



OTHER RELIGIONS

What do other religions believe?

WHAT DO OTHER RELIGIONS BELIEVE?

ISLAM

- **Origins & History:** Muhammad, 622 AD, Saudi Arabia
- **Followers Worldwide:** 1.3 billion (a “Muslim” is someone who follows Islam)
- **God(s):** One God (Allah in Arabic)
- **Human Situation and Life's Purpose:** Humans must submit to the will of God to gain Paradise after death
- **Afterlife:** Paradise or Hell
- **Practices:** Five Pillars: Faith, Prayer, Alms, Pilgrimage, Fasting. Mosque services on Fridays. No alcohol or pork. Holidays related to the pilgrimage and fast of Ramadan
- **Texts:** Qur'an (Scripture); Hadith (tradition)

HINDUISM

- **Origins & History:** Indigenous religion of India as developed to present day
- **Followers Worldwide:** 900 million
- **God(s):** One Supreme Reality (Brahman) manifested in many (millions) gods and goddesses
- **Human Situation and Life's Purpose:** Humans are in bondage to ignorance and illusion, but are able to escape. Purpose is to gain release from rebirth, or at least a better rebirth
- **Afterlife:** Reincarnation until gain enlightenment
- **Practices:** Yoga, meditation, worship (puja), devotion to a god or goddess, pilgrimage to holy cities, live according to one's dharma (purpose/ role)
- **Texts:** The Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, etc.

BUDDHISM

- **Origins & History:** Founded by Siddharta Gautama (the Buddha) in c. 520 BC, NE India
- **Followers Worldwide:** 360 million
- **God(s):** The Ravada group is atheistic; Mahayana group is more polytheistic; Buddha taught nothing is permanent
- **Human Situation and Life's Purpose:** Purpose is to avoid suffering and gain enlightenment and release from cycle of rebirth, or at least attain a better rebirth by gaining merit.
- **Afterlife:** Reincarnation (understood differently than in Hinduism, with no surviving soul) until gain enlightenment
- **Practices:** Meditation, mantras, devotion to deities (in some sects)
- **Texts:** Mandalas (Tibetan), Tripitaka (Pali Canon), Mahayana sutras like the Lotus Sutra

JUDAISM

- **Origins & History:** The religion of the Hebrews (c. 1300 BC), especially after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD
- **Followers Worldwide:** 14 million
- **God(s):** One God, Yahweh (YHVH)
- **Human Situation and Life's Purpose:** Obey God's commandments, live ethically. Focus is more on this life than the next. Not historically emphasized
- **Afterlife:** Beliefs vary from no afterlife to shadowy existence to the World to Come (similar to heaven)
- **Practices:** Circumcision at birth, bar/bat mitzvah at adulthood. Synagogue services on Saturdays. No pork or other non-kosher foods. Holidays related to historical events
- **Texts:** Bible (Old Testament translation called the Tanakh), Talmud

MORMONISM (CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS)

- **Origins & History:** Joseph Smith, 1830, New York, USA
- **Followers Worldwide:** 12.2 million
- **God(s):** God the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost are three separate individual beings
- **Human Situation and Life's Purpose:** Humans existed as spirits before this life, salvation is returning to God. Salvation by faith in Christ, good works, ordinances, and evangelism
- **Afterlife:** All return to spirit world for period of instruction before resurrection. Mormons to heaven with God and families; others rewarded but not with God; hell for those who reject God after death
- **Practices:** Abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, coffee and tea; baptism for the dead; eternal marriage; temple garments under daily clothes; active evangelism
- **Texts:** Christian Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price

JEHOVAH'S WITNESS

- **Origins & History:** Charles Taze Russell, 1879, Pittsburgh
- **Followers Worldwide:** 6.5 million
- **God(s):** One God, Jehovah. No Trinity - Christ is the first creation of God; the Holy Spirit is a force
- **Human Situation and Life's Purpose:** Salvation is through faith in Christ and obeying Jehovah's laws. The End of the World is soon
- **Afterlife:** Heaven for 144,000 chosen Witnesses, eternity on new earth for other Witnesses. All others annihilated. No hell
- **Practices:** No blood transfusions, no celebration of holidays, no use of crosses or religious images.
- Baptism, Sunday service at Kingdom Hall, strong emphasis on evangelism
- **Texts:** New World Translation of the Scriptures

CHRISTIANITY

- **Origins & History:** Founded by Jesus Christ in c. 30 AD, Israel
- **Followers Worldwide:** 2 billion
- **God(s):** One God who is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Matthew 3:16-17

16As soon as Jesus (SON) was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God (SPIRIT) descending like a dove and lighting on him. 17And a voice from heaven (FATHER) said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

- **Human Situation and Life's Purpose:** All have sinned and have been separated from God. Salvation is through faith in Christ. (Catholics and a few others believe that salvation also comes from sacraments and good works.)

