

# How Different Religions View Death & Afterlife

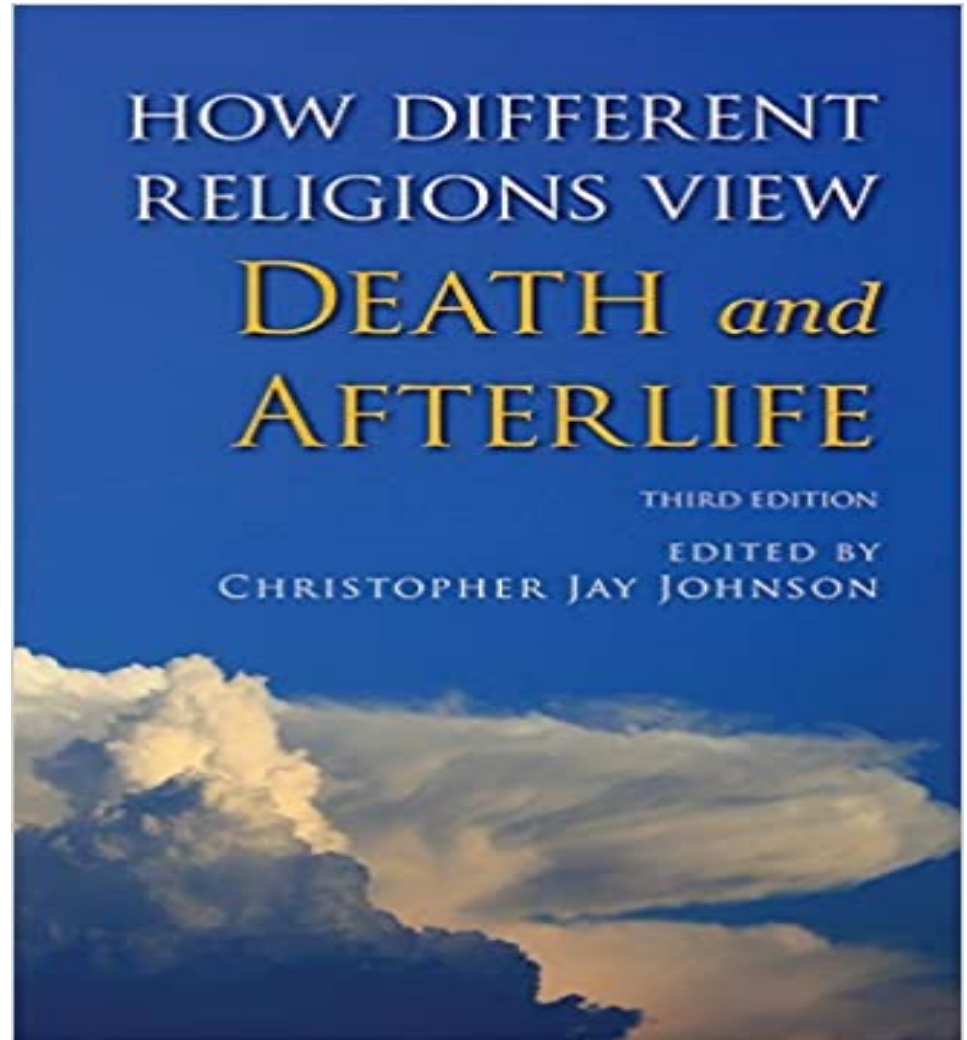
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# Religions Covered

- Assemblies of God
- Baha'i Faith
- Baptist (Southern)
- Buddhism
- Christian Science
- Churches of Christ
- LDS
- Eastern Orthodox Church
- Episcopalian
- Hindu
- Islam
- Jehovah Witnesses
- Judaism
- Lutherans
- Presbyterians
- Quakers
- Catholic
- Seventh Day Adventists
- Unitarian Universalism
- Unity
- Zoroastrian

# Hinduism: Prophet Krishna

- Even though our bodies age and die, we, the spirit souls within the bodies, do not die. Death is simply the soul leaving one body and going on to another spiritual body in the afterlife. Krishna is believed to be a son of God. He was divinely conceived and born in a prison cell. He was a child prodigy and sinless. He was a cow herder who appeared at a critical time when His country was in a torpid state.
- MYTH OF POLYTHEISM: Hindus worship one Supreme God called Brahman though by different names. This is because the peoples of India with many different languages and cultures have understood the one God in their own distinct way.
- Supreme God has uncountable divine powers. When God is formless, He is referred to by the term Brahman. When God has form, He is referred to by the term **Paramatma**. This is almighty God, whose three main forms are Brahma; the creator, Vishnu, the sustainer and Shiva, the destroyer.
- Lord Krishna was shot by an arrow & later resurrected to His believers—although stories vary.
- Krishna said: “Whenever and wherever there is a decline in virtue/religious practice, O Arjuna, and a predominant rise of irreligion—at that time I descend Myself, i.e. I manifest Myself as an embodied being.”

