

UNIT 5 - INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY

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1. Christianity dates back to 6 BC.
2. Its founder Jesus was born in Bethlehem in 6 BC in a Jewish family.
3. Christians believe that Jesus was the son of God and had come into this world to deliver the good news.

4. CHRISTIAN BELIEF:

Christians like Sikhs, Muslims and Jews believe in one God; but they are distinctive from others for they believe that Jesus was not a prophet but the son of God. Christians argue that Jewish prophets had paved the way for the coming of God's son. All Christians begin their service with:

"Our father, who is in heaven."

Christians argue that Jesus had to be conceived without a human father because he was the son of God.

5. THE HOLY BOOK:

Bible is the holy book of the Christians. It includes the scripture of the Jews and Christians revere it together with their own writings. Christians call Jewish scripture as the Old Testament and call their writings as the new Testament. The original language of the old testament is Hebrew and of the new testament is Greek.

6. The new Testament consists of 27 books including:

- @. the four Gospels (recount of Jesus' life) named after, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These books were compiled between 60-100 AD.
- a. Acts of the Apostles by Luke, compiled in the same period as the gospels;
- b. 21 Epistles (letters) by Paul, collected between 48-140 AD;
- c. the book of Revelation, written in about 90 AD

7. FIRST SERMON:

Jesus lived a family life with his parents as a carpenter until he was 30 years old. His missionary life lasted only three years. God's spirit entered his body when he was baptised by John the baptist. He started his work first with the down trodden people of Galilee. He said that the kingdom of God was on hand and the people must trust God completely.

8. JESUS' DISCIPLES:

Jesus chose twelve disciples as his aides. They were: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, Simon, Judas, and Judas Iscariot. After Jesus' death these disciples spread Christianity all over the globe. Jesus was betrayed by one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot who informed the local police about his whereabouts. Jesus was arrested and crucified on the complaints of Jewish clergy, who considered him to be a threat to their religion.

9. TEACHINGS:

Jesus said:

- @. Love God with all your heart, soul and mind, and
- a. Love your neighbour as much as you love yourself

He further said:

- @. Successful people are those who are humble and contented (poor) in their mind.
- a. All people must pray and praying meant talking to Father (God). All must say, "May your holy name be honoured; may your kingdom come; may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."
- b. Love your enemies. Our love must be as wide-ranging as God's.
- c. Kill the wrong thoughts. Whereas the law stopped wrong actions, the people are just as guilty if they only have wrong thoughts.
- d. Follow the ten commandments given to Moses by God.
- e. Avoid all wars and strife.
- f. Practise what you preach.
- g. All actions should lead to salvation. (refrain from committing sins, be humble and meek)
- h. Praise God and allow yourself to be guided by the holy spirit in you..

10. PRAYER:

Prayer is essential for every Christian although no set times are laid down. A Christian prayer may be recited loudly or said silently. It includes the following:

0. Saying the praises of God
- i. Thanking God for all the things in life.
- ii. Saying sorry to God for wrong doing.
- iii. Prayer for other people, especially those in need or who are sick.
- iv. Listening to God in silent contemplation.
- v. Finding inner peace by quietening brain and imagination

11. BELIEFS:

Christians believe in:

- @. Angele: who are instrumental in bringing forth messages of God. (Muslims believe in angels as well: Angel Gabriel)
- a. Miracles: Bible contains a number of stories of Jesus miraculously curing the diseased and the sick.
- b. Trinity of God: Christians believe in God, the heavenly father; Jesus, the son of God; and the Holy spirit the spirit of God.
- c. Evil spirits: Bibles contains stories where people had to fight against the forces of evil spirits.
- d. Sin: Christians believe that people are born in sin and have to repent and confess to get it pardoned.
- e. Priesthood: Christians believe in priesthood and have categories of Pope, Archbishops, Bishops, Cardinals, Canons, Chaplains, Pastors, Deacons, Ministers, Padres and Moderators.
- f. Baptism (Initiation): It means bathing or sprinkling with water. It is a sign of becoming a Christian.
- g. The Holy Communion: It is a special service held ever since the Last supper which Jesus held with his disciples. It is said at an alter lit with candles and marked with a plain cross

12. CHURCH

The Church is described as being the physical body of Jesus Christ, continuing his work in the world. Within Christianity there are 20,300 distinct denominations. These denominations belong to larger groups or families; the Roman Catholics, the Orthodox Churches and the Protestant Churches.

They each stress different things for Christian beliefs viz., abortion, war, authority of Pope etc.

- 12.1 Christian holy day is Sunday. The main church services are held on that day. In Roman Catholic Churches there are images of Jesus, Mary and saints.
- 12.2 The Sunday morning and evening services in the Church of England are made up of hymns, prayers and Bible readings and sermon. There is a choir robed in white and the priest wears white surplice over a black cassock or a long robe.

Roman Catholic Churches believe: 12.3

0. in the Trinity of Godhead: Father, Son and the Holy spirit
- i. in the divinity of Mary. She lives in heaven and is always ready to hear the requests of the people. She takes their requests to her son, Jesus.
- ii. in the special status of saints: The saints lived very close to God on earth that in heaven they are in a favoured position.
- iii. in purgatory: a place where people stay after death. Here people are purged of their sins and made ready for heavens. God, through the priests, forgives wrongdoers' sins and sends them to heaven.
- iv. in the authority of Pope: Pope is Jesus' representative on earth.

Orthodox Churches believe: 12.4

The churches in the East look to Constantinople as the important Christian centre. They believe in the authority of the Bishop of Constantinople. They call themselves Orthodox because they believe that they represent the true message of Christ. Each nation in the East has its own Orthodox Church, viz., Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, and so on. They believe in (i- iv) mentioned in 12.3 and further believe:

0. the holy spirit changes the bread and wine of the Lord's supper into the body and bread of the Jesus Christ.
- i. the power of all the disciples of Jesus were equal.

Protestant Churches believe: 12.5

The Christian reformation movement dates back to 1170. The names of Peter Waldo, John Waycliffe, John Huss and Martin Luther are some of important names of this movement. The Protestants rejected the authority of Pope but kept most of the teachings and ways of worship of the Catholic Church. Many new denominations sprang up in Europe, and many national Churches were established, viz., Church of England, Church of Scotland, and so on.

The Protestants believe:

0. Every Christian can read and interpret Bible on his own and thus does not need the services of a priest.
- i. The assistance of Mary and saints is not needed to take messages to Jesus and God.
- ii. The Bible and not the Church is the final authority for a Christian.
- iii. The service should be in the language of the people and not in the classical language which people fail to understand.
- iv. The Communion Service is the service to remember Jesus' death and his resurrection.

13. CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS:

1. Christmas: the birthday of Jesus. It falls on 25th of December.
2. Easter: it celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ after his crucifixion. It falls in April
3. Pentecost: it celebrates the birth of Christian Church. It falls 50 days after Easter.