

THE KNOW SERIES

Who, What, When, Where, Why, How of the Christian Experience

LESSON # 17

What About Other Religions?



OBJECTIVE: People often say things like ‘all religions are alike’ or ‘all roads lead to God.’ It really doesn’t make sense that contrary viewpoints about God, creation, and salvation can all be true when they are opposed to each other. Jesus claimed He exclusively was the Way to the Father. We’ll examine other religions and practices to understand them and then to compare them to Biblical Christianity.

We’ve already seen that Jesus claimed to be and is the only way to God. Yet there are many other religions and cults.

There are four basic tests to compare other religions to Christianity. They are:

- 1) What does the group do with Jesus?
- 2) How is a person saved? In Christianity it is by grace, believing Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead. You’ll see the other cults and religions trust in works.
- 3) What does the group do with the resurrection of Jesus?
- 4) How do they view the Bible?

Review together Biblical Christianity and then find a few groups that interest you and take a comparative look at what they believe about Jesus, the Bible and salvation. Read about them aloud, talk about them and discover together the differences...



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Biblical Christianity

Key Person Or Founder, Date, Location	Jesus Christ. Founded about A.D. 30-33, in the Judean province of Palestine (Israel today), under the Roman Empire.
Key Writings	The Bible, written originally in Hebrew and Aramaic (Old Testament), and Greek (New Testament).
Who Is God?	God is triune (one God in the form of 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 full sacrifice and payment for our sins. He rose from the dead on the third day, spiritually <i>and</i> 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 into 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 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 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.



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<i>What Happens After Death</i>	Believers go to be with Jesus. After death, all people await the final judgement. 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 (they go to Hell). Jesus' bodily resurrection guarantees believers that they, too, will be resurrected and receive new immortal bodies.
<i>Other Beliefs Or Practices</i>	Group worship, usually in churches. No secret rites. Baptism and the 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.

Information was taken from *Christianity, Cults & Religions* by Rose Publishing, 4455 Torrance Blvd. Suite 259, Torrance, CA, 90503.



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Scientology

Key Person Or Founder, Date, Location	L. Ron Hubbard (1911-1986). Founded 1954 in California. Current headquarters in Los Angeles, California
Key Writings	<i>Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health</i> and others by Hubbard. <i>The Way to Happiness</i> .
Who Is God?	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.
Who Is Jesus?	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.
Who Is The Holy Spirit?	The Holy Spirit is not a part of this belief.
How To Be Saved	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."
What Happens After Death	Hell is a myth. People who get clear of engrams become operating thetans.
Other Beliefs Or Practices	Members observe birth of Hubbard and anniversary of publication of <i>Dianetics</i> . Controversy follows the group world-wide. <i>Time</i> magazine and <i>Reader's Digest</i> have published damaging expose. Various media have reported that church leaders have had indictments and/or convictions for burglary, wiretapping, conspiracy, and other felonies.



THE KNOW SERIES

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New Age

Key Person Or Founder, Date, Location	Based on eastern mystics, Hinduism, and paganism. Popularized in part by actress Shirley MacLaine, 1980s-90s. Beliefs vary.
Key Writings	No holy book. Use selected Bible passages; <i>I Ching</i> ; Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist writings; and Native American beliefs. Writings on astrology, mysticism, and magic.
Who Is God?	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.
Who Is Jesus?	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.
Who Is The Holy Spirit?	Sometimes a psychic force. Man is divine and can experience psychic phenomena such as contacting unearthly beings.
How To Be Saved	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.
What Happens After Death	Human reincarnations occur until person reaches oneness with God. No eternal life as a resurrected person. No literal heaven or hell.
Other Beliefs Or Practices	Can include yoga, meditation, visualization, astrology, channelling, 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.



THE KNOW SERIES

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Judaism

key Person Or Founder, Date, Location	Abraham of the Bible, about 2000 B.C., in the Middle East. Three main branches of Judaism, each with its own beliefs.
Key Writings	The Tanakh (Old Testament), and especially the Torah (first five books of the OT). The Talmud (explanation of the Tanakh). Teachings of each branch: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. Writings of sages, such as Maimonides.
Who Is God?	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.
Who Is Jesus?	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.
Who Is The Holy Spirit?	Some believe the Holy Spirit is another name for God's activity on earth. Others say it is God's love or power.
How To Be Saved	Some jews believe that prayer, repentance, and obeying the Law are necessary for salvation. Others believe that salvation is the improvement of society.
What Happens After Death	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.
Other Beliefs Or Practices	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, and Purim. Jerusalem is considered to be the holy city.



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Hinduism

Key Person Or Founder, Date, Location	No one founder. Many sects. Began 1800-1000 B.C. in India.
Key Writings	Many writings, including the Vedas (oldest, about 1000 B.C.), the Upanshads, and the <i>Bhagavad-Gita</i> .
Who Is God?	God is "The Absolute," a universal spirit. Everyone is part of God (Brahman) like drops in the sea. People worship manifestations of Brahman (gods and goddesses). People are God, but are unaware of it.
Who Is Jesus?	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.
Who Is The Holy Spirit?	The Holy Spirit is not a part of this belief.
How To Be Saved	Release from the cycles of reincarnation. Achieved through yoga and meditation. Can take many lifetimes. Final salvation is absorption or union with Brahman.
What Happens After Death	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.
Other Beliefs Or Practices	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.



