

What We Believe

A Study in Basic Christian Doctrine

Orthodox Christianity - the plumb line (“What WE believe”)

- ortho•dox** (or'the-doks') *adj.* 1. Adhering to the established and traditional faith.
2. Adhering to the Christian faith as set forth in the early Christian ecumenical creeds.
3. Conforming to accepted standards or established practice.

plumb line *n.* 1. a line from which a weight is suspended to help masons construct a wall that is straight and true.

Orthodox Christianity comprises the beliefs held by the majority of Christians since the early church began in the first century. These include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

1. God
2. Jesus Christ
3. Man and Sin
4. Salvation
5. Heaven and hell
6. The Bible

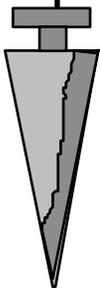
The major goal of this study is to help Christians better understand and strengthen their own beliefs to enable them to share these beliefs with others (I Peter 3:15). So the first thing we need to do is “nail down” the indisputable, biblically based beliefs we hold to so we have our “plumb line” from which to compare the other religions, viewpoints and philosophies.

1. God - the Almighty. *Genesis 1:1, Revelation 4:8,11, Revelation 15:3-4, Psalm 104, Psalm 139.* God is the creator of the universe. He is all-knowing (omniscient), everywhere (omnipresent), all-powerful (omnipotent). His very nature is one of holiness. He has always existed and always will. He created man. *II Corinthians 13:14, Ephesians 4:4-6.* He is “triune”. One God - but 3 distinct personalities - The Father is God, the Son is God and the Spirit is God.

2. Jesus Christ. *Matthew 1, Luke 2.* A person, whose name was Jesus, was born in Bethlehem. That is rarely disputed. Jesus Christ is the central focus of Christianity and it is how he is viewed that provides the very core of our beliefs.

God’s Son (*incarnate - taking human bodily form, made flesh*). *John 1:14, John 10:30, John 14:9, Phil. 2:5-7.* Jesus Christ was God. If he was not God, then his claims were false, his death ineffective, his existence meaningless.

Virgin birth. *Luke 1:26-28. Matthew 1:18-24.* To deny the virgin birth, means that Jesus was conceived like every other man, and thus negates/cancels his deity and sinlessness. Jesus was conceived by God’s Spirit and born of a virgin.



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Sinless. *I Peter 2:22, II Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15.* Christ never sinned. He was tempted, felt the “tug” of his humanness, but never sinned. If he had, he would not have been an acceptable sacrifice to God for our sins.

Resurrection. *Romans 1:1-4, Matthew 27:53, John 11:25, Acts 1:22, Acts 4:33, I Corinthians 15:3-4, 12-14, II Corinthians 4:14.* Jesus was physically dead, came back to life and rose bodily from the grave. His conquering of death and sin, proved once and for all he was the Son of God, guaranteed our resurrection in the last days and finished God’s plan for salvation. If he had not risen, he would have been just another man.

Return (second coming). *Acts 1:11, John 14:1-3, Matthew 16:27.* Jesus will return to earth one day to establish His kingdom, judge all mankind, punish sin and reward faithfulness for eternity.

If you want to get to the “heart” of another religion, belief, denomination or cult - *ask them what they believe about Jesus Christ.* Their answer will tell you all that you need to know.

3. Man and sin. *Romans 3:23, Romans 3:9-20, Romans 6:23.* Man is sinful. He is born with a sin nature and is separated from God.

4. Salvation. *John 3:16, I John 1:9, Acts 16:31, Acts 2:21, Acts 4:12, John 14:6, Ephesians 2:8-9.* Salvation for man is only available thru faith and belief in Jesus Christ. No other person can offer or provide forgiveness of sins. It is not earned by works, ceremonies or rituals but is a free gift available by faith and God’s grace.

5. Heaven and hell. *Acts 1:11, Matthew 6:9, Phil. 3:20, Hebrews 9:24, Matt. 18:10.* There is an actual location known as heaven, where God and Christ, angels and the saints (Christians who have died) currently dwell. *Matthew 10:28, Luke 16:23, Proverbs 15:24.* There is an actual location known as hell/Hades where unbelievers and punished angels dwell.

6. The Bible - God’s Word. *II Timothy 3:15-17, II Peter 1:20-21, I Corinth 2:10-13.* The Holy Scriptures are the only basis (final authority) and foundation for the Christian’s belief. They are the complete, God-inspired revelation to man. Men wrote the Scriptures in a number of ways including the direct dictation from the Lord (*thus said the Lord, God spoke*), visions, personal experiences and observation. But in all Scripture the writers were inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Study Questions:

- Which of these beliefs do think is easiest for you to defend/believe? Why?
- Which of these beliefs do find difficult to defend/believe? Why? Examine these scripture verses and study further to help validate this belief in your own heart and mind.

