

Compare 17 Religions and Cults with Biblical Christianity

Christianity, Cults & Religions

- Clear summary of key beliefs
- Large fold-out chart
- New, up-to-date research

Mormonism
Jehovah's Witnesses
Unification Church
Christian Science
Spiritualism
Scientology
New Age
Hinduism
Hare Krishna
T.M.
Islam
Bahá'í and more

Who is God?
Who is Jesus?
Who is the Holy Spirit?
Salvation
What Happens After Death
Founder, Date, Location
Key Writings
Other Interesting Facts

ROSE

Christianity, Cults & Religions

How to Become a Christian: The Bible says God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16) God loves you and wants a relationship with you. Here are God's promises:

- A All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, 1 John 1:10)
- B Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. (Acts 16:31, John 1:12)
- C If you Confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9, Eph. 2:8,9)

If you have come to believe in Jesus as the Son of God and your risen Savior after reading this pamphlet, please write to us at the address below and we will send you some free information about following Jesus Christ.

What Others Groups May Teach About Jesus and the Bible Response:

- Jesus was not God. (See verses D, I, U, Y)
- Jesus was created by God (See verses J, M, U)
- There are three separate gods: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not one God in three persons. (A, B, J, Z)
- Jesus is not necessary because there is no sin. (F, O, P, R)
- Jesus was not raised bodily from the dead. (C, R, S)
- Jesus was a great prophet, but not God. (H, J, V)
- There are many ways to God, not just one. (F, K, X)
- Jesus is not necessary because people must pay for their own sins. (P, Q, T)
- Jesus died for sins, but people can't be saved unless they obey all of the teachings of the church. (K, Q, T)
- Jesus is God, but less than God the Father. (H, K, V)
- Jesus was just a man. (J, E)
- Jesus is not the only son of God (F, G, Z)
- Jesus will never come again. (N, W)

A. Deut. 6:4	H. John 5:17-18	P. Rom. 6:23
Isa. 43:10	John 5:23	Q. Rom. 10:3-10
Isa. 44:6-8	L. John 8:56-58	R. 1 Cor. 15:1-8
B. Matt. 28:18-19	J. John 10:30-38	S. 1 Cor. 15:12-23
1 Peter 1:2	Isa. 7:14	T. Eph. 2:8,9
C. Luke 24:36-53	Matt. 1:18	U. Col. 1:15-20
D. John 1:1-5	K. John 14:6-7	V. Col. 2:9-10
John 1:6-18	L. John 17:2-3	W. 1 Thess. 4:13-18
E. John 2:18-22	M. John 17:5	X. 1 Tim. 2:5-6
F. John 3:14-17	N. Acts 1:11	Y. 1 Tim. 3:16
G. John 3:36	O. Rom. 3:23-30	Z. Heb. 1:1-14
	1 John 1:8-10	

Edition: 10 9 8 7 6 5
19 18 17 16 06 05 04 03

This chart is also available
as a 19 x 26 wall chart.

Special thanks to those who shared their original research or provided revision and clarification:

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Key Person or Founder Date, Location

Key Writings

Who is God?

Who is Jesus?

Who is the Holy Spirit?

How to Be Saved

What Happens After Death

Other Beliefs or Practices

Biblical Christianity

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

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

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.

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 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 and judge the world.

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.

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.

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 be resurrected and receive new immortal bodies.

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.

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Date, Location**

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or Practices**

Islam

Muhammad (570?-632). About A.D. 610, in Mecca and Medina. Headquarters in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Main sects: Sunni, Shi'ite.

Qur'an (Koran), scripture in Arabic. *Hadith* (Muhammad's words and deeds). Biblical Law of Moses, Psalms, and Gospel of Jesus (the Injil) accepted by Qur'an, but considered by Muslims to be "corrupted."

God (Allah) is one. God revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel. God is a severe judge (though sometimes merciful) and is not depicted as loving.

Jesus is one of up to 124,000 prophets sent by God to various cultures. Abraham, Moses, and Muhammad are others. Jesus was born of a virgin, but is not the Son of God. Sinless. Not divine or God Himself. He was not crucified (he ascended to heaven without dying). He is referred to as messiah and *ayatallah* (*ayatallah*, sign of God). Jesus will return in the future to live and die.

