



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 (is 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.

Advent - the four-week season of preparation for the birth of Christ, and for the Second Coming. Often an Advent wreath is used as a focus for prayer during Advent.

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 25th, but Orthodox Christians celebrate it on January 7th.



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.

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 50th 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 1st 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 Material for teacher. Use PowerPoint to teach the lesson and to stop at appropriate sections to start a discussion.
2. Make a printout of the Material for teacher for each student or use a projector to display it on classroom wall (in a virtual class share screen the information). Have each student read a section before discussing it as a class.
3. Enhance the lesson by following up with a YouTube video.
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCo93aC7CuQ>
 - b. <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. Fill out the comparative religion chart for Christianity and discuss the results with the class. Using the chart compare each section with Zoroastrianism.
2. Plan a field day to a Christian Church close to your center.
3. Plan an interfaith half day with your local Church.
4. Invite a representative of Christian faith to your virtual or in person class to share information about the religion. Have each student have a question ready to ask the representative.
5. Have each student write one thing they found interesting about Christianity on a small sheet of paper along with their name, fold it, and place it in a jar. Then have each student take out one of the folded sheets of paper, read the content, and ask the person whose name is on the sheet of paper why they found what they have written interesting and discuss with class.
6. How can we use Christ's teachings today to improve ourselves and our world? Give current event examples when possible.
7. Visit the Teacher's Guide section of fezana.org/education and get ideas for in class and virtual activities by using "Activity Menu" and "Virtual Class ideas".

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>



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).

Prepared by: Bakhtavar Desai

Lesson for students, activity, and the accompanying PowerPoint: Artemis Javanshir

Lesson and PowerPoint edited by: Nina Kalianivala

Date: 1/2023