THE KNOW SERIES

Who, What, When, Where, Why, How of the Christian Experience

Buddhism

<i>Key Person Or Founder, Date, Location</i>	Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama). Founded about 525 B.C. in India. Offshoot of Hinduism.
<i>Key Writings</i>	The Tripitaka (three baskets), which has more than 100 volumes.
<i>Who Is God?</i>	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.
<i>Who Is Jesus?</i>	Jesus Christ is not a part of this belief. Buddhists in the West generally view Jesus as an enlightened man.
<i>Who Is The Holy Spirit?</i>	The Holy Spirit is not a part of this belief.
<i>How To Be Saved</i>	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.
<i>What Happens After Death</i>	People do not have a soul or spirit. However, one's desires and feelings may be reincarnated into another person. No heaven or hell.
<i>Other Beliefs Or Practices</i>	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.



THE KNOW SERIES

Who, What, When, Where, Why, How of the Christian Experience

Islam

Key Person Or Founder, Date, Location	Mohammed (570-632). About A.D. 610, in Mecca and Medina. Headquarters in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Main sects: Sunni and Shiite.
Key Writings	Qur'an (Koran), scripture in Arabic. <i>Hadith</i> (Mohammed'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."
Who Is God?	God (Allah) is one. God revealed the Qur'an to Mohammed through the angel Gabriel. God is a severe judge (though sometimes merciful) and is not depicted as loving.
Who Is Jesus?	Jesus is one of up to 124,000 prophets sent by God to various cultures. Abraham, Moses, and Mohammed 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 ayatollah (sign of God). Jesus will return in the future to live and die.
Who Is The Holy Spirit?	The Qur'an refers to Jesus as the spirit of God. Muslim scholars see the angel Gabriel as the Holy Spirit.
How To Be Saved	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.
What Happens After Death	Resurrection of bodies. Final day of reckoning and rewards. Eternal paradise for those who believe in Islam. Eternal hell for those who reject Islam.
Other Beliefs Or Practices	Followers are called Muslims. Go to mosque for prayers, sermons, counsel. Holy efforts to spread Islam (jihad). Five pillars of Islam: Confess that Allah is the one true God and that Mohammed 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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by Matt Slick This chart is a simplification of various groups and their beliefs. It is, to be realistic, an oversimplification. But it gives the reader an idea of where the groups stand.

Group Name	Founder	The Gospel	The Church	God	Jesus	Salvation	Jesus Resurrection	Scripture and writings associated with group
Christianity (The Truth to compare against)	Jesus Christ	That Jesus saves from sin	Those who are saved	Trinity: 3 Persons in one God	God in flesh	by Grace	Jesus rose in the same body he died in.	The Bible alone
Christadelphianism	John Thomas (1805-1871) founded 1848	Faith in Christ and baptism	Members of their church	One God as one person	Created being. A man with a sin nature	Baptism is required	Yes	The Bible is inspired. Elpis Israel, Eureka written by founder.
Christian Science	Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910)	Religious beliefs of Jesus' teachings, not	A collection of spiritual	Impersonal Universal	A man in tune with the Divine Conscious	Correct thinking	No	Bible, Science and Health with Key to the Scripture



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		the atonement.	al ideas	Presenc e	ness, not the Christ.			s, Miscellany
Islam	Muham mad	Faith in Allah and works	n/a	One God: Allah. Non Trinitarian	Created being. A prophet. Not God.	by Allah's grace and man's works	No.	Qur'an, Hadith
Jehovah's Witnesses	Charles T. Russell (1852-1916) founded 1879	Jesus opened the door for us to earn our salvation	Members of their church	One Person	Created being. Michael the archangel who became a man	Keeping the commandments, being in their Organization	No	Bible, Studies in the Scriptures, presently the Watchtower and Awake Magazines
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day saints (Mormons)	Joseph Smith (1805-1844) founded 1830	Jesus' atonement plus the Laws and ordinances of the gospel	Members of their church	Triad - 3 gods.	Created being. The brother of the devil and of all people	Resurrected by grace, saved by doing works.	Yes	The Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price



THE KNOW SERIES

Who, What, When, Where, Why, How of the Christian Experience

Oneness Pentecostal	N/A	Faith in Christ and baptism	Members of their church	One Person modalism	God in flesh	By faith and baptism "in Jesus' name" in their church	Yes	The Bible
Theosophy	Madame Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891) founded 1875	n/a	n/a	God is a principle	Created being. A great teacher	*	No	The Secret Doctrine, Isis Unveiled, The Key to Theosophy, and The Voice of the Silence
Unity	Charles Fillmore (1854-1948) founded 1889	The overall principles of Unity	A collection of spiritual ideas	Impersonal Universal Power	Created being. A man, not the Christ	Adopting the correct Unity thought principles	No	Bible, Unity Magazine, Metaphysical Bible Dictionary.



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THE KNOW SERIES

Who, What, When, Where, Why, How of the Christian Experience

Way Internati onal	Victor Paul Weirwel l (1917- 1985)	Earned	Memb ers of their church	One Person	Created being. A man, not God in flesh	By works	Yes	Bible, Jesus Christ is Not God, Power for Abundan t Living
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