**Christianity** (from the [Ancient Greek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_language) word Χριστός, [*Christos*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ), a translation of the [Hebrew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language) מָשִׁיחַ, [*Māšîăḥ*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messiah), meaning "the [anointed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anointing) one",[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-name-1) together with the [Latin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Late_Latin) suffixes *-ian* and *-itas*) is a [monotheistic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monotheism)[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-Monotheism-3) [religion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion) based on the life and [oral teachings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral_gospel_tradition) of [Jesus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus) as presented in the [New Testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament). Christianity is the [world's largest religion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major_religious_groups#World_Religion_Database), with approximately 2.2 billion adherents, known as [Christians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christians). Most Christians believe that Jesus is the [Son of God](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Son_of_God), [fully divine and fully human](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypostatic_union), and the [saviour of humanity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvation_%28Christianity%29) whose coming was prophesied in the [Old Testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Testament). Consequently, Christians refer to Jesus as "[Christ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ)" or the [Messiah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messiah).

The foundations of [Christian theology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_theology) are expressed in [professions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Profession_%28religious%29) of faith that Jesus suffered, died, was buried, and was [resurrected](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection_of_Jesus) from the dead in order to grant eternal life to those who believe in him and trust in him for the [remission](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forgiveness#Christianity) of their [sins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_views_on_sin). The creeds further maintain that Jesus bodily [ascended](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ascension_of_Jesus) into heaven, where he reigns with [God the Father](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_the_Father). Most [Christian denominations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_denomination) teach that Jesus will [return](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Coming) to [judge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_Judgment) everybody, living and dead, and to grant [eternal life](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternal_life_%28Christianity%29) to his followers. He is considered the [model](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Role_model) of a [virtuous](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtue) life. His [ministry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Jesus), [crucifixion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion_of_Jesus), and resurrection are often referred to as the "[gospel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel)", meaning "[good news](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_News_%28Christianity%29)" The term *gospel* also refers to written accounts of Jesus' life and teaching, four of which—the Gospels of [Matthew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Matthew), [Mark](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mark), [Luke](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Luke) and [John](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_John)—are included in [Christian Bibles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Bible).

Following the [Age of Discovery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Discovery), Christianity spread to the [Americas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Americas), [Australasia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australasia), [sub-Saharan Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sub-Saharan_Africa), and the rest of the world through [missionary work](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_mission) and colonization. Christianity has played a prominent role in the shaping of [Western civilization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_civilization).

Worldwide, the three largest groups of Christianity are the [Catholic Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church), the [Eastern Orthodox Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox_Church), and the various denominations of [Protestantism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestantism). Protestantism came into existence during the [Reformation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_Reformation) of the 16th century, splitting from the Roman Catholic Church

**Beliefs**[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bloch-SermonOnTheMount.jpg)

The [Sermon on the Mount](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sermon_on_the_Mount) by [Carl Heinrich Bloch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Heinrich_Bloch), Danish painter, d. 1890.

Christians share a certain set of beliefs that they hold as essential to their faith, though there are many important differences of interpretation and opinion of the Bible on which Christianity is based.

* belief in [God the Father](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_the_Father),
* [Jesus Christ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Christ) as the [Son of God](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Son_of_God) and
* the [Holy Spirit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Spirit_%28Christianity%29)
* the [death](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion_of_Jesus), [descent into hell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harrowing_of_Hell), [resurrection](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection_of_Jesus), and [ascension](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ascension_of_Jesus) of Christ
* the holiness of the [Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesia_%28church%29) and the [communion of saints](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communion_of_saints)
* Christ's [second coming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_coming), the [Day of Judgement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day_of_Judgement) and [salvation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvation) of the faithful.

