (called *caliphs*) should ideally be chosen by consensus/election. The first was Abu Bakr (c. AD 573–634), and over the centuries many others followed. No new caliphs since 1924.

Shi'a: Muhammad's successors (called *imams*) should be from his family and descendants (*Ahl al-Bayt*). The first of these was his cousin and son-in-law, Ali (c. AD 600–661), and thereafter all imams were bloodline descendants from Fatimah (Muhammad's daughter and Ali's wife). No new imams since AD 869.

Authoritative Writings

Sunni: The Qur'an, plus an emphasis on Hadith and other sayings attributed to companions of Muhammad such as Abu Bakr, Umar, and Aisha.

Shi'a: The Qur'an, plus an emphasis on Hadith and other sayings attributed to members of Muhammad's family and their supporters.

Main Teachings and Practices

Sunni: Five Pillars (or duties): Profession of Faith (*shahadah*); Prayers (*salat*); Almsgiving (*zakat*); Fasting during Ramadan (*sawm*); Pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*). Six Beliefs: in Allah; in Prophets and Messengers; in Angels; in Holy Books; in the Day of Judgment and the Resurrection; in the Decree (destiny/fate)

Shi'a: Ten Central Practices: Profession of Faith (*shahadah*); Prayers (*salat*); Almsgiving (*zakat*); One-Fifth Tax (*khums*); Fasting during Ramadan (*sawm*); Pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*); Religious War (*jihad*); Enjoining to Do Good (*amr-bil-ma'ruf*); Exhortation to Desist from Evil (*nahi-anil-munkar*); Loving the *Ahl al-Bayt* and their followers (*tawalla*); Disassociation from the Enemies of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*tabarra*) Five Principles: Oneness (*tawhid*); Justice (*adl*); Prophethood (*nubuwwah*); Leadership (*imamah*); Day of Resurrection (*yawm al-qiyamah*)

Major Divisions

Sunni: Four "schools of law" (*Madh'hab*)—Hanafi, Maliki, Hanbali, Shafi

Shi'a: Three branches—majority "Twelvers" (*Jafari*), who believe in a succession of twelve infallible, divinely ordained imams; "Seveners" (*Ismaili*); and "Fivers" (*Zaidi*)

Eschatology

Sunni: Majority believe that a figure known as the *Mahdi* ("guided one"), from Muhammad's family, will appear with Jesus before the final judgment.

Shi'a: Majority believe in a series of twelve imams serving as Muhammad's spiritual and political successors. The final one, Muhammad al-Mahdi (b. AD 869), is alive but hidden (in "occultation") since AD 874; at the proper time he will appear with Jesus.

What Some Groups Teach about Jesus and the Bible's Response

What Others Teach	What the Bible Says
Jesus was not God.	John 1:1–18; 8:56–58; Colossians 1:15–20; 1 Timothy 3:16
Jesus was created by God.	John 10:30–38; 17:5; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18
There are three separate gods: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not one God in three persons.	Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 7:14; 43:10; 44:6–8; Matthew 1:18; 28:18–19; John 10:30–38; Hebrews 1:1–14; 1 Peter 1:2
Jesus is not necessary because there is no sin.	John 3:14–17; Romans 3:23–30; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:1–8; 1 John 1:8–10
Jesus was not raised bodily from the dead.	Luke 24:36–53; Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 15:1–23
Jesus was a great prophet, but not God.	Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18; John 5:17–18, 23; 10:30–38; Colossians 2:9–10
There are many ways to God, not just one.	John 3:14–17; 14:6–7; 1 Timothy 2:5–6
Jesus is not necessary because people must pay for their own sins.	John 17:2–3; Romans 6:23; 10:3–10; Ephesians 2:8–9
Jesus died for sins, but people can't be saved unless they obey all of the teachings of the church.	John 14:6–7; Romans 10:3–10; Ephesians 2:8–9
Jesus is God, but less than God the Father.	John 5:17–23; 14:6–7; Colossians 2:9–10
Jesus was just a man.	Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18; John 10:30–38; 2:18–22
Jesus is not the only son of God.	John 3:14–17, 36; Hebrews 1:1–14
Jesus will never come again.	Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

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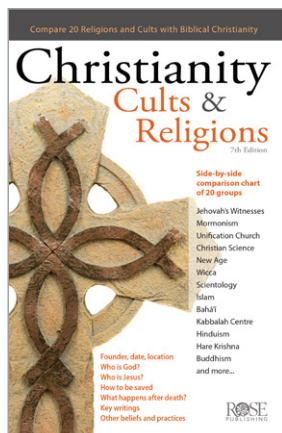
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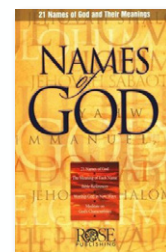


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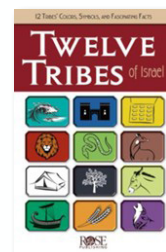


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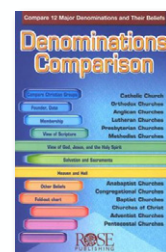


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