Ephesians 2:8-9

8For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9not by works, so that no one can boast.

- **Afterlife:** Eternal heaven or hell (Catholics and a few others believe in purgatory)

Matthew 25:31-46

46"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

- **Practices:** Prayer, Bible study, baptism, communion, church on Sundays, numerous holidays
- **Texts:** The Bible (Old and New Testaments)

WHAT IS THE MAIN DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER WORLD RELIGIONS?

Nobody is perfect. No religion disputes this fact. Since nobody's perfect, how good is good enough? What do I need to do to make things better or to be allowed into Heaven? Is there a way to escape the consequences my shortcomings? These are the questions that all religions seek to answer. Different religions answer these questions in vastly different ways, all seeking a standard and a method for achieving a positive outcome in the end.

Besides Christianity, every other religion is about **DOING** the necessary things to achieve a positive outcome. Some religions acknowledge the person of Jesus Christ and the bible but they are different from Christianity because, in one form or another, they include a requirement of good works that a person must **DO** in order to earn God's favor or some other positive result. When you really boil it down, every other religion has the basic message that people who **DO** the good things required will be rewarded with the good things they desire.

Christianity is completely different because it is not about **DOING**. It is all about what has been **DONE**. Christianity recognizes that no amount of good works will be able to erase the sin in our lives. No matter what we **DO**, we have offended a holy God and are still deserving of judgment. That's why Jesus came to pay the price that we owe. On the cross, he said, "It is finished"...**DONE**...paid in full. When you really boil it down, Christianity has the basic message that people who have done bad things will be rewarded with good things when they admit their inability to **DO** enough and put their trust in God's love and grace expressed and fulfilled in the already **DONE** work of Jesus Christ.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH & PROTESTANT CHURCH?

- Catholics believe authority comes from their traditions as well as the bible (along with extra books that our bible doesn't have like Tobit, Judith, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, Wisdom (of Solomon), Sirach, and Baruch). Protestants believe authority comes from the bible alone (*Revelation 22:18-19, 2 Timothy 3:16-17*).
- Catholics believe the death of Christ created merit that is shared with sinners through sacraments (baptism, communion, confirmation, penance, etc.). Protestants believe the death of Christ was a substitute, a sacrifice that satisfied God's justice and is a gift for everyone who believes (*Romans 5:15-16, John 3:16, etc.*)
- Catholics believe good works earn God's favor. Protestants believe good works do not earn God's favor. Good works are fruit that comes from a life that has received the gift of God's favor. (*Ephesians 2:8-9, Galatians 5:22-23*)
- Catholics believe salvation is received at baptism. Protestants believe salvation is received at the moment a person trusts in Jesus. (*Luke 23:42-43*)
- Catholics believe salvation may be lost and regained by penance. Christians believe salvation guarantees eternal life. (*2 Corinthians 1:21-22, 1 John 5:11-12*)
- Catholics believe priests have a position of authority only held by select individuals. Protestants believe every believer is a "priest". (*1 Peter 2:9*)
- Catholics believe communion elements (bread and wine) can literally be transformed into the flesh and blood of Jesus (called transubstantiation). Protestants believe communion is a symbol that was given to us by Jesus so that we would remember and proclaim His sacrifice. (*Luke 22:19-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26*)
- Catholics believe in purgatory after death (a place of purification or temporary punishment in which the souls of those who die in a state of grace are made ready for heaven). Protestants believe judgment awaits us after death. (*Hebrews 9:27-28*)
- Catholics believe people can and should pray to saints. Protestants believe people can and should only pray to God. (*1 Timothy 2:5, Matthew 6:9-13*)

WHAT ARE DENOMINATIONS?

A "denomination" is an identifiable group under a common name, structure, and doctrine within Christianity. Denominations are divided because of differing beliefs about a variety of topics. Some examples of issues that divide groups are the trinity, authority/interpretation of the bible, creation, sin, salvation, virgin birth, heaven and hell, styles of worship, speaking in tongues, healing, church leadership structure, etc.