



## FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

**Subject Category (circle one):** Religion/Ceremony    Celebration    History    Prayer  
Gathas    **Comparative Religion**    Shahnameh

**Age Group (circle one):** PreK-K    Grades 1-3    Grades 4-5    **Grades 6-8**    Grades 9-12

**Lesson # (if applicable):** 6

**Subject of the Lesson:** Christianity

**Background Knowledge for the Teacher:**

### CHRISTIANITY

**Christianity** is a monotheistic religion centered on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth as recounted in the New Testament. Christians believe Jesus to be the Messiah, the "anointed one" predicted in the Jewish Scriptures. The word "Christ" comes from the Greek for "Messiah," (it is actually a title, not a surname), and thus they refer to him as Jesus Christ. With over two billion adherents, Christianity is the world's largest religion.

According to the Gospels of the New Testament (the four books which give a record of Jesus Christ's life and teaching), Jesus was born a Jew in Bethlehem around 4 BCE., and he died circa 28-30 AC. His mother, Mary, was married to Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth. Jesus was believed by his followers to be the son of God. There is not much record of his childhood. He began his ministry around the age of 30 years, becoming a preacher, teacher, and healer. He gathered disciples in the region of Galilee (a region of northern Israel; the northernmost part of Palestine and the ancient kingdom of Israel). Galilee was the center of Jesus's ministry, which included the 12 Apostles (one of a group made up especially of the 12 disciples chosen by Jesus to preach the gospel). There he preached that the end of the world is imminent (about to occur), giving way to the reign (Kingdom) of God. To prepare for this, all must repent and live according to an ethic of love. He asked his followers to be meek and merciful peacemakers.

His moral teachings were based on a new law of love, even of enemies, as opposed to the old law of retribution (retaliation). His reported miracles won him a growing number of followers, who believed that he was the promised messiah (savior). On Passover, he entered Jerusalem on a donkey, where he shared the Last Supper with his disciples and was betrayed to the Roman authorities by Judas Iscariot. Arrested and tried, he was condemned to death as a political agitator and was crucified and buried. Three days later visitors to his tomb found it empty. According to the Gospels, he appeared several times to his disciples before ascending into heaven.

They believe that Jesus, by dying and rising from the dead, made up for the sin of Adam and thus redeemed the world, allowing all who believe in Him to enter heaven. Traditionally, the sin of Adam



has been ascribed to the sin of the first man, Adam, who disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit (of knowledge of good and evil) and, in consequence, transmitted his sin and guilt by heredity to his descendants. The doctrine has its basis in the **Bible (the holy book of the Christians)**. During the thousand years of its composition, almost the entire **Old Testament was written in Hebrew**. But a few chapters in the prophecies of Ezra and Daniel and one verse in Jeremiah were written in a language called Aramaic. The **New Testament**, however, **was written in Greek** because Greek was the language of scholarship during the years of the composition of the New Testament from 50 to 100 AD.

Christians rely on the Bible as the inspired word of God. The central teachings of traditional Christianity are that Jesus is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; that his life on earth, his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven are proof of God's love for humanity and God's forgiveness of human sins; and that by faith in Jesus one may attain salvation and eternal life (see creed). This teaching is embodied in the Bible, specifically in the New Testament, but Christians also accept the Old Testament as a sacred and authoritative Scripture.

Most Christians believe that **God is one single eternal being who exists as three distinct, eternal, and indivisible persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost)**.

**Most Christians believe that salvation from "sin and death" is available through the person and work of Jesus. It is generally believed that Jesus made an atoning sacrifice, completed with his death on the cross, and thereby paid for the sins of mankind. Christians further believe justification and sanctification are made possible through this sacrifice. Christians consider salvation through Jesus completely unearned, but rather a gift from God through his divine grace (or sanctifying grace).** Christian denominations have arrived at several explanations as to exactly how this salvation occurs, though most include a personal acceptance of Jesus as savior.

**Christians' worship places are called Churches.** Common Christian worship include baptism, confirmation or Chrismation, the Eucharist (communion), penance and reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and matrimony. A Christian service is led by a priest, minister, preacher, or pastor.