The Qur'an refers to Jesus as spirit of God. Muslim scholars see the angel Gabriel as the Holy Spirit.

Humans are basically good, but fallible and need guidance. The balance between good and bad deeds determines eternal destiny in paradise or hell. God's mercy may tip the balances but it is arbitrary and uncertain.

Resurrection of bodies. Final day of reckoning and rewards. Eternal paradise for those who believe in Islam. Eternal hell for infidels, those who reject Islam.

Followers are called Muslims. Go to mosque for prayers, sermons, counsel. Holy efforts to spread Islam (*ji had*).
Five pillars of Islam: Confess that Allah is the one true God and that Muhammad is his prophet. Pray five times daily facing Mecca. Give alms (money). Fast during the month of Ramadan. Make pilgrimage to Mecca (once in a lifetime).

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Baha'i World Faith

Mizra Ali Muhammed (the Bab) and Mizra Husayn Ali (Baha'u'llah). Founded 1844 in Iran. Headquarters in Haifa, Israel.

Writings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha: *Kitab-i-Aqdas* and *Kitab-i-Iqan*. The Bible, interpreted spiritually to conform to Bahá'í theology.

God is an unknowable divine being who has revealed himself through nine "manifestations" (religious leaders) including Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, Muhammad, and Baha'u'llah.

Jesus is one of many manifestations of God. Each manifestation supersedes the previous, giving new teachings about God. Jesus, who superseded Moses, was superseded by Muhammad, and most recently by the greatest, Baha'u'llah ("Glory of Allah"). Jesus is not God and did not rise from the dead. He is not the only way to God. Jesus has returned to earth in the form of Baha'u'llah.

Holy Spirit is divine energy from God that empowers every manifestation. "Spirit of Truth" refers to Baha'u'llah.

Faith in the manifestation of God (Baha'u'llah). Knowing and living by Baha'u'llah's principles and teachings.

Personal immortality based on good works, with rewards for the faithful. Heaven and hell are conditions, not places.

Bahá'í originated as an Islamic sect and is severely persecuted in Iran. Bahá'í teaches that all religions have the same source, principles, and aims. Stress on oneness and world unity. Regular local gatherings called "feasts" occur every 19 days. Administrative meetings (at various levels) are called "spiritual assemblies."

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New Age

Based on Eastern mystics, Hinduism, and paganism. Popularized in part by actress Shirley Maclaine, 1980s-90s. Beliefs vary.

No holy book. Use selected Bible passages; *I Ching*; Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist writings; and Native American beliefs. Writings on astrology, mysticism, and magic.

Everything and everyone is God. God is an impersonal force or principle, not a person. People have unlimited inner power and need to discover it.

Jesus is not the one true God. He is not a savior, but a spiritual model, and guru, and is now an "ascended master." He was a New Ager who tapped into divine power in the same way that anyone can. Many believe he went east to India or Tibet and learned mystical truths. He did not rise physically, but "rose" into a higher spiritual realm.

Sometimes a psychic force. Man is divine and can experience psychic phenomena such as contacting unearthly beings.

Need to offset bad karma with good karma. Can tap into supernatural power through meditation, self-awareness, TM, and "spirit guides." Use terms such as "reborn" for this new self-awareness.

Human reincarnations occur until person reaches oneness with God. No eternal life as a resurrected person. No literal heaven or hell.

Can include yoga, meditation, visualization, astrology, channeling, hypnosis, trances, tarot card readings, and contact with spirits. Use of crystals to get in harmony with God (Energy), for psychic healing, for contact with spirits, and for developing higher consciousness, or other psychic powers. Strive for world unity and peace, and holistic health.

Christian Science

Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910). Founded 1875 in Massachusetts. Current headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts.

Science and Health, With Key to the Scriptures; Miscellaneous Writings; Manual of the Mother Church; and other books by Mrs. Eddy. The Bible (not as reliable). *Christian Science Journal*, *Christian Science Sentinel*, and other writings.

According to Mrs. Eddy, God is an impersonal Principle of life, truth, love, intelligence, and spirit. God is all that truly exists; matter is an illusion.

Jesus was not the Christ, but a man who displayed the Christ idea. ("Christ" means perfection, not a person.) Jesus was not God, and God can never become man or flesh. He did not suffer and could not suffer for sins. He did not die on the cross. He was not resurrected physically. He will not literally come back.

