

# APOLOGETICS

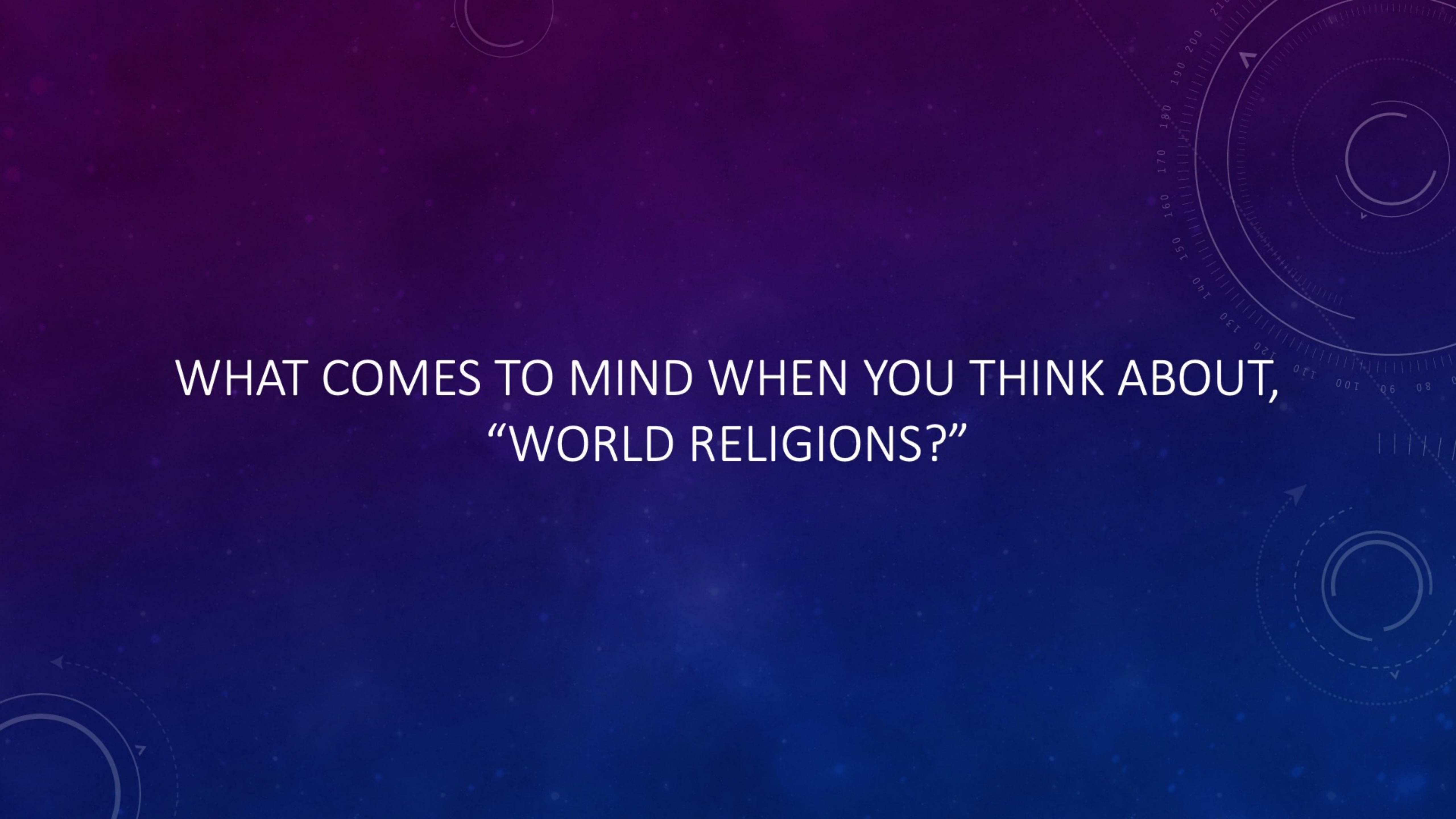
Greek Word: *apologia* (defense of the faith)

# WORLD RELIGIONS & DENOMINATIONS

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APOLOGETICS—DEFENDING YOUR FAITH

CHRISTIAN PRUETT

The background is a deep blue gradient with a subtle starry field of small white dots. On the right side, there are several overlapping circular and semi-circular patterns. These include concentric circles, dashed lines, and arcs with arrows indicating direction. Some of these patterns resemble a circular scale or a compass rose, with numerical markings like 100, 110, 120, 130, 140, 150, 160, 170, 180, 190, and 200. The overall aesthetic is clean, modern, and technical.

WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT,  
“WORLD RELIGIONS?”



# UNDERSTANDING WORLD RELIGIONS

The background is a dark blue gradient with a subtle pattern of small white dots. On the right side, there are several technical or scientific-looking graphics. A prominent one is a circular scale with numerical markings from 0 to 210 in increments of 10. There are also several concentric circles, some solid and some dashed, with arrows indicating clockwise or counter-clockwise directions. These elements suggest a theme of measurement, cycles, or global systems.

# FIVE FACTORS OF WORLD RELIGIONS

- **Theology**

- What are the views of their gods, including nature, purpose, and habitation?

- **Anthropology**

- What are the views of mankind, our origin, and the nature of people?

- **Soteriology**

- What are the views about sin, salvation, and redemption?

- **Epistemology**

- What are the views about knowledge, such as authoritative texts or leaders?

- **Metaphysics**

- What are the views about the laws of nature, the afterlife, and invisible forces?

# RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

## REALITY VS ILLUSION

*Concept*—Existence is just a dream or a vision. We may not even exist.

*Sample Religions*—Buddhism, Simulation-ists (people who believe we are part of a computer simulation)

### *Biblical Perspectives*

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)”

“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. (Colossians 1:16)”



# BUDDHISM

Founded by Siddhartha Gautama in 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC; 530 million followers today

## ***Theology***

- Generally non-theistic; some traditions include celestial beings, but they are not ultimate

## ***Anthropology***

- Humans are part of a cycle of rebirth (samsara); No permanent self (anatta)

## ***Soteriology***

- Life is marked by suffering (dukkha); Follow the Eightfold Path to achieve enlightenment (nirvana)

## ***Epistemology***

- Based on teachings of the Buddha; Texts include the Tripitaka (Pali Canon)

## ***Metaphysics***

- No eternal soul, reality is impermanent, Karma governs cause/effect; Rebirth cycle continues until enlightenment

# RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

## THEISTIC VS ATHEISTIC

*Concept*—There is no God.

*Sample Religions*—Atheism, Communism, Scientology

### *Biblical Perspectives*

“The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.’ (Psalm 14:1a)”

“The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. (Psalm 19:1-2)”



# ATHEISM

891 million to 1.1 billion followers today

## ***Theology***

- No belief in God or other gods

## ***Anthropology***

- Humans are products of evolution with no spiritual nature

## ***Soteriology***

- No concept of salvation; focus on human flourishing and survival of the fittest

## ***Epistemology***

- Rejection of divine revelation; knowledge through science and reason

## ***Metaphysics***

- Materialist, only the physical world exists; no afterlife, soul, or supernatural forces

# RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

## TRANSCENDENT VS PANTHEISTIC

*Concept*—God exists in nature, nature is to be worshipped, or there is no distinction between the natural world and God.

*Sample Religions*—Shintoism, Paganism, Druidism, Shamanism, Wiccan

### *Biblical Perspectives*

“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. (Romans 1:22-23)”



# PAGANISM/WICCA

Origins in ancient times, modern revitalization going back to 1950s, 200 million followers today

## ***Theology***

- Pantheistic with god/goddess duality; divinity often tied to nature

## ***Anthropology***

- Humans are part of nature and spiritual reality

## ***Soteriology***

- Moral law: "An it harm none, do as ye will"

## ***Epistemology***

- Personal experience, rituals, traditions; no single authoritative text

## ***Metaphysics***

- Nature is sacred and alive; magic and spiritual forces are real; reincarnation is a common belief

# RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

## MONOTHEISTIC VS POLYTHEISTIC

*Concept*—There is more than one god, or the one god presents himself as a variety of gods with differing traits, some of which may be evil.