Virtually all Christian traditions affirm that Christian practice should include acts of personal piety such as prayer, Bible reading, and attempting to live a moral lifestyle. This lifestyle includes not only obedience to the Ten Commandments, as interpreted by Christ (as in the Sermon on the Mount), but also love for one's neighbor in both attitude and action — whether friend or enemy, Christian or non-Christian. This love is commanded by Christ and, according to him, is next only in importance to love toward God; it includes obedience to such injunctions as "feed the hungry" and "shelter the homeless", both informally and formally.

Christianity teaches that it is impossible for people to completely reform themselves, but that moral and spiritual progress can only occur with God's help through the gift of the Holy Spirit who dwells



within all faithful believers. Christians believe that by sharing in Christ's life, death, and resurrection, they die with him to sin and can be resurrected with him to new life.

Most Christians believe in the General Resurrection, in which all people who have ever lived will rise from the dead at the end of time, to be judged by Christ in the end. Christian views of the afterlife generally involve heaven and hell. These realms are thought to be eternal; however, the word "eternal" occurs only once in both the Old Testament and New Testament, in describing the time when the Kingdom of God will exist.

Catholicism adds the transitory realm of purgatory (a state in which the souls of those who have died in grace must repent for their sins) whose denizens (residents) reside there for a period of time before entering into heaven.

In the second millennia of its history, Christianity has been divided by opinions or beliefs that contradict the established religious teachings, and which are condemned by the religious authorities. Today there are three broad divisions, Roman Catholic, Orthodox Eastern, and Protestant; but within the category of Protestantism, there is a particularly large number of divergent denominations.

One of the world's major religions, it predominates in Europe and the Americas, where it has been a powerful historical force and cultural influence, but it also claims adherents in virtually every country of the world.

**Note: the above material was reviewed by Sister Caroljean Willie, a Sister of Charity, Cincinnati, OH, and these were her comments:**

“There is nothing factually incorrect with what you have written, but I have to confess that I had to look up the word purgatory because I have not heard that word in more than 40 years. It is still in the Catholic catechism, but no longer taught as far as I know. Our understanding of why Jesus came is also evolving. There are still many who believe that he came to save us and that is a strong belief in the Church, but more progressive thinking is that Jesus came to teach us how to live more than to save us. Hope that helps”. Cj

### **Christian Celebrations:**

Christian celebrations and festivals center around important dates in Jesus' life.

**Christmas** - Jesus' birth - often celebrated with nativity scenes, stories, pageants recalling the story of Jesus' humble birth in a stable surrounded by animals. Most Christians celebrate Christmas on December 25<sup>th</sup> but Orthodox Christians celebrate it on January 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Advent**-Is the period leading up to Christmas. It begins four Sundays before Christmas. In Church during this time, many Christians are reminded of Old Testament prophecies about the coming of Jesus. The 12 days of Christmas involve special church services such as Midnight Mass on Christmas



eve and a Christmas Day morning service. Often an Advent wreath is used as a focus for prayer during Advent.

**Epiphany** - the visit of the three wise ones to Jesus just after his birth and their subsequent spreading of the news of his birth throughout the world.

**Lent** - the period leading up to Easter commemorating the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert fasting and praying - a time for personal reflection and improvement through prayer, fasting, and study.

**Holy Week** - the last week of Jesus' life.

It starts with Palm Sunday, which celebrates his triumphal entry into Jerusalem the week before he was crucified.

Maundy Thursday (Holy Thursday) a remembrance of the Last Supper at which Jesus shared bread and wine with the disciples.

Good Friday, the day Jesus was crucified on a cross, which is the most recognized symbol of Christianity. Some Christians take part in a walk, carrying a cross.

Holy Saturday is a time for private prayer and there are no services.

**Easter** – Easter Day falls on a Sunday after a full moon that occurs after Spring Equinox. It is a very significant day in the Holy Week. It celebrates Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Eggs are a major symbol of Easter since they symbolize new life. Crosses are often covered with flowers to symbolize Jesus' victory over death.

**Ascension Day** – It always falls on a Thursday and it is 40 days after his resurrection on Easter during which he traveled and preached his message before ascending to Heaven.

**Pentecost** - the gift of the Holy Spirit, God's presence in the world, to Jesus' followers. It is on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after Easter inclusive of Easter Sunday.

**Saints' Days** - official days, recognized by many Christians, especially Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican, celebrating people who have lived particularly holy lives and are recognized as official saints. It is celebrated on November 1<sup>st</sup> in Western churches and the first Sunday after Pentecost in Eastern churches.

