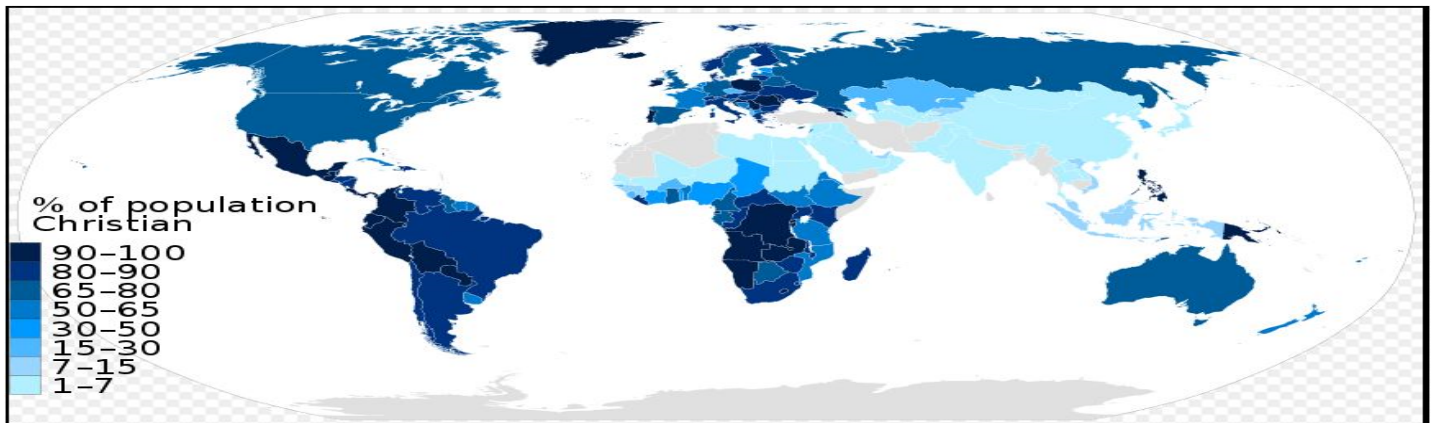


# Christianity



**Origin/Founder:** Jesus of Nazareth, also referred to as Jesus Christ, and his disciples established a ministry in Jerusalem, which was then located in the Roman province of Judea. Jesus' ministry recognized him as the Messiah that was promised by the God of Abraham.

**History:** The church's growth after Jesus Christ is due to Paul the Apostle, a missionary whose teaching centered on understanding the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as a central turning point in history. Paul established Christian churches throughout the Roman Empire, including Europe, and even into Africa. However, the Church struggled with persecution for many years, including periods where Roman emperors made it against the law to be a Christian. When a Roman soldier, Constantine, became the Roman emperor, he attributed his success in battle to the Christian God and immediately proclaimed his conversion to Christianity, which became the official religion of the Roman Empire.



**Symbols:** Christians believe in the Trinity - that is, in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Some confuse this and think that Christians believe in three separate gods, which they don't. Christians believe that God took human form as Jesus Christ and that God is present today through the work of the Holy Spirit and evident in the actions of believers. Symbols of Christianity, especially the Cross, represent the relationship between these three forms.

**Tenets:** The history of Christianity is focused on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is considered to be the son of God. His birth in a stable in Bethlehem is believed by Christians to be the fulfillment of prophecies in the Jewish Old Testament, which claimed that a Messiah would deliver the Jewish people from captivity. After



Jesus began his ministry at age 30, he stated publicly that he spoke with the authority of God. This claim angered the religious authorities in Palestine and they handed Jesus over to the Roman authorities as a revolutionary. He was tried for heresy, condemned and put to death by means of crucifixion. It is believed that he was resurrected three days after death, after which he ascended into heaven.

There are three main branches of Christianity, all of which focus on Jesus Christ's life and teachings. Roman Catholicism is practiced by Catholics who live west of Vatican City under the authority of the Pope. Eastern Orthodoxy is practiced by Catholics who live east of Vatican City, but they reject the authority of the Pope and the Bishopric. Protestantism encompasses all Christian groups that splintered off from Catholicism after the Reformation.

**Deity:** Christianity is the world's largest monotheistic religion, and it was originally a minor branch of Judaism. Like Judaism, they also believe in the God of Abraham. He is also referred to as God the Creator and God of Holy Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit).

**Afterlife:** Christians believe in an afterlife which revolves around concepts of a Heaven and a Hell. For most groups, the way you have lived your life (i.e. following the Ten Commandments, etc.) determines where you will spend the afterlife. Additionally, many groups believe in an additional state of Purgatory, where souls temporarily wait to be accepted into Heaven.



**Scriptures:** The Bible is a collection of books written by many authors. The Old Testament is the equivalent of the Jewish Torah, in that it chronicles the early history of the faith. The story of Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection is told in the writings of his apostles in the New Testament of the Bible.

**Practices:** While specific practices will vary by the different branches of Christianity, usually a minister/priest will lead services in a church on Sundays. During the service, readings from Scripture and prayers will be said aloud followed by a sermon which usually revolves around the chosen readings. Depending on the branch, Communion may be offered during the service. In addition to weekly church attendance, many Christians complete prayer rituals- in Catholicism, the Rosary can be prayed daily, while in Protestant sects, Bible Study can be conducted at home. For most of the Christian faiths, baptism welcomes you into Christianity in youth, while you complete a Confirmation ceremony in adulthood.