# Good, Evil and the Afterlife

- Krishna said: “in this world there are two kinds of created beings. One is called the divine and the other demoniac. I have already explained to you at length the divine qualities. Now hear from Me of the demoniac.” “Pride, arrogance, conceit, anger, harshness and ignorance—these qualities belong to those of demoniac nature.” (Bhagwat Gita (BG): 16:4); “Those who are demoniac do not know what is to be done and what is not to be done. Neither cleanliness nor proper behavior nor truth is found in them.” (BG:16:7); “They say that this world is unreal, with no foundation, no God in control. They say it is produced of sex desire and has no cause other than lust.” (BG:16: 8); “Following such conclusions, the demoniac, who are lost to themselves and who have no intelligence, engage in unbeneficial, horrible works meant to destroy the world.” (BG:16:9);
- “Taking shelter of insatiable lust and absorbed in the conceit of pride and false prestige, the demoniac, thus disillusioned, are always sworn to unclean work, attracted by the impermanent.” (BG:16:10); “They believe that to gratify the senses is the prime necessity of human civilization. Thus, until the end of life their anxiety is immeasurable. Bound by a network of hundreds of thousands of desires and absorbed in lust and anger, they secure money by illegal means for sense gratification.” (BG:16: 11-12)

# Vedic Literature & Death

According to the Vedic literature, the psychophysical entity with which we now identify ourselves is not our true self. Body & mind are but coverings of the self. We must suffer or enjoy results of our own past actions, this Karma is a real incentive. Krishna says, "The soul is never born nor dies at any time. Soul has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. Soul is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval. Soul is not slain when the body is slain." BG:2:22. This real self-survives the death of the body & lives on. Krishna spoke as God in saying: "I am the origin of everything, and everything arises out of Me..."



## Death & the Self

# Buddhism: Prophet Buddha

5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.

- Queen Māyā (Mary) & King Suddhodhana didn't have children for 20 years. One day Mary dreamt of a divine enlightened Being on white elephant touching her side & she became pregnant with baby Gautama Buddha. She died 7 days after delivery. He was born standing up, taking 7 steps. Her sister then helped care for Buddha.
- BUDDHA WITNESSED THE SINS OF HUMANKIND:  
At age 35, after His father shielded Him from seeing the evil in the world, God showed Him a vision of this side of the human condition.
- Later, He became aware of His Divine mission after receiving Enlightenment after meditating all night under a pipal tree

# BUDDHA' 8-Fold Path to Salvation

- Although not a universal belief of Buddhists, Buddha was a divine Being who performed miracles, healed the sick, fed 500 men from a "small basket of cakes" & walked on the water. Sound familiar?

## **8-Fold Path to salvation:**

- The steps of the Noble Eightfold Path are Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.



# Buddhism & Modern Psychology

- **Death is definite.**
  - Death comes & we will not be able to escape it. Life diminishes uninterruptedly; we cannot augment it. A normal life leaves little time for religious practice—one is too young, too busy with family or too old.
- **Death's coming is unpredictable.**
  - Life is short. Moreover, the young & healthy may die before the old & infirm.
- There are many causes of life, few of death & the former can turn into the latter. The body is weak & susceptible.
- **Only religious practice is of help at death.**
  - Wealth is of no help;
  - Friends & relatives cannot help;
  - The body cannot help at this time.



# Buddhism: Heaven and Hell

- The wise man makes his own heaven while the foolish man creates his own hell here and hereafter. The Buddhist concept of heaven and hell is entirely different from that in other religions. Buddhists do not accept that these places are eternal. It is unreasonable to condemn a man to eternal hell for his human weakness but quite reasonable to give him every chance to develop himself. From the Buddhist point of view, those who go to hell can work themselves upward by making use of the merit that they had acquired previously.
- The Buddha's Teaching shows there are heavens and hells not only beyond this world, but in this very world itself. For instance, the Buddha once said, 'When the average ignorant person makes an assertion to the effect that there is a Hell under the ocean he is making a statement which is false and without basis. The word 'Hell' is a term for painful sensations. 'The idea of one particular ready-made place or a place created by god as heaven and hell is not acceptable to the Buddhist concept.'

# Heaven & Hell

- Heaven: There are numerous Heavens called “Pure Lands” where enjoyment bodies made of pure light exist. Each Heaven is made of light made out of each person’s enlightened wisdom achieved by following Buddha’s path of selflessness, wishing to help others & leading a holy life on earth.
- Hell: There are 8 hot & cold Hells, each associated with a particular type of suffering required to purify evil persons. These tortures are described graphically to develop compassion by the living for those who are there. It is also an incentive to avoid non-virtuous behaviour which would cause one to wind up there! One is there for a long time & then reborn elsewhere.

# Judaism (Reformed, Orthodox & Conservative): Prophets Abraham & Moses

**Abraham** was a Manifestation of God who promoted the Oneness of God & denounced idol worship. Genesis 15:18 describes God as making a covenant with Abraham, saying, “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.”

**Moses** was a Manifestation of God. He was given 10 Commandments for society to live by & influenced a change from paganism to idealism.