Holy spirit is defined as the teaching of Christian Science. Impersonal power.

Humanity is already eternally saved. Sin, evil, sickness, and death are not real.

Death is not real. Heaven and hell are states of mind. The way to reach heaven is by attaining harmony (oneness with God).

Members use Christian Science practitioners instead of doctors. Healing comes from realizing one cannot be sick or hurt and that the body cannot be ill, suffer pain, or die (matter is an illusion). Attracts followers by claims of miraculous healing.

**Unity
School of Christianity**

Charles (1854-1948) and Myrtle (1845-1931) Fillmore. Founded 1889 in Kansas City, Missouri. Headquarters in Unity Village, Missouri.

Unity magazine. *Lessons in Truth*, *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary*, the Bible (not as reliable, interpreted with "hidden" meanings).

Invisible impersonal power. "God" is interchangeable with "Principle," "Law," "Being," "Mind," "Spirit." God is in everything, much as the soul is in the body. No Trinity. The spirit is reality; matter is not.

Jesus was a man and not the Christ. Instead, he was a man who had "Christ Consciousness." "Christ" is a state of perfection in every person. Jesus had lived many times before and was in search of his own salvation. Jesus did not die as a sacrifice for anyone's sins. Jesus did not rise physically and will never return to earth in physical form.

The Holy Spirit is the law of God in action, "the executive power of both Father and Son." A "definite" thought in the mind of man.

By recognizing that each person is as much a Son of God as Jesus is. There is no evil, no devil, no sin, no poverty, and no old age. A person is reincarnated until he learns these truths and becomes "perfect."

Death is a result of wrong thinking. One moves to a different body (reincarnation) until enlightenment. No literal heaven or hell.

Worship services in Unity churches. Counseling and prayer ministry ("Silent Unity") by phone and mail. It is reported that Unity receives millions of prayer requests annually. Unity devotionals, such as *Daily Word*, are used by members of other religious groups and churches. Millions of pieces of literature are printed each year.

Founder

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Spiritualism (Spiritism)

Ancient belief popularized by sisters Kate and Margaret Fox, 1848, Hydesville, New York. Many small groups, no official headquarters.

Spiritualist Manual, Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ, Oahspe, the Bible (selected portions), and others.

God is infinite intelligence. Impersonal power controlling the universe.

Jesus was a man, not God. While on earth, he was a prophet or an advanced medium (one believed to communicate with the spirit world). Jesus is now a spirit that one can communicate with in the spirit world.

The Holy Spirit is not part of this belief. However, some use the term to refer to the spirit of a holy person who once lived.

Knowledge and good works enhance one's status in the afterlife.

After life on this earthly plane, life continues in the spirit world, where one's spirit may progress from one level to another. Heaven and hell are states of mind. Some believe in reincarnation.

Séances to contact the dead. Psychic demonstrations. Church services with singing, music, sermon, spirit messages from the dead, and prophecies. May use Ouija™ boards. Often attracts grieving people who hope for contact with a deceased loved one.

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Scientology

L. Ron Hubbard (1911-1986). Founded 1954 in California. Current headquarters in Los Angeles, California.

Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health and others by Hubbard. *The Way to Happiness*.

Does not define God or Supreme Being, but rejects biblical description of God. Everyone is a "thetan," an immortal spirit with unlimited powers over its own universe, but not all are aware of this.

Jesus is rarely mentioned in Scientology. Jesus was not the Creator, and not an "operating thetan" (in control of supernatural powers, cleared from mental defects). Did not die for sins.

The Holy Spirit is not part of this belief.

No sin or need to repent. Salvation is freedom from reincarnation. One must work with an "auditor" on his "engrams" (hang-ups) to achieve the state of "clear," then progress up the "bridge to total freedom."

Hell is a myth. People who get clear of engrams become operating thetans.

Members observe birth of Hubbard and anniversary of publication of *Dianetics*. Controversy follows the group worldwide. *Time* magazine and *Reader's Digest* have published damaging exposés. Various media have reported that church leaders have had indictments and/or convictions for burglary, wiretapping, conspiracy, and other felonies.

Judaism

Abraham of the Bible, about 2000 B.C., and Moses, in the Middle East. Three main branches of Judaism, each with its own beliefs.