In addition, certain passages in an individual Christian's life are marked by celebration and special services. These include **Baptism**, or birth into the Christian church; **Confirmation**, an informed commitment to membership in the church; **weddings**; and **funerals**.



### Lesson for students:

1. Make a PowerPoint of the lesson highlighting the major aspects of Christianity such as:
  - a. The name of the messenger and what we know about Christ.
  - b. The name of Christian scripture and the language it is written in
  - c. Existence of God as one single being in three persons
  - d. Different sects of Christianity
  - e. Basic beliefs and practices
  - f. Where do Christians live today and about how many Christians are in the world?
  - g. Purpose of life in Christianity
  - h. Christian celebrations-include photos or videos for visual experience.
    - i. Lent  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fd\\_C-jHUwZU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fd_C-jHUwZU)
    - ii. Easter  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDHJhfkQHEI>
    - iii. Three wise men  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VySzDA07N-c>  
Who were the three wise men and how does it relate to Zoroastrianism?  
The three Magi are known as Zoroastrian priests.
    - iv. What are some of the Zoroastrian and/or Iranian cultural celebrations that are at the same time as Christian celebrations and how do they relate to one another?
      1. Christmas-Yalda-Birth of Mithra
      2. Easter-Nowruz-Spring time
  - i. The lesson can be enhanced with the following videos:
    - i. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCo93aC7CuQ>
    - ii. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQjS6NGvIQ0>  
The video can be stopped at different sections to discuss with the class a summarization of points said and comparing it to Zoroastrian beliefs and practices.

### Activity for Students:

1. Pair up the students (it can also be an individual activity) to solve the Lesson 6 Puzzle. The team that solves it first is the winner.
2. Make a booklet or a poster of this series of comparative religion lessons.
  - a. Booklet:
    - i. Give each student a sheet of paper and ask them to write, draw or design some of the major aspects of Christianity.



- ii. After finishing all the lessons about the different religions, they can design a cover page and bind all the pages to form a booklet which illustrates their work for all the covered religions.
  - b. Poster:
    - i. Give each student a half sheet of paper and ask them to design a poster depicting some of the major aspects of Christianity.
    - ii. After finishing all the lessons about the different religions, they can glue their half sheets on a poster board and design it.
3. Virtual activity:
  - a. After each lesson, ask students to say something they learned from the day's lesson and record them. Make sure they do not repeat the facts. Use the recording from all the lessons in this series to make a comprehensive video to share.
  - b. Make a Kahoot game.
  - c. Visit the Teacher's Guide section of [fezana.org/education](https://fezana.org/education) and get ideas for in class and virtual activities by using "Activity Menu" and "Virtual Class ideas".
4. Visit a Christian Church close to your center with the class.
5. Break the class into groups of 2-4 students. Have them imagine that they will be talking about Christianity at an interfaith gathering. Give each group a specific category (for example goal of a Christian, the story of Christ, and his/their beliefs, etc.) Give each team about 10-15 minutes to prepare a 5-minute talk about their specific category. Then each group present their talk to the other groups.

#### Sources:

1. <https://www.uri.org/kids/world-religions/christian-celebrations>
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z63pfcw/revision/5>
3. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/All-Saints-Day>
4. <https://christianity.org.uk/article/what-is-the-purpose-of-life>
5. <https://melkite.org/faith/faith-worship/an-explanation-of-the-ceremonies-of-christian-initiation>
6. <https://www.learnreligions.com/the-sacraments-of-initiation-542133>
7. <https://www.lignoma.com/en/magazine/christian-symbols-and-their-meanings/>
8. <https://www.gotquestions.org/difference-Catholic-Protestant.html>

#### Bibliography:

See J. Lebreton and J. Zeiller, *A History of the Early Church* (4 vol., 1944–46; repr. 1962); H. Lietzmann, *The History of the Early Church* (4 vol., tr. 1961; repr. 1967); A. Finkel, *The Pharisees and the Teacher of Nazareth* (1964); H. Marrou et al., *The Christian Centuries* (1964); J. G. Davies, *The Early Christian Church* (1965); H. Chadwick, *The Early Church* (1967); R. M. Grant, *Augustus to Constantine* (1970); R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (1970); R. Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion* (1998).



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