*Sample Religions*—Hinduism, Taoism, Norse Religions, Greek & Roman Mythology, Egyptian Mythology

### *Biblical Perspectives*

“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:

‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.[’] (Isaiah 44:6)”



# HINDUISM

Origins around 1500BC in India, 1.2 billion followers today

## ***Theology***

- Polytheistic with underlying unity (Brahman); many gods are expressions of Brahman (Vishnu, Shiva, etc.)

## ***Anthropology***

- Humans have an eternal soul (atman) trapped in a cycle of rebirth (samsara)

## ***Soteriology***

- Liberation (moksha) from rebirth; achieved through devotion, meditation, worship, and action (karma)

## ***Epistemology***

- Texts—Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita; knowledge through gurus

## ***Metaphysics***

- Karma governs life and rebirth; afterlife is continued until freedom

# RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

## ABRAHAMIC VS NON-ABRAHAMIC

*Concept*—The one true god has been revealed through sources other than by Abraham.

*Sample Religions*—Zoroastrianism, Sikhism, Baha'i

### *Biblical Perspectives*

“Moreover He said, ‘I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. (Exodus 3:6)”



# SIKHISM

Founded around 1500AD by Guru Nanak in India, 30 million followers today

## ***Theology***

- Monotheistic belief in Waheguru (“wondrous teacher”)

## ***Anthropology***

- Humans created by Waheguru, souls seek union; believers always wear five items

## ***Soteriology***

- Liberation (moksha) from rebirth; achieved through action (karma) and grace

## ***Epistemology***

- Texts—Guru Granth Sahib; knowledge through gurus

## ***Metaphysics***

- Karma governs life and rebirth; afterlife is continued union with god

# RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

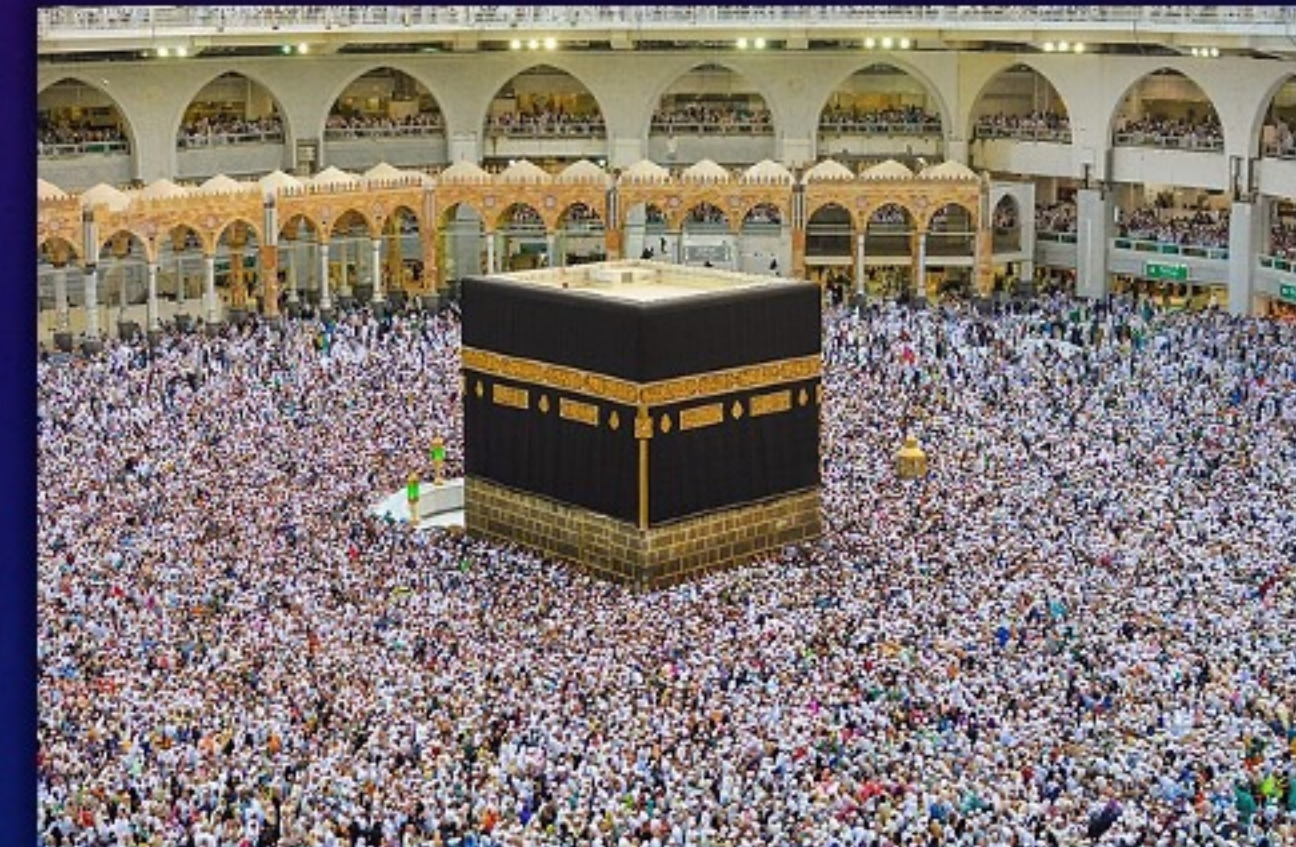
## JUDEO-CHRISTIAN VS NON-JUDEO CHRISTIAN