# JUDAISM: Salvation & Society

- Social salvation is important. Hence, there is a belief in a Messiah coming to the world to usher in God's kingdom on earth as in Heaven.
- Patterning your life by obedience to the 10 Commandments, asking God for forgiveness if one breaks any of them & abiding by Jewish rituals is the key to the good life & salvation.

Justice is an salient part of Jewish beliefs. Hence, they believe in the Law of retribution, a life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand (cf., Exodus 21:23, 24).

# This-Worldly not Other-Worldly

Jewish conceptualization of dying & death involve:

- 1) accepting the reality of death;
- 2) respect for the dead;
- 3) equality;
- 4) simplicity;
- 5) the venting of emotions openly and fully;

6) communal responsibility and support;

7) affirmation of life; and

8) remembrance of the deceased by their family.

Death is usually considered a sad event, with prolonged mourning periods being Jewish custom.

# Being re-schooled for Heaven

The Talmud offers a number of thoughts relating to the afterlife. After death, the soul is brought for judgment. Those who have led pristine lives enter immediately into the "World to Come."

Most do not enter the "World to Come" immediately. They experience a period of review of their earthly actions & are made aware of what they have done wrong. They are "re-schooled," with the soul gaining wisdom of life's errors or sins. At the end of this period, approximately one year, the soul then takes its place in the World to Come. Although punishments are certain in the afterlife, the concept of "eternal damnation", so prevalent in other religions, is not a central tenet but happen to a select few who parish.

# Prophet Zoroaster

- Zoroastrianism

The Manifestation of God was Zoroaster. He was born in Persia. He lived somewhere between 630 - 550 BC. Zoroaster was an ancient Persian prophet who founded the first world religion - Zoroastrianism.

- Zoroastrianism is the religion of Persia (modern Iran). It survives there in isolated areas but more prosperously in India, where the descendants of Zoroastrian Persian immigrants are known as Parsees. Founded by the Iranian prophet Zoroaster in the 6th century BC. His sacred text is the Avesta ("Book of the Law"), a fragmentary collection of sacred writings. Compiled over many centuries, the Avesta was not completed until Persia's Sassanid dynasty (226-641 AD).

- Picture of Zoroaster





# Faith & Works

- Zoroaster's sacred text is the Avesta. Compiled over many centuries, it was not completed until Persia's Sassanid dynasty (226-641 AD). He taught that humans choose between the exclusive worship of Mazda (God) & the Devil (Angra Mainyu/false gods). Believers must choose right, as Zoroaster perfect life modeled & reject evil. Persons dedicate their lives to Mazda & realizing in person the various aspects of the divine nature (e.g. piety, good mind, welfare etc.) in which everyone can share.

# Heaven & Hell

- God will gather all humans, believers and unbelievers in a universal gathering. God will judge His creation. They will be reminded and informed of their good deeds & sins. The faithful will acknowledge their failings & be forgiven. The disbelievers will have no good deeds to declare.
- A bridge that will be established over Hell extending to Paradise. Anyone who is steadfast on God's religion in this life will find it easy to pass into Paradise. Hell will be the final dwelling place for the damned after the Last Judgment. The bliss of the people of Paradise shall never end & the punishment of unbelievers condemned to fiery Hell.

# Burial Rites prior to Judgment

The **Tower of Silence** is built in 3 concentric circles, one each for men, women, & children. The corpses are exposed there naked. The vultures do not take long—an hour or two at the most—to strip the flesh off the bones, & these, dried by the sun, are later swept into the central well. Formerly the bones were kept in an ossuary to preserve them from rain & animals. The morning of the fourth day is marked by the most solemn observance in the death ritual, for it is then that the departed soul reaches the next world & appears before God who passes judgment over it.

# Good thoughts, words and deeds

- In terms of salvation there are two interrelated goals: personal salvation & the fulfillment of the total creation.
- Zoroastrian religious beliefs can best be summarized with the phrase, 'Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds.'
- Future Savors will come when the world is in decline.
- Zoroaster incorporated belief in angels and demons, similar to later Christian Scripture. Other concepts he brought were: monotheism (one God), heaven, hell, angels, the resurrection of the body, & the messiah figure were influential on Judaism, Christianity, & Islam.

# FUNDAMENTALIST CHURCHES

## LITERALISM

- ASSEMBLIES OF GOD
- BAPTIST

## INERRANCY OF THE BIBLE

- CHURCH OF CHRIST
- SEVENTH DAY  
ADVENTIST (CAME  
FROM MILLERITES)

# Beliefs about Death

Paradox of Death: it is punishment for sin but gateway to Heaven. Christianity rests on Christ's literal resurrection from dead. In these churches view, once you die, prayers for the dead will not help, persons are usually judged immediately except for some (e.g. 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventists) & are assigned to Heaven or Hell for eternity.

