

## CHRISTIANITY/WORLD RELIGIONS/CULTS

The purpose of this study is not to discredit any religion, nor to attempt to influence anyone to make a decision of what they choose to believe (or not believe), but simply to make a comparison of Christianity to other religions/cults. Below is a brief description of some of the most well known religions/cults.

### CHRISTIANITY

The Christian faith is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is also based on the belief that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God. He is the founder of Christianity and Christians are considered Disciples of Christ.

Christians believe in the Trinity which is one God who eternally exists in three distinct persons, namely, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Although the word “trinity” does not appear in the scriptures, there are numerous biblical scriptures where the three persons of the trinity are mentioned together. (Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; Luke 1:35; John: 14:26; 15:26; II Corinthians 13:14).

Christians believe that Jesus died on a cross, rose from the dead on the third day, ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God and ever lives to make intercession for the believers.

Christians believe that Jesus was begotten through the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

Christians believe that Jesus died on the cross as a voluntary and substitutionary act of love. As a result of that death, people are able to have their sins forgiven and to have abundant life with God and most importantly, gain eternal life at the end of this life. Therefore, his death on the cross paid the penalty for our sins. (I John: 2:2; Romans 3:25).

Christians accept the bible as their doctrine and standard for living. They believe that it is the inspired word of God. No parts of it are denied and nothing is added or taken away from it.

Christians believe that repentance is necessary for forgiveness of sins.

Christians believe in a literal hell and a literal heaven.

Christians believe in the bodily resurrection at the end of this life.

## ISLAM

Islam was founded in Mecca, Arabia. The founder of Islam is the Prophet Elijah Muhammad. The Holy book that is used is the Qur'an. The word Islam means "complete surrender and obedience to Allah. (Allah is the Arabic name for God.)

Islam is built on five pillars. They are: Shahabad, Salad, Sum, Zapata and Hajj.

The Five pillars of Islam are the five obligations that every Muslim must satisfy in order to live a good and responsible life according to Islam.

- Shahabad is the sincere reciting of the Muslim profession of faith.
- Salat is the performing of ritual prayers five times each day.
- Sawm is fasting during the month of Ramadan.
- Zakat is paying a charity tax to the poor.
- Hajj is going on a pilgrimage to Mecca

Muslims believe in one God and that his name is Allah. They do not believe in the Trinity. They believe that their holy book which is the Qua'ran was revealed to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel.

Muslims believe that Muhammad is a true prophet of God and that his teachings are perfect and error free. They believe that Muhammad is God's last prophet.

Muslims believe that salvation is by sincerity and works. They believe that salvation comes through a life of good deeds.

Muslims believe that the Holy Spirit is the angel Gabriel.

Muslims believe that Jesus was an important prophet. They do not believe that Jesus is God. They believe that those who believe that Jesus is God are infidels or disbelievers.

Muslims do not believe that Jesus was placed on a cross, or that he died on a cross. They also do not believe that Jesus rose from the dead.

Muslims believe in a final judgment. They believe in eternal enjoyment for the righteous and severe punishment for the wicked

## **SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST**

The primary organizers of Seventh Day Adventism are James and Ellen White and Joseph Bates . They were incorporated in 1863 in Michigan. Headquarters is in Silver Springs, Maryland.

They believe in one God existing in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

They believe that God the Father exalted Jesus to be his son who provoked Satan to jealousy and to a revolt in heaven.

They believe that Saturday is the Sabbath and that it is the seal of God. They believe that worship on Sunday is the mark of the beast.

They believe that they are God's one, special remnant church. They follow the Old Testament's clean/unclean meat laws. Traditional Seven Day Adventists believe that wearing jewelry is a sin.

They believe that humans have no immaterial spirit, so at death the body goes into the ground and the breath goes to God.

New age can include yoga, meditation, astrology, channeling, hypnosis, trances and tarot card readings. They strive for unity and peace and they place great emphasis on holistic health.

## JUDAISM

There are three main branches of Judaism. They are Orthodox, Conservative and Reform. Each of them basically has their own belief.

In Judaism, Jesus is seen as a false messiah. Many Jews do not consider Jesus at all. Jews and Hebrew Christians do not believe that he was the messiah or that he rose from the dead. Orthodox Jews believe the Messiah will restore the Jewish kingdom and eventually rule the earth.

They meet in synagogues on the Sabbath which is Friday evening to Saturday evening. Some believe that prayer, repentance, and obeying the Law are necessary for salvation. Others believe that salvation is the improvement of society.

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

They celebrate many holy days and festivals such as Passover, Sukkoth, Hanukkah, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Purim. Jerusalem is considered the holy city.

## (ROMAN) CATHOLIC

The official Catechism of the Catholic Church places tradition and Magisterium on the same level of authority with Scripture.

Roman Catholics believe in the Omnipotence of Mary which is totally against scriptures that teach that Christ is Omnipotent.

Catholics believe that there is a level between Heaven and Hell which is considered the state of suffering where the souls of them who died in grace, but without having fully satisfied the justice of God, remain for a time to pay the debt of temporal punishment due to their sins and to be purified for heaven.