*Concept*—The one true god—although revealed through Abraham’s descendants—is not YAHWEH.

*Sample Religions*—Islam

*Biblical Perspectives*

“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Revelation 22:18-19)”



# ISLAM

Founded around 610AD by Mohammed, 1.9 billion followers today

## ***Theology***

- Strict monotheism in Allah

## ***Anthropology***

- Humans created by Allah with purpose; born sinless but prone to forgetfulness

## ***Soteriology***

- Faith and works (Five Pillars of Islam); Judgement Day determines destiny

## ***Epistemology***

- Texts—Quran (teachings of Mohammed) and Hadiths (sayings of Mohammed)

## ***Metaphysics***

- Heaven and Hell; Angels, djinn, and spiritual realm exist; Linear history with final judgment

# RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

## CHRISTENDOM VS NON-MESSIANIC

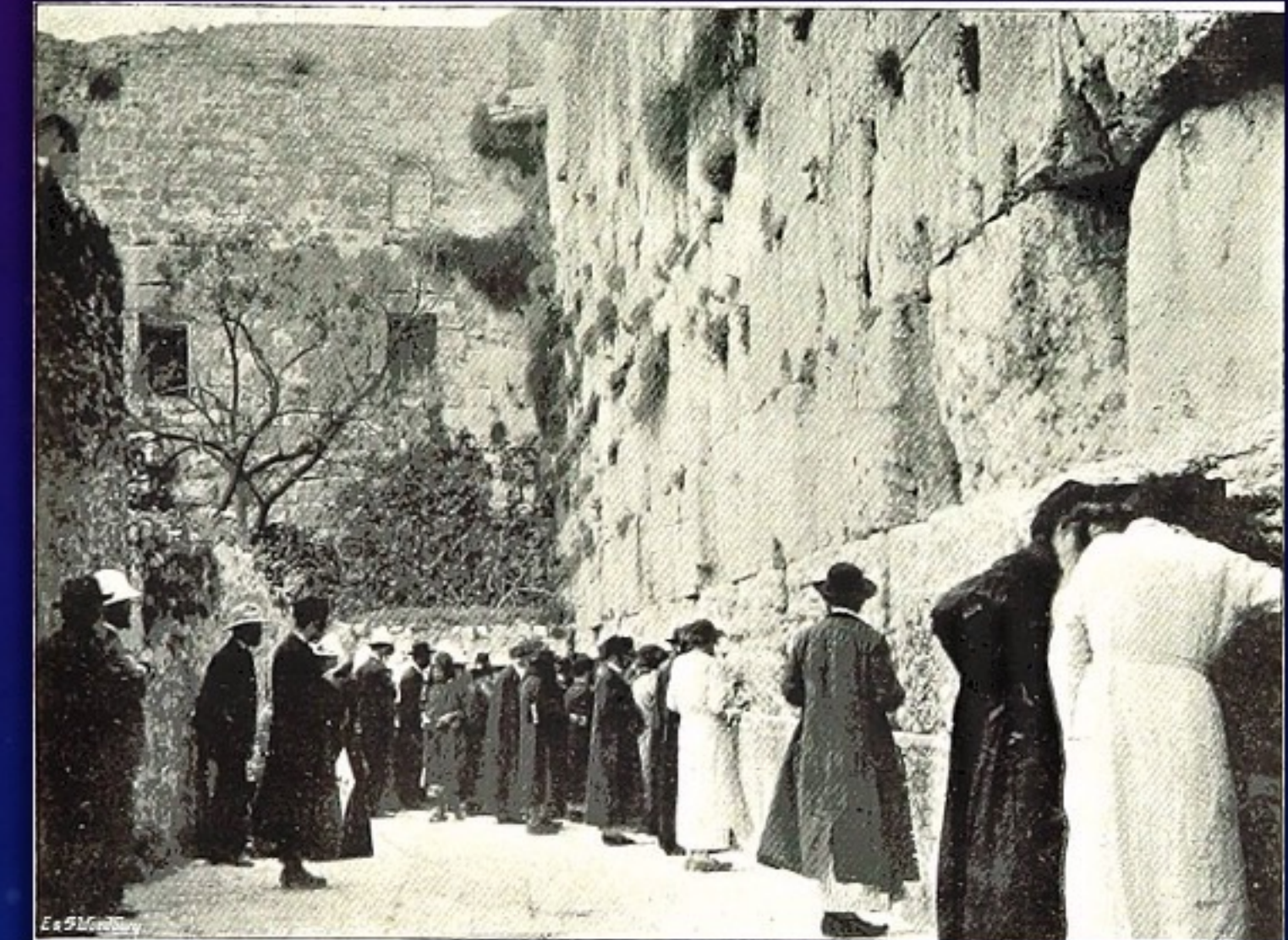
*Concept*—Jesus is not the Jewish Messiah, or Messiah has not yet come.

*Sample Religions*—Judaism

*Biblical Perspectives*

“The woman said to Him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming’ (who is called Christ). ‘When He comes, He will tell us all things.’

Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He.’ (John 4:25-26)”



# JUDAISM

Follows Old Testament, 15 million followers today

## ***Theology***

- Yahweh of Old Testament, denial of Jesus Christ as Messiah

## ***Anthropology***

- Humans made in God's image, emphasis on moral responsibility (613 Mitzvot)