Only a few real Christians are saved, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it." (Matt:7:13);

# Your physical body is reassembled after death

The Pharisees stressed a literal resurrection of the physical body, which would be reunited with the spirit of an individual. Their worldview embraced a future restoration of God's original design for his world. Fundamentalist vary but most hold to some type of physical resurrection, it has to be physical because you are punished in a physical way. The afterlife, both Heaven and Hell are believed to be physical conditions. So rather than reincarnating to another body, the spirit returns to its own physical existence in either a similar or a perfected state.

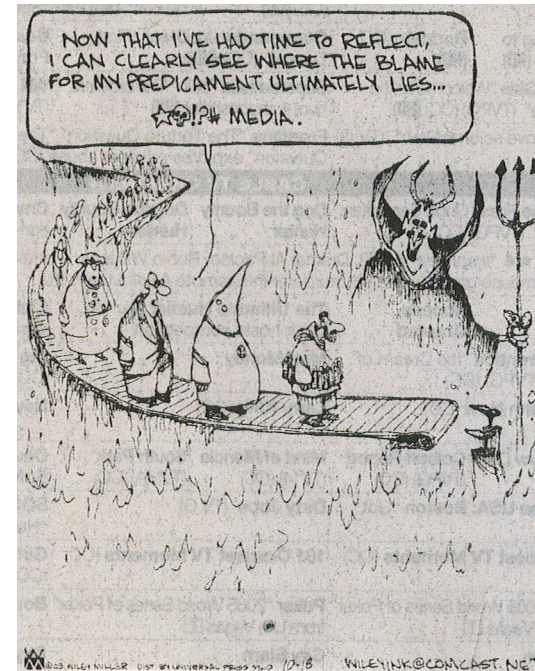


# Judgment & Afterlife

Man is born wretched, fear of Hell dominates beliefs. Heaven & Hell are conceptualized as physical places with pearly gates or actual fire etc. Humans ability to sin & die in sin far outweigh an ability to be good. So sermons focus on Jesus & avoiding eternal damnation.

In the end times, Christ is believed to return literally in the clouds for every eye to see.

P.S. Then why would the Bible need to warn us of false prophets on earth since we would automatically know He was false.



## Bible is Inerrant

- Literalism;  
Fundamentalism;  
Pentecostalism (belief in experiencing the “Holy Spirit” as the Apostles did at Pentecost). They speak in tongues, engage in “holy rolling” & are lead by the spirit.

Laying on of hands guided by the Holy Ghost



## Assemblies of God

# Great White Throne Judgment!

- The **great white throne judgment** is described in Revelation 20:11-15 & is the final judgment prior to the lost being cast into the lake of fire. Books are opened containing records of everyone's deeds & subsequent rewards & punishments for each of us.
- The “book of life” (Revelation 20:12) is opened and at this judgment the dead will be “judged according to what they had done” (Revelation 20:12) & remember that “anyone's name” that is not “found written in the book of life” will be “thrown into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15).

# Southern Baptists

- Fundamentalist;
- Largest Protestant denomination in U.S.;
- No speaking in tongues but holy spirit guides persons to the truth;
- Literal Heaven and Hell;
- Exclusivity;
- Bible is sole guide but there are 50 different Bibles.