The Tanakh (Old Testament), and especially the Torah (first 5 books of the OT). The Talmud (explanation of the Tanakh). Teachings of each branch: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. Writings of sages, such as Maimonides.

God is spirit. To Orthodox Jews, God is personal, all-powerful, eternal, and compassionate. To other Jews, God is impersonal, unknowable, and defined in a number of ways. No Trinity.

Jesus is seen either as an extremist false messiah or a good but martyred Jewish rabbi (teacher). Many Jews do not consider Jesus at all. Jews (except Messianic Jews and Hebrew Christians) do not believe he was the Messiah, Son of God, or that he rose from the dead. Orthodox Jews believe the Messiah will restore the Jewish kingdom and eventually rule the earth.

Some believe the Holy Spirit is another name for God's activity on earth. Others say it is God's love or power.

Some Jews believe that prayer, repentance, and obeying the Law are necessary for salvation. Others believe that salvation is the improvement of society.

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

Meeting in synagogues on the Sabbath (Sabbath is Friday evening to Saturday evening). Circumcision. Many holy days and festivals, including Passover, Sukkoth, Hanukkah, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Purim. Jerusalem is considered to be the holy city.

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Hinduism

No one founder. Many sects. Began 1800-1000 B.C. in India.

Many writings, including the Vedas (oldest, about 1000 B.C.), the Upanishads, and the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

God is "The Absolute," a universal spirit. Everyone is part of God (Brahman) like drops in the sea, but most people are not aware of it. People worship manifestations of Brahman (gods and goddesses).

Jesus Christ is a teacher, a guru, or an avatar (an incarnation of Vishnu). He is a son of God as are others. His death does not atone for sins and he did not rise from the dead.

The Holy Spirit is not part of this belief.

Release from the cycles of reincarnation. Achieved through yoga and meditation. Can take many lifetimes. Final salvation is absorption or union with Brahman.

Reincarnation into a better status (good karma) if person has behaved well. If one has been bad, he can be reborn and pay for past sins (bad karma) by suffering.

Some disciples wear orange robes, and have shaved heads. Many Hindus worship stone and wooden idols in temples. Gurus demand complete obedience. Disciples meditate on a word, phrase, or picture. Yoga involves meditation, chanting, postures, breathing exercises. Foundation of New Age and Transcendental Meditation.

Buddhism

Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama). Founded about 525 B.C. in India. Offshoot of Hinduism.

The Tripitaka (Three Baskets), which has more than 100 volumes.

Buddhism is mostly atheistic. Many Buddhists do not believe in a God or Supreme Being of any kind.

Others speak of the Buddha as a universal enlightened consciousness or as a god.

Jesus Christ is not part of this belief. Buddhists in the West generally view Jesus as an enlightened man.

The Holy Spirit is not part of this belief.

Goal of life is *nirvana*, to eliminate all desires or cravings, and in this way escape suffering. The Eightfold Path is a system to free Buddhists from desiring anything.

People do not have a soul or spirit. However, one's desires and feelings may be reincarnated into another person. No heaven or hell.

Eightfold path recommends right knowledge, intentions, speech, conduct, livelihood, right effort, mindfulness, and meditation. Some Buddhist groups talk about an eternal Buddha (life-force).

Some Buddhist offshoots include Zen, Nichiren Shoshu, and Tibetan (occultic) Buddhism.

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Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism

Nichiren Daishonin. Began A.D. 1253 in Japan. Modern: Tsunesaburo Makiguchi in 1930. Headquarters on Mt. Fuji, near Tokyo, Japan.

The *Lotus Sutra* (a *sutra* is a book claiming to give the literal words of Gautama Buddha, founder of Buddhism). *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* plus writings of Daisaku Ikeda.

The mystic law of cause and effect (karma) is the essence of reality. It is embodied in the *Lotus Sutra* and in the Japanese title of the book.

Jesus Christ is not part of this belief.

The Holy Spirit is not part of this belief.

Enlightenment, prosperity, and healing come from chanting "nam-myoho-enge-kyo," a mantra (phrase) expressing devotion to the law of karma. Fulfilling worldly desires brings enlightenment.

Repeated reincarnation until one is awakened to the Buddha nature. Then reincarnation ends. No heaven or hell.