## ***Soteriology***

- Focus on covenant faithfulness; sins covered through

## ***Epistemology***

- Texts—Old Testament, Talmud (commentaries), and rabbinic tradition

## ***Metaphysics***

- Heaven and Hell, supernatural occurrences, God involved in history

# RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

## HISTORIC VS CULTIC

*Concept*—Special revelation is needed to understand the Bible or to access God, typically through relatively modern religious institutions.

*Sample Religions*—Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-Day Adventism, Christian Scientist, Satanism

### *Biblical Perspectives*

“Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

(Matthew 24:26-27)”



# MORMONISM

Founded around 1830AD by Joseph Smith, 17 million followers today

## ***Theology***

- God is an exalted man, many gods exist, Jesus and Satan are spiritual brothers

## ***Anthropology***

- Humans are preexistent spiritual beings incarnated as a test with potential to become gods

## ***Soteriology***

- Salvation through faith, works, and ordinances; multiple levels of heaven

## ***Epistemology***

- Texts—Bible (KJV), Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, Doctrine & Covenants; LDS leadership

## ***Metaphysics***

- Eternal progression, premortal existence, physical resurrection

# RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

## CHRISTIAN VS CATHOLIC

*Concept*—Knowledge of God comes through a regulated church and salvation by works, rather than through the Bible and by faith.