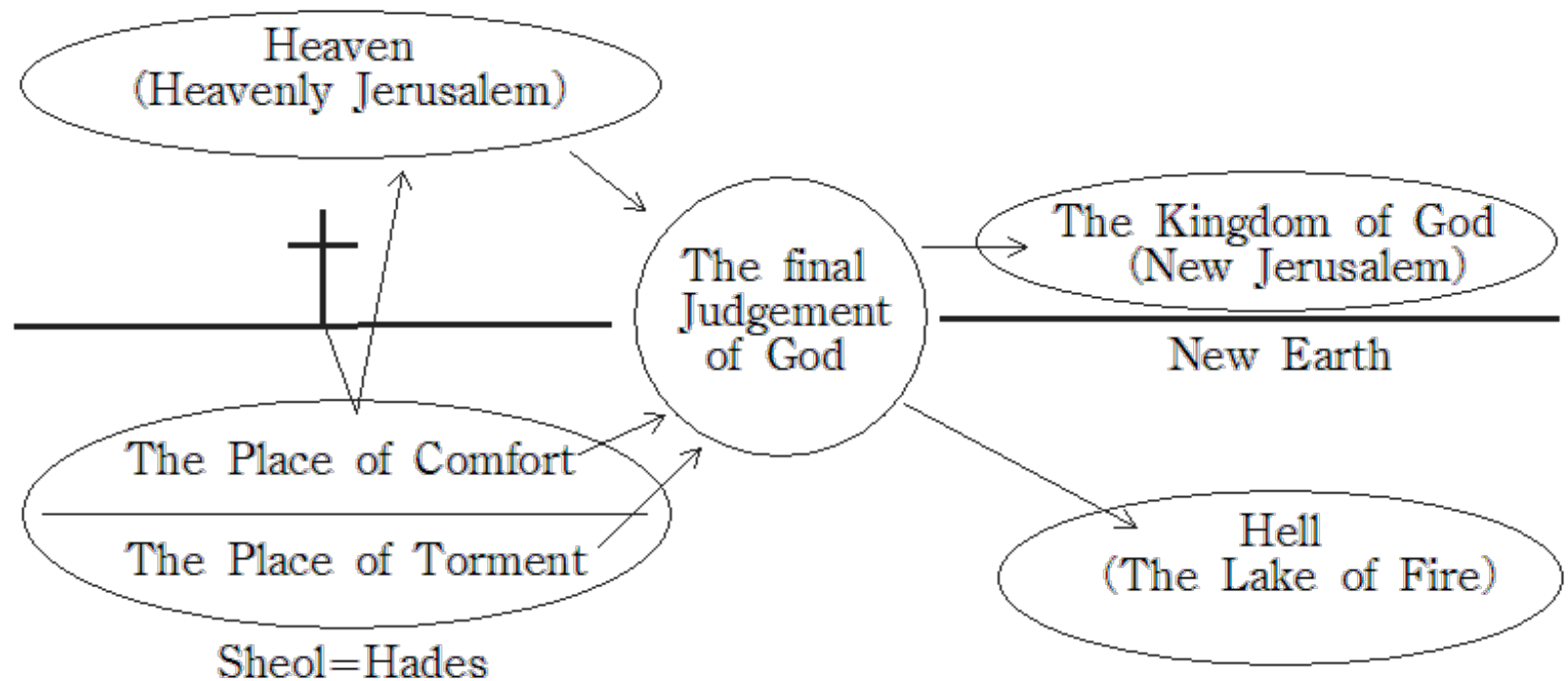
# Hades: A Holding Tank

- Four words are translated "hell" in the KJV:
- 1. Hades--the place to which all spirits go at death, regardless of their moral character. Signifies only the region of disembodied spirits. The grave denotes only the receptacle of the body.
- 2. Gehenna--denotes the final abode of the wicked, the hell of fire. Used 12 times in the Greek NT.
- 3. Tartarus--Used only one time in the Greek NT. 2 Peter 2:4 "...God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." (the compartment of Hades occupied by the wicked between death and the resurrection as they await the final judgment.) This is where the rich man was in Luke 16.

# Churches of Christ

- No singing in church;
- Fundamentalist and exclusivist (only Christians are saved); Hades first, then Heaven or Hell next;
- Heaven is Paradise— which refers to the abode of the righteous spirits in Hades. "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Both Jesus and the robber were in paradise (Hades) together. Hence paradise, here, does not refer to Heaven for Christ did not go to Heaven when he died.

# Their interpretation of Judgments'





# 38,000 Christian Denominations today, the question of authority

- Bible text says “faith” in Christ leads to “eternal life,” but we are still forced to define what “faith” is. Is it uttering the phrase “Jesus Saves” and forcing ourselves to have an emotional attachment to our own conceptual narrative of what Christ is? Is it commitment to the life of the Faith community? Or is it an acceptance of God’s active role in our lives and using that to develop as individuals? While the Bible says “faith” is “believing in” or “living in” Christ – adding in James that “good fruits” are the outward result of real faith – we are still left to define for ourselves what “believing and living” in Christ means.

# Mainline Churches & Salvation

- Catholic
  - Lutheran
  - Presbyterian
  - Quaker
  - Methodist
- Bible is both literal and figurative; It is the inspired word of God but usually not considered inerrant.
  - Man is sinful but equally capable of a lot of good; Hence, you can do a lot to better civilization & society. Civilization is progressive. Salvation comes to all good Christians not a select few, even some non-Christians can be saved; interested in social salvation as well, making a better society.

# Catholic: Distinguishing Features

- Catholic is largest Christian denomination & according to the Guardian, the original true one;
  - Ritualistic;
  - Pope is infallible source of guidance since the Bible contains both truth and differences in interpretation.
- Sincere confession of a mortal sin to an authorized priest and making restitution if required, leads to absolution of the sin and the avoidance of Hell.
- The level of punishment will be meted out in accordance with the seriousness of the individual's sin.

# Purgatory & Prayers for the Dead

- Which Bible matters in terms of an afterlife!  
Catholic (with additional books) or King James;  
Book of Maccabees talks about Purgatory for Catholics but Protestants believe in King James version which doesn't mention this condition in the afterlife.
- Mainlines disagree on the benefit of prayers for the dead.

# Biblical interpretation

- Is the Bible factually without error, or limited to spiritual teaching? Obviously it cannot be without factual error, because there are contradictions that cannot be reconciled without a forced “reading-in” (Did Judas jump or hang himself? Did Solomon have forty thousand or four thousand stalls for horses? Did God create man before or after the plants?).
- Can we validate empirically that certain claims of the Bible are straightforwardly incorrect: Adam cannot be the first man according to genealogies given, because our genetics suggest we existed for hundreds of thousands of years; the exodus could not have occurred as suggested, because there is simply no evidence that a population of that size was enslaved by the Egyptians and ever lived in Palestine during that period.
- Thus, the Bible cannot be factually inerrant. It must therefore be limited to spiritual teaching. But who wields authority to determine what it theologically states? I believe Protestants offer no clear answer to this question.