Group chanting of a Japanese phrase (mantra) of devotion out of *The Law of the Lotus Sutra* (the law of karma). Traditional Buddhists consider this group a cult, since the object of Buddhism is *desirelessness* and the object of Nichiren Shoshu is *fully gratifying* one's desires. Followers worship a parchment, the *Gohonzon*, which contains the names of deities.

Armstrongism

Herbert W. Armstrong (1892-1986). Founded Worldwide Ch. of God (WCG) in 1934. WCG left his beliefs, but splinter groups still follow them.

New groups, often former WCG members, who still follow Armstrong's traditional teaching produce: *The Philadelphia Trumpet* magazine, *Malachi's Message*, *Key of David* TV program and others.

One infinite, eternal God. Traditional Armstrongism denies a Trinity, defining God as a "family of individuals." However, in 1995, WCG leaders officially accepted a Trinitarian concept of God and now accept biblical beliefs.

Jesus is God incarnate (in human form). Armstrong suggested that Jesus would return to earth in 1975. Groups following Armstrong's original teachings (Global, Philadelphia, and United Churches of God) say Jesus was not resurrected physically and that he is the only one who has been born again. WCG believes that Jesus was raised spiritually and physically.

Armstrongism: Holy Spirit is an impersonal force. WCG: Holy Spirit is God, the third person of the Trinity.

Salvation is by grace (the unmerited favor of God). Whereas Armstrong followers must recognize Old Testament sabbath days, feast days, and dietary prohibitions, such as no pork or shellfish, WCG has abandoned these beliefs.

Armstrongism: Resurrected believers will live on the new earth. Unsaved will face judgment.

Groups like the Philadelphia Church of God and Church of God International still hold Armstrong's views such as deity for mankind, no immortality of the soul, no literal hell, no medical treatment, and Anglo-Israelism. Since Armstrong's death, WCG, which was formerly very cultic, has undergone many changes toward more biblical views.

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Unification Church

Sun Myung Moon (born 1920). Founded "Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity" 1954 in South Korea. Current headquarters in New York City.

Divine Principle by Sun Myung Moon, considered the "Completed Testament." *Outline of the Principle, Level 4*, and the Bible. (The Bible is "not the truth itself, but a textbook teaching the truth.")

God is both positive and negative. God created the universe out of himself; the universe is God's "body." God does not know the future, is suffering, and needs man (Sun Myung Moon) to make Him happy. No Trinity.

Jesus was a perfect man, not God. He is the son of Zechariah, not born of a virgin. His mission was to unite the Jews behind him, find a perfect bride, and begin a perfect family. The mission failed. Jesus did not resurrect physically. The second coming of Christ is fulfilled in Sun Myung Moon, who is superior to Jesus and will finish Jesus' mission.

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).

After death one goes to the spirit world. There is no resurrection. Members advance by convincing others to follow Sun Myung Moon. Everyone will be saved, even Satan.

Mass marriages (recently 30,000 couples), based on different racial backgrounds, arranged and performed by Moon. Members believe that Jesus bows down to Sun Myung Moon and that Moon is the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and the Lamb of God. Contact with spirits of the dead accepted.

Hare Krishna (ISKCON)

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896-1977). Founded 1965 in New York. Based on Hindu teachings from the A.D. 1500s.

Back to Godhead magazine. Prabhupada's translations of and commentaries on Hindu scriptures, especially Bhagavad-Gita, As It Is.

God is Lord Krishna (Krsna). Krishna is a personal creator; the souls of all living things are part of him. ISKCON teaches that what Krishna does freely for his own pleasure (intoxication, sex outside of marriage) is prohibited to his devotees.

Jesus is not important. He is usually thought of as an enlightened vegetarian teacher who taught meditation. He is not an incarnation of God. Some Krishna devotees consider Jesus to be Krishna. Others say he is a great avatar (teacher).

The Holy Spirit is not part of this belief.

Chanting Krishna's name constantly, total devotion to Krishna, worshipping images, and obeying the rules of ISKCON throughout many reincarnated lives, releases a follower from bad karma.

Those who are unenlightened continue in endless reincarnation (rebirth on earth) based on the sinful acts of a person's previous life.

Public chanting of Hare Krishna mantra, yoga, food offerings, soliciting donations. Vegetarian diet. No intoxicants, no gambling. Sex for procreation only. ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) attracts new members through feasts and Indian cultural programs. Followers are given new names, and often cut family ties.

