


# World Religions *and* Ethical Systems

## Christianity



Christianity is the largest religion in the world, with about 2 billion followers. It is based on the life and teachings of Jesus, whom Christians call Christ, or savior. Most Christians are members of one of three major groups: Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Eastern Orthodox. Christianity teaches the existence of only one God. Christians regard Jesus as the son of God. They believe that Jesus entered the world and died to save humanity from sin. The cross shown above, a symbol of the crucifixion of Jesus, represents Jesus' love for humanity by dying for its sins. Christians believe that they reach salvation by following the teachings of Jesus.

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**RESEARCH WEB LINKS** Go online for more on Christianity.

### Ritual ►

Each year, hundreds of thousands of Christians from all over the world visit the Basilica of Guadalupe in northern Mexico City. The church is considered the holiest in Mexico. It is near the site where Mary, the mother of Jesus, is said to have appeared twice in 1531. Out of deep respect for Mary, some pilgrims approach the holy cathedral on their knees.



### Worship Practices ►

Worshiping as a group is an important part of Christian life. Most Protestant services include praying, singing, and a sermon. Some services include baptism and communion, in which bread and wine are consumed in remembrance of Jesus' death.

Communion celebrates the last meal Jesus took with his disciples, as illustrated here in *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci.







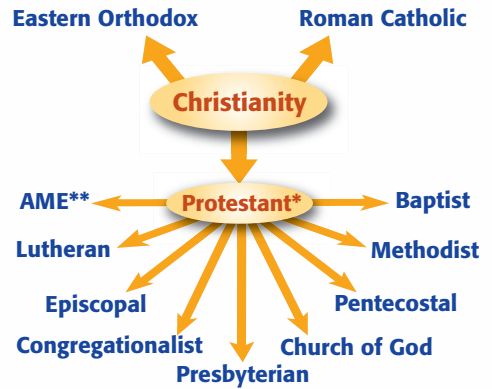
### ▲ Leadership

In some Christian churches, the person who performs services in the local church is known as a priest. Shown here is a priest of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. These priests, like the ministers and clergy in other Christian sects, conduct worship services and preside over marriages and funerals. Monks and nuns also provide leadership and guidance in the Christian church.



## Learn More About Christianity

### Major Christian Sects

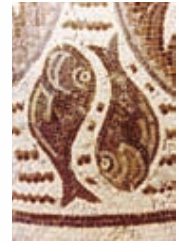


\*In the United States alone, there are 30 Protestant denominations with over 400,000 members in each.

\*\*African Methodist Episcopal

### Fish Symbol

The fish is an early symbol of Christianity. There are many theories about the origin of the symbol, but some Christians believe that it derives from the fact that Jesus called his disciples, or followers, “fishers of men.”



### The Christian Bible

#### PRIMARY SOURCE

The Bible is the most sacred book of the Christian religion. It is divided into two major parts: the Old Testament, which is much the same as the Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament, which describes the teachings of Jesus. The following verses from the New Testament reveal the fundamental teaching about Jesus:

*“Men, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”*

Acts 16:30–31

### Chapter Connection

For more about Christianity, see pages 168–172 of Chapter 6. To learn about the Protestant and Catholic Reformations, see sections 3 and 4 of Chapter 17.