# Purgatory

- In Hell, punishment will be in the form of isolation from God, and some supernatural form of fire which causes endless pain but does not consume the body.
- The Church teaches that "the souls of those who have died in the state of grace suffer for a time a purging that prepares them to enter heaven."
- They spend time in **Purgatory until fully cleansed of imperfections, venial (less serious) sins etc.** Purgatory will be terminated at the time of the general judgment.
- The intensity and duration of the punishment can be reduced by friends and family, if they offer Masses, prayers "and other acts of piety and devotion."

# Lutheran: Salvation is a gift not earned by works

- Lutherans do not speculate about the return of Christ;
- Lutherans have a skeptical view of humans and the social gospel;
- Salvation is not earned by works but is an undeserved gift of God by faith in Christ.(Ephes. 2:8-9).
- Largest Protestant denomination worldwide but declining due to evangelicals;
- No distinguishing features to funerals or burial practices, usually embalm.



# Unique features: 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventists

- Millerites were the original church, but when Christ did not return in clouds in 1844, they changed their name;
- Milleanealists;
- Healthy lifestyles & vegetarianism because the body is reassembled after death;
- They live the longest of any church in U.S;
- Worship on Saturdays;
- They differ from Baptists in not believing that Hell is a place of eternal punishment "with sinners screaming in agony." Hell is a place where the unsaved will be burned and annihilated. Biblical verses show that 'everlasting hell' means 'as long as there is something to burn in hell.' God is loving & to portray sinners as screaming in agony forever and ever does not portray God in such light."

# Presbyterians & Predestination

- Salvation is earned by works, faith plays less of a part.
- Pre-destination is unique to this church and speaks about the sovereignty of God. Its an act of God's will where He elects those whom He calls to faith & thus to eternal life. Predestination is a concept which is rooted in the Biblical images of God's calling of a chosen people. Romans (8:29) says, "For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the first-born within a larger family."

# Quaker: Unique Features

- Quakers have no clergy. Quakers do not have a written creed. Instead, they hold to personal testimonies professing peace, integrity, humility, and community. From its beginning, the Religious Society of Friends taught equality of all persons, including women.
- Quakers believe that God's kingdom is now, and consider heaven and hell issues for individual interpretation.
- While Quakers beliefs say that God is revealed in Jesus Christ, most Friends are more concerned with emulating his life and obeying his commands than with the theology of salvation.
- They believe in simple and inexpensive funerals, caskets & burials. All people possess a certain divine seed or Light. Obedience to this Light and to other revelations from God, through Scripture, nurtured it and caused it to grow. Ultimately, it would bring the believer to a state of holiness that justified heaven.

# Justification by Faith

Justification & sanctification were inseparable & gradual. Salvation is instant through faith, believing in Christ. Sanctification follows. This is probably lifelong after conversion. Justification is crucial to have a relationship with God. Isn't sin what separates us from God - and God forgiving the sin is what makes us just?

- Justification is God's act to remove the obstacles enabling a God-human relationship. That approach fits with conviction-- a realization of the burden of sin, & recognition of the need for God's help.

# Soul Sleep: Adventists & Jehovah Witnesses

Jehovah Witness originator, Charles Russell was influenced by what was called Second Adventism, (meaning the second advent), he believed that when someone dies their personality & life is so united with the body that it ceases to exist. This not only occurs with believers, but also non-believers and with Jesus, so God has to refashion everyone by memory. What we're dealing with here is re-creation. What they have is not a resurrection, because the individual's body and soul are carbon copied to exist later on Paradise Earth.

# “Soul Sleep”

King Edward VI stated in his fortieth article out of forty-two, that "The souls that do depart hence do sleep, being without all sense, feeling, or perceiving until the day of judgment, do utterly decent from the right that is closed to us in Holy Scriptures."

Everyone is going to live on paradise earth one day. one of the problems is if you die before the resurrection, well, you won't be there.

You will not participate in the new earth because God will copy you from memory and your duplicate will be enjoying all the benefits of all your hard work for the kingdom. Obviously, copying the body from memory involves inspiration to take care of the body.

When we come to the subject of soul-sleep we find this view has been sporadically held throughout church history. The Ana-Baptists believed in this in the 1500's.

# LDS: Marriage & Afterlife

- Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)—America's fastest growing Christian denomination: The Mormon afterlife is divided up into 4 levels. From the lowest to the highest they are: hell, & then 3 levels of heaven: the telestial, the terrestrial, and the place where God dwells, the celestial (also called the kingdom of God). The celestial is also divided, the highest level being "exaltation," or becoming a God, something only a devout Mormon who has a temple marriage can achieve but those of other faiths cannot.
  - Beliefs about church weddings versus Temple Marriages as they relate to death & eternity;
  - Belief in 3 layers of Heaven—Mormons only making the top layer;
  - Double standard on Temple Marriages—men can have more than one but women cannot. Hence, men can be “sealed” to more than one wife for eternity, while women can only be sealed to one husband for eternity.
  - Mormons believe they can become Gods themselves.