**Ten Commandments**

The [Ten Commandments](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Commandments) are a set of [biblical](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical) principles relating to [ethics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics) and [worship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worship) which play a fundamental role in [Judaism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism) and most forms of Christianity. They include instructions to worship only [God](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_in_Abrahamic_religions) and to keep the [Sabbath](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_Sabbath), and prohibitions against [idolatry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idolatry_in_Christianity), [blasphemy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ%27s_sakes), [murder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/You_shall_not_murder), [theft](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/You_shall_not_steal), and [adultery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adultery)., Christ generalised the law into two underlying principles: The first is -You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."[[Matthew 22:34-40]](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22%3A34-40&version=ESV)[[Mark 12:28-33]](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+12%3A28-33&version=ESV)

Christians generally believe that Jesus is [God incarnate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incarnation_%28Christianity%29) and "[true God and true man](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypostatic_union)". Jesus, having become [fully human](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incarnation_%28Christianity%29), suffered the pains and temptations of a mortal man, but did not [sin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_views_on_sin). According to the canonical gospels of [Matthew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Matthew) and [Luke](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Luke), Jesus was [conceived](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incarnation_%28Christianity%29) by the [Holy Spirit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Spirit) and [born](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nativity_of_Jesus) from [the Virgin Mary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_%28mother_of_Jesus%29).

**Death and resurrection**

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cristo_crucificado.jpg)

[http://bits.wikimedia.org/static-1.23wmf13/skins/common/images/magnify-clip.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cristo_crucificado.jpg)

[*Crucifixion*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ_Crucified_%28Vel%C3%A1zquez%29), representing the death of [Jesus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus) on the [Cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Cross), painting by [D. Velázquez](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diego_Vel%C3%A1zquez), 17th century

According to the New Testament Jesus was [crucified](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion), died a physical death, was buried within a tomb, and rose from the dead three days later.[[Jn. 19:30–31]](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jn.+19%3A30%E2%80%9331&version=ESV) [[Mk. 16:1]](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mk.+16%3A1&version=ESV) [[16:6]](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+16%3A6&version=ESV)

The death and resurrection of Jesus are usually considered the most important events in [Christian theology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_theology), partly because they demonstrate that Jesus has power over life and death and therefore has the authority and power to give people [eternal life](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternal_life_%28Christianity%29).

**Salvation** .Modern Christian churches tend to be concerned with how humanity can be [saved](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternal_salvation) from a universal condition of sin and death. Reformed theology places distinctive emphasis on grace by teaching that individuals are [completely incapable of self-redemption](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total_depravity), but that [sanctifying grace is irresistible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irresistible_grace). In contrast Catholics, Orthodox Christians and [Arminian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arminianism) Protestants believe that the exercise of [free will](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_will) is necessary to have faith in Jesus.[[56]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-57)

**Trinity**

The [Trinity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity) is the belief that [God](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_in_Christianity) is one God in three persons: [God the Father](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_the_Father), [God the Son](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_the_Son) ([Jesus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus)), and [God the Holy Spirit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_the_Holy_Spirit)

In the words of the [Athanasian Creed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasian_Creed), an early statement of Christian belief, "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God".[[61]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-62) They are distinct from another: the Father has no source, the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father. Though distinct, the three persons cannot be divided from one another in being or in operation.

The [Trinity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity) is an essential doctrine of mainstream Christianity. "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" represents both the [immanence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immanence) and [transcendence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcendence_%28religion%29) of God. God is believed to be infinite and God's presence may be perceived through the actions of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.[[63]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-64)

**Scriptures**

Christianity regards the [biblical canon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_canon), the [Old Testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Testament) and the [New Testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament), as the [inspired](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_inspiration) word of God. The traditional view of inspiration is that God worked through human authors so that what they produced was what God wished to communicate.

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gutenberg_Bible,_Lenox_Copy,_New_York_Public_Library,_2009._Pic_01.jpg)

[http://bits.wikimedia.org/static-1.23wmf13/skins/common/images/magnify-clip.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gutenberg_Bible,_Lenox_Copy,_New_York_Public_Library,_2009._Pic_01.jpg)

The [Gutenberg Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gutenberg_Bible), the first printed Bible

Regarding [exegesis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exegesis), following the rules of sound interpretation, Catholic theology holds:

