

Biblical Christianity

Key Person, Date, and Location

Jesus Christ. Founded about A.D. 30-33, in the Judean province of Palestine (Israel today), under the Roman Empire.

Authoritative 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]; being 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, 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 was killed on a cross according to God's plan, as a full sacrifice and payment for our sins. He rose from the dead three days later, 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.

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 the Son, Jesus Christ.

How to Be Saved

Saved by God's grace, not by an individual's good works. Salvation must be received by faith. People must believe in their heart 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 live with Jesus in Heaven. Those who are lost suffer the torment of eternal separation from God (Hell). Jesus' bodily resurrection guarantees believers that they, too, will receive new immortal bodies.

Other Beliefs and Practices

Group worship, usually in churches. No secret rites. Baptism and Lord's Supper (Communion). Active voluntary missionary efforts. Aid to those in need. Jesus said His followers would be known for their love for one another.

In A.D. 325, after years of battling false teaching and heresies, the Christian leaders of that day gathered together in the city of Nicaea (Turkey today) to put the truth of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection into a simple compact statement. It is called the Nicene Creed.

We believe in one God
the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and all things visible and invisible:
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God; Begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God; Begotten, not made; being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made:
Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man:
And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried:
And the third day He rose according to the Scriptures: And ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father: And He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick¹ and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.
And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son;
Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spake by the prophets:
And I believe in one catholic² and apostolic church:
I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins:
And I look for the resurrection of the dead:
And the life of the world to come.

¹ living ² means the ancient undivided Christian church of that time

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Cult Characteristics

If a religious group has one or more of these characteristics, it may be a cult.

1. A leader who claims to be divine
2. Rejection of all other churches
3. Control over members' activities and friendships
4. A special diet
5. Chants using religious phrases or words
6. Sleep deprivation
7. No privacy
8. Overpowering demonstrations of love
9. Control over finances, financial resources, or financial decisions
10. Leadership that does not tolerate honest questions

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The Abrahamic Faiths: A Comparison
How do Judaism, Christianity, and Islam differ?

	JUDAISM	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
God	One god	One god	One god
Central Prophet	<u>Moses</u>	<u>Jesus Christ</u>	<u>Muhammad</u>
Scripture	Torah, Prophets, Writings and the Talmud (oral tradition and commentary)	Bible (Old and New Testaments)	Qur'an (God's revelation to Muhammad) and Hadith (Mohammed's sayings)
War	Peace is always preferable, but war in self-defense is considered obligatory.	'Just war' can be fought as a last resort; tradition of non-violent resistance.	War should be fought only in self-defense, within strict limits.
Divisions	Modern movements include Reform, Conservative, Modern Orthodox and Reconstructionist.	Many theological divisions and schisms: Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, numerous Protestant churches.	<u>Sunni-Shiite schism</u> based on disagreement over Mohammed's successors; broad debate over Islam's role in modern society; little theological debate.
Fundamentalism	Ultra-Orthodox Jews reject the secular world and live in strict communities.	Debate over literal meaning of the Bible; efforts to bring religion into daily life.	Return to "pure" Islam; rejection of secular culture; efforts to bring religion into daily life and create an Islamic state.
Holy City	Jerusalem	Jerusalem	Mecca
Jesus	A historical figure; not the Messiah.	The Son of God.	Highly respected as the second-last prophet before Mohammed.
Hierarchy	No hierarchy; rabbis are considered teachers.	Catholics and Orthodox have <u>extensive hierarchy</u> ; some Protestant branches have almost none.	No hierarchy; prayers are led by imams (teachers) who have studied the Qur'an.
Idols & Images	Images and statues forbidden.	Images and statues allowed in some denominations, but not worshiped.	Images and statues forbidden.
Charity	Tzedakah: 10 percent of income.	Tithe: 10 percent of income.	Zakat: 2.5 percent of total wealth each year.
Proselytizing	<u>No proselytizing</u> ; Jews must turn away would-be converts three times to ensure their commitment.	Conversion considered important in most traditions; Catholic and Protestant churches have missionaries.	Da'wa: Muslims should share their knowledge of Islam without trying to convert. Only God can bring someone to Islam.
Women	Men and women are equal in the eyes of God; traditional Judaism prescribes different roles for men and women. Orthodox men and women worship separately.	Men and women worship together. Some Protestant churches ordain women as priests. <u>More...</u>	Men and women are generally treated the same in the Koran, although women are oppressed in many Muslim cultures today. Men and women worship separately.
House of Worship	Synagogue	Church	Mosque
Main Day of Worship	Saturday	Sunday	Friday
Diet	Must keep "kosher": no pork or certain seafood; other meat to be killed by kosher method; separation of meat and dairy.	No dietary restrictions.	No pork; other meat should be prepared by the halal method. No alcohol.
Life After Death	No immediate life after death; life in the "world to come" after the coming of the Messiah.	Day of Judgment, followed by Heaven or Hell.	Day of Judgment, followed by Heaven or Hell.
Mysticism	<u>Kabbalah</u>	Numerous <u>mystical traditions</u>	<u>Sufism</u>