## Islam (Sunni)

- *Muhammad was born of a noble family but was an orphan. He was nursed by God providing milk to animals after they were dry. His guardians felt they were blessed to have taken in Muhammad. After an Angel telling Him of His Mission & God giving Him instructions,*
- *His primary teachings, like all Manifestations of God before Him was Monotheism. God is not divided into three, as Christians believed at that time. His teachings supported Christ's own statements.*



# Judgment: Works & Faith

- This chapter is written mainly from both views.
- There is a direct relationship between conduct on earth & afterlife. Those Moslems who commit suicide by bombing are condemned in the Koran to Hells fire. "O ye who believe!... [do not] kill yourselves, for truly Allah has been to you Most Merciful. If any do that in rancour and injustice, soon shall We cast him into the Fire..." (Qur'an 4:29-30).
- Rewards & punishments are commensurate with conduct. The Day will come when God will resurrect & gather His creation & judge all justly. People will then enter Heaven or Hell. Faith in an afterlife urges us to do right & to avoid sin.

# Moslem requirements for Heaven

The 5 pillars of the Islamic faith are requirements for entrance into Heaven:

1. Shahadah (belief or confession of faith)
2. Salat (worship in the form of prayer)
3. Fasting during the month of Ramadan)
4. Zakat (alms or charitable giving)
5. Hajj (the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime)

# Murderers & Oppressors: Hell

- The taking of life is allowed only by way of justice (i.e., the death penalty for murder), but even then, forgiveness is better. "Nor take life - which Allah has made sacred - except for just cause..." (17:33).
- The Qur'an admonishes those who oppress others and transgress beyond the bounds of what is right and just. "The blame is only against those who oppress men with wrongdoing & insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right & justice. For such there will be a chastisement grievous in the Hereafter" (42:42).

# Judgement & Final Resurrection

- The dead have a continued & conscious existence of a kind in the grave. Muslims believe that, upon dying, a person enters an intermediate phase of life between death & resurrection.
- Many events take place in this new “world,” such as the “trial” of the grave, where everyone will be questioned by angels about their faith in their religion, their Prophet & God.
- The grave is a garden of paradise or a pit of hell; angels of mercy visit the souls of believers & angels of punishment come for the unbelievers.
- Resurrection will be preceded by the end of the world. People will be resurrected into their original physical bodies from their graves, thereby entering the third & final phase of life. The Horn will blow again upon which people will rise up from their graves, resurrected!

# Muhammad's Ascension to Heaven

- His “Night Journey” from Mecca to Jerusalem & His subsequent “Ascension” to heaven are, in reality, two stages of one mystic experience, dating almost exactly one year before the exodus to Medina. According to various well-documented traditions Muhammad, accompanied by the Angel Gabriel, found Himself transported by night to the site of Solomon’s Temple at Jerusalem. There He led a congregation of many of the earlier, long since deceased prophets in prayer; some of them He afterwards encountered again in Heaven. The Ascension, in particular, is important from the viewpoint of Muslim theology inasmuch as it was in the course of this experience that the 5 daily prayers were explicitly instituted, by God’s law, as an integral part of Islamic believes.

# Baha'i Faith (1844)

## Baha'u'llah

- Forerunner, **The Bab** (“The Gate”) from Shiraz, Persia.
- Prepared the world for the coming of Baha'u'llah (“The Glory of the Father”); Short ministry; Was executed under miraculous circumstances which were chronicled.
- **Baha'u'llah** from Tehran as a “Manifestation of God”: He grew up as a child prodigy, came from wealthy family but gave it up, had no formal education.
- **Baha'u'llah** received messages of His Prophet hood & declared His Mission in 1863. His ministry lasted 30 years; He was tortured, imprisoned, banished from countries, resulting in imprisonment in Israel. He had written 100 tablets, books & prayers throughout his life on a variety of subjects from requirements for personal to social salvation. He also sent letters to leading religious & secular figures.

This IS the day of Judgment: Christ returned in clouds (e.g. orthodoxy/family pressures which blind us from recognizing Him), do you believe in Baha'u'llah?



# Believe in Baha'u'llah or deny Him!

- *The coming of the Promised One is associated in some religious scripture as the "Day of Judgment." Bahá'u'lláh identified the advent of every divine Messenger as the "Day of Judgment," and most particularly His own:*
- *As the adherents of Jesus have never understood the hidden meaning of these words, and as the signs which they and the leaders of their Faith have expected have failed to appear, they therefore refused to acknowledge, even until now, the truth of those Manifestations of Holiness that have since the days of Jesus been made manifest. They have thus deprived themselves of the outpourings of God's holy grace, and of the wonders of His divine utterance. Such is their low estate in this, the Day of Resurrection! They have even failed to perceive that were the signs of the Manifestation of God in every age to appear in the visible realm in accordance with the text of established traditions, none could possibly deny or turn away, nor would the blessed be distinguished from the miserable, and the transgressor from the God-fearing.*
- *Judge fairly: Were the prophecies recorded in the Gospel to be literally fulfilled; were Jesus, Son of Mary, accompanied by angels, to descend from the visible heaven upon the clouds; who would dare to disbelieve, who would dare to reject the truth, and wax disdainful? Nay, such consternation would immediately seize all the dwellers of the earth that no soul would feel able to utter a word, much less to reject or accept the truth.*
- (Kitáb-i-Iqán , p. 80-81)