They call this level purgatory.

The Catholics believe in the Priesthood.

The book of Hebrews (7:11) declares that the Priesthood of Jesus is an eternal priesthood.

Under their Priesthood celibacy is required. Also Priests are forbidden to marry. (It should be noted that both of those requirements are unscriptural.)

Hebrews 13:4 states, *“Marriage is honorable in all. And the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*

In St. Luke 1:5-6 the bible states that Zacharias was a Priest and was married to Elizabeth. It further states that he and his wife were righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. These scripture confirm the fact that (1) He was a priest, (2) He was married (3) he was considered righteous before God (4) God blessed he and his wife with a child which means he was not celibate.

## CULTS

A cult by Christian definition is a religious group that denies one or more of the fundamentals of biblical truths of Christianity.

Some of the most common beliefs of such cults would be to deny the deity of Christ or the fact that his death was a sufficient payment for our sins.

Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons are two of the most traditional cults. However, there are many others.

## **JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES**

Charles Taze Russell and Joseph F. Rutherford began this religion in 1879 in Pennsylvania. Headquarters is in Brooklyn, New York.

All current Watchtower publications, the Bible (New World translation only), reasoning from the scriptures, Watchtower and Awake magazines are what they use to study the word of God.

They believe there is one God, called Jehovah. They do not believe in the trinity. They also believe that Jesus is the first thing God created.

They believe that before Jesus lived on earth, he was Michael, the archangel. They believe that Jesus died on a stake, not a cross.

They believe he was resurrected as a spirit and that his body was destroyed. They do not believe that Jesus is coming again. They believe he returned invisibly in 1914 in spirit and that he and the angels will destroy all non-Jehovah's Witnesses in the near future.

They believe that most followers must earn everlasting life on earth by door to door work and that salvation is limited to 144,000 anointed ones. They believe that number is already reached.

They believe that the 144,000 live as spirits in heaven and that the rest of the righteous live on earth and must obey God perfectly for 1,000 years to be annihilated.

Jehovah's witnesses do not observe holidays or birthdays. They are forbidden to vote, salute the flag, work in the military, or accept blood transfusions.

## **MORMONISM**

The founder of Mormonism is Joseph A. Smith. The date of origin is 1830.

The church is commonly known as The Church of Latter-day Saints. (LDS). The Mormon Church claims to be the true church.

Mormons believe that God the father was once a man, but “progressed” to godhood. They believe God has a physical body and that he has a wife named (Heavenly Mother) who has a physical body as well.

They do not believe in the trinity. They believe that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three separate Gods. They believe that worthy members may one day become exalted to Godhood themselves.

They believe that Jesus is a separate God from the Father. Mormons believe that Jesus was created through sexual union between Elohim and Mary and that Jesus was married.

They believe that the death of Jesus on the cross does not provide full atonement for all sin, but does provide everyone with resurrection.

They believe that the Holy Spirit is not God but is an influence.

They believe that eternal life is not possible without Mormon membership.

People of African ancestry were denied full access to Mormon priesthood and privileges until 1978.

## SCIENTOLOGY

Scientology was founded by L. Ron Hubbard in 1954 in California. Their major headquarter facilities are in California and Florida.

Scientology rejects the biblical description of God. Everyone is a “theta,” (an immortal spirit with unlimited powers over its own universe) but not all are aware of this.

Jesus is rarely mentioned in Scientology. They believe that Jesus did not die for sins.

They do not believe in the Holy Spirit. They do not believe that sin exists therefore there is no need to repent. They believe that salvation is freedom from reincarnation. They believe that hell is a myth and that heaven is a “false dream.”

## NEW AGE

New Age is based on Eastern mysticism, Hinduism and paganism.

They believe that everything and everyone is God. They believe that God is impersonal. They believe he is a force or principle. They believe that people have unlimited power and need to discover it.

They do not believe that Jesus is the savior, but a spiritual model and guru. They do not believe that Jesus rose from the dead but that he rose into a higher spiritual realm. They believe in Karma and that people can offset bad karma with good karma.

They believe that human reincarnations occur until a person reaches oneness with God. They do not believe in a literal heaven or hell.

## UNIFICATION CHURCH

Sun Myung Moon started “Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity in 1954.

They believe that God is both positive and negative. They believe the universe is God’s body. They believe that God does not know the future, that he is suffering, and needs man (Sun Myung Moon) to make him happy. They do not believe in the Trinity.

They believe that Jesus was a perfect man, not God. They believe Jesus is the son of Zechariah and was not born of a virgin. They believe that the second coming of Christ will be fulfilled in Sun Myung Moon, who is superior to Jesus and will finish Jesus’ mission.

They believe that 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).

They believe that after death one goes to the spirit world. They do not believe in the resurrection. The members of this religion advance by convincing others to follow Sun Myung Moon. They also believe that everyone, including Satan will be saved.

They place great emphasis on channeling to contact the dead. They believe that in doing so; they can liberate the souls of one's ancestors. They believe that Jesus bows down to Sun Myung Moon and that he is the King of King, Lord of Lords and the Lamb of God.