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Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Founded 1959 in California, based on Hinduism and yoga. Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Hindu scriptures, including the Bhagavad-Gita. Meditations of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Science of Being and the Art of Living, other writings by the founder.

Each part of creation makes up "God" (Brahman). Supreme Being is not personal. All creation is divine; "all is one."

Jesus is not uniquely God. Like all persons, Jesus had a divine essence. Unlike most, he discovered it. Christ didn't suffer and couldn't suffer for people's sins.

The Holy Spirit is not part of this belief.

Humans have forgotten their inner divinity. Salvation consists of doing good in excess of evil in order to evolve to the highest state (final union of the self with Brahman) through reincarnation.

Reincarnation based on karma (reaping the consequences of one's actions) until loss of self into union with Brahman. No heaven or hell.

Mentally recite a mantra (word associated with a Hindu god). Meditate twice a day to relax and achieve union with Brahman. Maharishi University in Iowa offers advanced T.M. programs in "levitation" and "invisibility." Practices include yoga, Hindu astrology, use of crystals, and idol worship (offerings of flowers, fruit, and cloth for Maharishi's dead teacher, Guru Dev).

Mormonism (Latter-day Saints)

Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805-1844), founded the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints in 1830 in New York. Headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The Book of Mormon; Doctrine and Covenants; Pearl of Great Price; the Bible (King James Version only or Smith's "Inspired Version"); authoritative teachings of Mormon prophets and other LDS "general authorities."

God the Father was once a man, but "progressed" to godhood. He has a physical body, as does his wife (Heavenly Mother). No Trinity. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three separate gods. Worthy men may one day become gods themselves.

Jesus is a separate god from the Father (Elohim). He was created as a spirit child by the Father and Mother in Heaven, and is the "elder brother" of all men and spirit beings. His body was created through sexual union between Elohim and Mary. Jesus was married. His death on the cross does not provide full atonement for all sin, but does provide everyone with resurrection.

The "holy spirit" is different from the "Holy Ghost." The "holy spirit" is not God, but is an influence or electricity-like emanation from God (also called the "light of Christ").

Resurrected by grace, but saved (exalted to godhood) by works, including faithfulness to church leaders, Mormon baptism, tithing, ordination, marriage, and secret temple rituals. No eternal life without Mormon membership.

Eventually nearly everyone goes to one of three separate heavenly "kingdoms," with some achieving godhood. Apostates and murderers go to "outer darkness."

No alcohol, tobacco, coffee, or tea. Baptism on behalf of the dead. Two-year missionary commitment encouraged. Door-to-door proselytizing. Secret temple rituals available only to members in good standing. Extensive social network. People of African ancestry not granted full access to Mormon priesthood and privileges until 1978.

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Jehovah's Witnesses (Watchtower Bible & Tract Society)

Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916), later Joseph F. Rutherford. Began 1879 in Pennsylvania. Headquarters in Brooklyn, New York.

All current Watchtower publications, including the Bible (New World Translation only), Reasoning from the Scriptures, You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth. Watchtower and Awake! magazines.

One-person God, called Jehovah. No Trinity. Jesus is the first thing Jehovah created.

Jesus is not God. Before he lived on earth, he was Michael, the archangel. Jehovah made the universe through him. On earth he was a man who lived a perfect life. After dying on a stake (not a cross), he was resurrected as a spirit; his body was destroyed. Jesus is not coming again; he "returned" invisibly in 1914 in spirit. Very soon, he and the angels will destroy all non-Jehovah's Witnesses.

Impersonal "holy spirit" is not God, but rather an invisible, active force from Jehovah.

Be baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses. Most followers must earn everlasting life on earth by "door-to-door work." Salvation in heaven is limited to 144,000 "anointed ones." This number is already reached.

The 144,000 live as spirits in heaven. The rest of the righteous, "the great crowd," live on earth, and must obey God perfectly for 1000 years or be annihilated.

Known as the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. Meet on Sundays in "Kingdom Halls." Active members encouraged to distribute literature door-to-door. Once a year, Lord's Evening Meal; only "anointed" ones may partake. Do not observe holidays or birthdays. Do not vote, salute the flag, work in the military, or accept blood transfusions. Believe Armageddon will occur soon.