Verily I say, this is the Day in which mankind can behold the Face, and hear the Voice, of the Promised One. The Call of God hath been raised, and the light of His countenance hath been lifted up upon men. It behoveth every man to blot out the trace of every idle word from the tablet of his heart, and to gaze, with an open and unbiased mind, on the signs of His Revelation, the proofs of His Mission, and the tokens of His glory. Great indeed is this Day! The allusions made to it in all the sacred Scriptures as the Day of God attest its greatness.” Baha’u’llah (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, VII, p. 10-11).

Why did Christ return in a new name (The Glory of the Father)? Reaching its zenith at the time of Baha’u’llah’s coming and getting progressively worse over the past 150 years (Two World Wars; 38,000 Christian denominations; corruption of churches and clergy etc.):

**2nd Peter 3:3-4**, “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”

**2nd Timothy 3:1,2,4**, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.”

**2nd Timothy 4:3**, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.”

# Perquisites for Individual & Social Salvation

## Individual Salvation—Purpose on Earth:

- 1.To know & love God;
- 2.To recognize His most current Manifestation for this Era.

- **Society needs to be saved!**

“So blind hath become the human heart that neither the disruption of the city, nor the reduction of the mountain in dust, nor even the cleaving of the earth, can shake off its torpor.”

“Its (the worlds) sickness is approaching the stage of utter hopelessness, inasmuch as the true Physician is debarred from administering the remedy, whilst unskilled practitioners are regarded with favour, and are accorded full freedom to act.”

Baha'u'llah



# Progressive Revelation



# Salvation

- We will see the errors of our ways in the afterlife. God is perfectly fair, forgiving & just. There is a judgment today as we make choices between Gods plan or the schemes of the Old World Order. Salvation is an on-going process not the result of one event. The most august believer can reject his beliefs in a moment or the most abysmal failure can through Gods grace & efforts suddenly ascend. Another effect of spiritual development is alignment with God's will. This growing closer to God prepares the individual for the afterlife.
- “WHEN A TRUE SEEKER determineth to take the step of the search, the path leading unto the knowledge of the Ancient of Days, he must, before all else, cleanse his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all knowledge, and the allusions of the embodiments of satanic fancy.” Baha’u’llah

# Entering the Crimson Ark

- Bahá'ís do not believe that our individual personalities survive after death, because our personality is an extension of natural, biological functions. “How can anyone imagine that man’s consciousness and personality will be maintained, when the very instruments necessary to their existence and function will have completely disintegrated?” (Gleanings, 80).
- And yet, Bahá'ís will be able to recognize one another through a spiritual means left undescribed. “Know thou that the souls of the people of Bahá, who have entered and been established within the Crimson Ark, shall associate and commune intimately one with another, and shall be so closely associated in their lives, their aspirations, their aims and strivings as to be even as one soul. They are indeed the ones who are well-informed, who are keen-sighted, and who are endued with understanding. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.” (Gleanings, 86).

# Heaven & Hell as a continuum—with recognition of others who have passed

- **Even though most of us will fail to recognize one another, there is still some sense of distinction between souls.** “They that are of the same grade and station are fully aware of one another’s capacity, character, accomplishments and merits. They that are of a lower grade, however, are incapable of comprehending adequately the station, or of estimating the merits, of those that rank above them. Each shall receive his share from thy Lord...”
- **“The souls of the infidels,** however, shall—and to this I bear witness—when breathing their last be made aware of the good things that have escaped them, and shall bemoan their plight, and shall humble themselves before God. They shall continue doing so after the separation of their souls from their bodies... I swear by the Day Star that shineth above the horizon of Divine power! They that are the followers of the one true God shall, the moment they depart out of this life, experience such joy and gladness as would be impossible to describe, while they that live in error shall be seized with such fear and trembling, and shall be filled with such consternation, as nothing can exceed.” (Gleanings, 86).

# Baha'u'llah uses symbols to explain the afterlife

- The soul does not die; it endures everlastingly. When the human body dies, the soul is freed from ties with the body & the surrounding physical world & begins its progress through the spiritual world.
- Bahá'ís understand the spiritual world to be a timeless and placeless extension of our own universe--not some physically remote place. Entry into the next life has the potential to bring great joy.
- Baha'u'llah likened death to birth, saying: "The world beyond is as different from this world as this world is different from that of the child while still in the womb of its mother."
- Heaven can be seen partly as a state of nearness to God; Hell is a state of remoteness from God. Each state follows as a natural consequence of individual spiritual efforts, or the lack of efforts. Spiritual progress is following the laws of God.