*Sample Religions*—Roman Catholicism, Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Coptic Churches

### *Biblical Perspectives*

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)”



# CATHOLICISM

Ascribed to Peter as first Pope, 1.2 billion followers today

## ***Theology***

- Trinitarian God, veneration of Mary and the Saints

## ***Anthropology***

- Humans are made in God's image; fallen due to original sin; venial and mortal sins

## ***Soteriology***

- Salvation through faith and works, emphasis on the sacraments

## ***Epistemology***

- Texts—Bible (includes Apocrypha) and Magisterium

## ***Metaphysics***

- Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory; focus on spiritual beings and intercession

# UNDERSTANDING DENOMINATIONS

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# THEOLOGICAL DISTINCTIVES



# DENOMINATIONAL DISTINCTIVES

- **Baptism (Method/Recipient)**
  - Paedobaptism/Sprinkling—Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Reformed
- **Leadership (Authority/Governance)**
  - Councils/Synods—Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Reformed
- **Pastors (Men/Women)**
  - Women Leaders—Pentecostal, Lutheran, Methodist
- **Eschatology (Rapture/Millennial)**
  - No Rapture/Amillennial/Postmillennial—Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian
- **Worship (Style/Formality)**
  - Liturgical—Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian

# ADDITIONAL DENOMINATIONAL DISTINCTIVES

- **Role of the Holy Spirit/Gifts/Miracles**
- **Sanctification & Christian Growth**
- **Assurance of Salvation**
- **Calvinistic Leanings**
- **Scripture, Tradition, Experience, Reason**
- **Confessions & Creeds**
- **Church Discipline**
- **Evangelism & Missions**
- **Engagement With Society**
- **Church Membership**

# CALVARY CHAPEL DISTINCTIVES

- **Priority of Word of God**
  - Expository, verse-by-verse teaching
- **Middle ground between Fundamentalism & Pentecostalism**
  - Spiritual gifts exist, but not prioritizing experiences over Scripture
- **Modeled after the Church from the Book of Acts**
  - Teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer
- **Pastor-Led “Moses Model” of church government**
  - Senior pastor leads with the counsel of elders, rather than committee-driven
- **Reliance on the Holy Spirit**
  - Trusting God to lead and grow the church above marketing or growth techniques
- **Emphasis on grace**
  - Central posture of Christian life & ministry; avoidance of legalism

# CALVARY CHAPEL DISTINCTIVES

- **Centrality of Christ**
  - Everything in worship and teaching intended to focus on Jesus
- **Ordered view of spiritual gifts**
  - “We don’t do weird here”
- **Premillennial, Pre-Tribulation Eschatology**
  - Rapture of the Church before the Great Tribulation; literal Millennial Reign
- **Balance of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility**
  - Avoiding extremes of Calvinism and Arminianism
- **Supremacy of love**
  - God’s primary attribute and highest Christian virtue
- **Living by “Ventures of Faith”**
  - Trusting God for provision and ministry initiatives