* the injunction that all other senses of sacred scripture are based on the *literal*[[86]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-87)[[87]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-88)
* that the historicity of the Gospels must be absolutely and constantly held[[88]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-89)
* that scripture must be read within the "living Tradition of the whole Church"[[89]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-90) and
* that "the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the [Bishop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop) of [Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocese_of_Rome)".[[90]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-91)

**Protestant interpretation**

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Martin_Luther_by_Cranach-restoration.tif)

[http://bits.wikimedia.org/static-1.23wmf13/skins/common/images/magnify-clip.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Martin_Luther_by_Cranach-restoration.tif)

[Protestants](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestants) believe in [Martin Luther](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther)'s basic beliefs against the Catholic Church: [Sola scriptura](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sola_scriptura) (by Scripture alone), [Sola fide](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sola_fide) (by faith alone), [Sola gratia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sola_gratia) (by grace alone), [Solus Christus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solus_Christus) (through Christ alone),

and [Soli Deo gloria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soli_Deo_gloria) (glory to God alone)

Clarity of Scripture

Protestant Christians believe that the Bible is a self-sufficient revelation, the final authority on all Christian doctrine, and [revealed all truth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revelation) necessary for salvation.

Priests were not essential.

The end of things, whether the end of an individual life, the end of the age, or the end of the world, broadly speaking is Christian eschatology; the study of the destiny of humans as it is revealed in the Bible. The major issues in Christian eschatology are the [Tribulation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Tribulation), death and the afterlife, the [Rapture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rapture), the [Second Coming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Coming) of Jesus, [Resurrection of the Dead](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection_of_the_Dead), Heaven and Hell, [Millennialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennialism), the [Last Judgment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_Judgment), the end of the world, and the [New Heavens and New Earth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Heavens_and_New_Earth).

Christians believe that the second coming of Christ will occur at the [end of time](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eschatology) after a period of severe persecution (the Great Tribulation). All who have died will be [resurrected bodily from the dead](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection_of_the_dead) for the Last Judgment.

**Death and afterlife**

Most Christians believe that human beings experience divine judgment and are rewarded either with eternal life or [eternal damnation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hell). This includes the [general judgement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_Judgment) at the [resurrection of the dead](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection_of_the_dead) as well as the belief (held by Roman Catholics,[[104]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-CEParticularJudgement-105)[[105]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-Ott-106) Orthodox[[106]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-107)[[107]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-108) and most Protestants) in a [judgment particular to the individual soul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Particular_judgment) upon physical death.

In Roman Catholicism, those who die in a state of grace, i.e., without any mortal sin separating them from God, but are still imperfectly purified from the effects of sin, undergo purification through the intermediate state of [purgatory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purgatory) to achieve the holiness necessary for entrance into God's presence.[[108]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-109) Those who have attained this goal are called *saints* (Latin *sanctus*, "holy").[[109]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-110)

**Symbols**

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Nideggen-St.Johannes_Baptist249.JPG)

The [cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_cross) and the fish are two common symbols of [Jesus Christ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Christ).

.The [cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_cross), which is today one of the most widely recognised symbols in the world, was used as a Christian symbol from the earliest times. Among the symbols employed by the primitive Christians, that of the fish or [Ichthys](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ichthys) seems to have ranked first in importance. From monumental sources such as tombs it is known that the symbolic fish was familiar to Christians from the earliest times. Its popularity among Christians was due principally, it would seem, to the famous acrostic consisting of the initial letters of five Greek words forming the word for fish (Ichthys), which words briefly but clearly described the character of Christ and the claim to worship of believers: *Iesous Christos Theou Yios Soter* (Ίησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός, Σωτήρ), meaning, *Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour*.[[118]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity#cite_note-cefish-119)

Other major Christian symbols include the [dove](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dove) (symbolic of the Holy Spirit), the sacrificial lamb (symbolic of Christ's sacrifice), the [vine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vine) (symbolising the necessary connectedness of the Christian with Christ)

**Baptism**

[Baptism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptism) is the ritual act, with the use of water, by which a person is admitted to membership of the [Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Church). Some simply acknowledge it as a purely symbolic act, an external public declaration of the inward change which has taken place in the person. Others see it as an essential link between person and God.