# DEFENDING YOUR FAITH



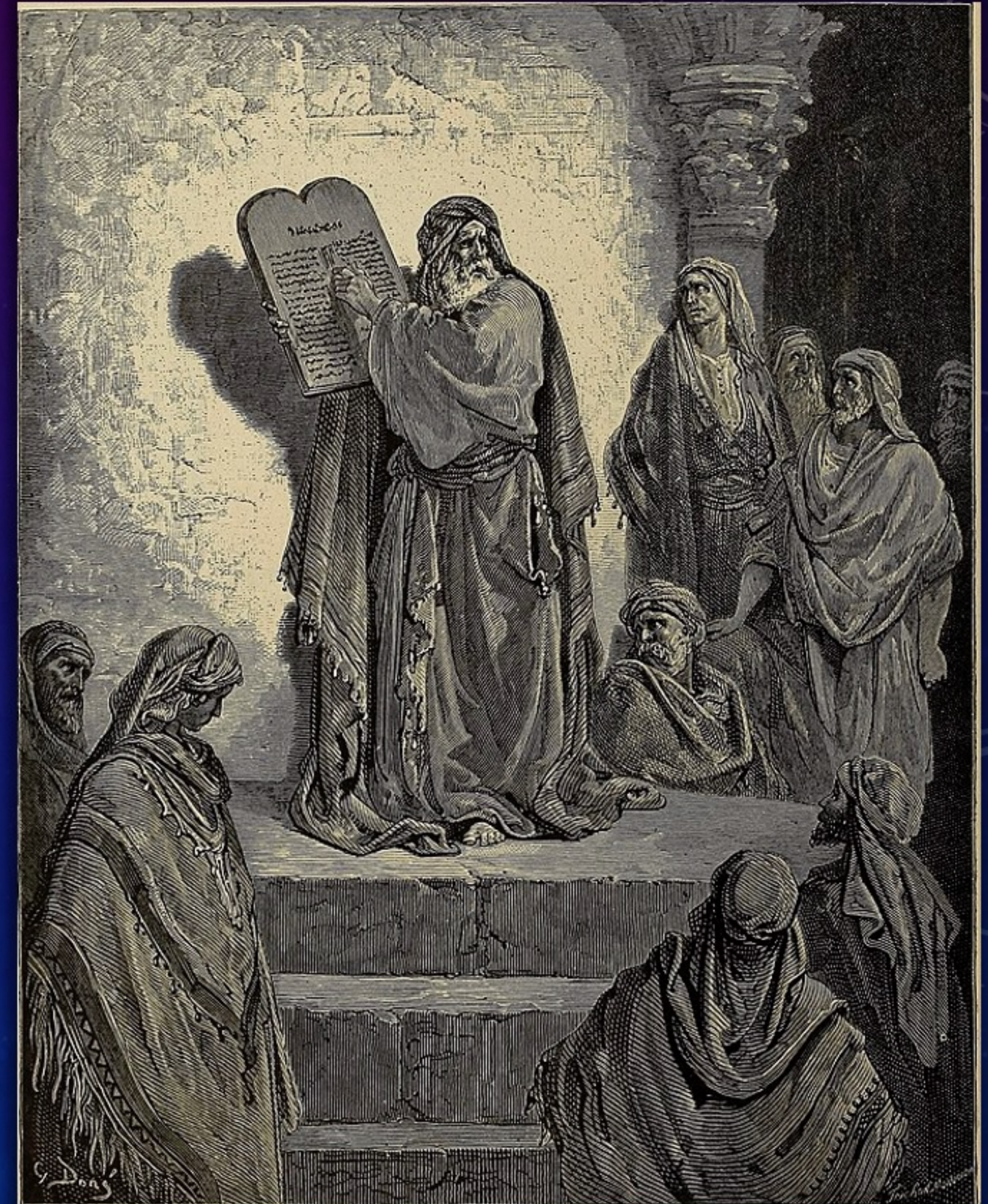
# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

- Be faithful to study the Word and understand it (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- Have confidence that the Gospel has the ability to save souls (Romans 1:16).
- Trust that God will direct your words (Isaiah 55:11).



# STRATEGIES & TACTICS

- **Define your terms.**
  - If referring to biblical terms, describe what you mean and don't assume common understanding.
- **Illustrate the differences.**
  - Show clearly how there are distinctions between Christianity and other faiths.
- **Agree to disagree.**
  - Point out the consequences of what each of you believe and trust the Gospel.



QUESTIONS?



THANK YOU

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## **Bible Study Topics starting Wednesday, April 15, at 6:00 PM**

No child care other than Awanna participants.

### **April 15 and 22**

"Acts is a Book of Transitions", parts 1 & 2

- A comprehensive overview of Acts, its place in the NT, and the many transitions found in Acts after Jesus ascends to Heaven.

### **April 29 and May 6**

"Apostles and Prophets", parts 1 & 2

- Does the New Testament teach that the offices of Apostles and Prophets are for today?
- Are there differences among the Apostles in the New Testament?

**May 13** No Bible Study due to Awanna awards Night

### **May 20 & 27**

"The Purpose of the Sermon on the Mount", parts 1 & 2

- An overview of the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount and how to study it in Matthew chapters 5-7.
- Knowing the correct purpose and interpretation will lead to correct application.

This Schedule will lead us to the CCA conference week and Church in the Park for the rest of the Wednesdays for the Summer of '26.