



Reach

SAYINGS AND TEACHINGS

Sri Ramakrishna on Truthfulness

It is said that truthfulness alone constitutes the spiritual practice of the Kali Yuga (in modern age). If a man clings tenaciously to truth, he ultimately realizes God.

Source: *Great sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 11.

Sri Sarada Devi on the Spirit of Dispassion

Do you notice this human body? Today it is and tomorrow it is not. And the world is full of misery and pain. Why should one be eager to have another birth? The body is never free from its attendant troubles.

Source: *Teachings of Sri Sarada Devi: The Holy Mother*, Sri Ramakrishna Mission Math, Mylapore; page 23.

Swami Vivekananda on Freedom or Mukti

Salvation means knowing the truth. We do not become anything; we are what we are. Salvation [comes] by faith and not by work. It is a question of *knowledge*! You must *know* what you are, and it is done.

Source: *Teachings of Swami Vivekananda* published by Swami Mumukshananda, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta; page 81.

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We welcome you all to the Vedanta Movement in Australia, as epitomized in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, and invite you to involve yourselves and actively participate in the propagation of the Universal Message of Vedanta.

1. NEWS FROM AUSTRALIAN CENTRES 11 JUNE 2021 TO 10 SEPTEMBER 2021

ADELAIDE

16 East Terrace, Kensington Gardens, SA 5068

Email: vedanta.adelaide@gmail.com

Contact: Dr Raman Sharma on (08) 8431 9775

Mrs Pathma Iswaran on (08) 8379 5336

URL: <http://vedantaadelaide.org>

Daily Activities

- The Centre functions from 7.30am-12.30pm and 4.00-8.00pm. The evening vesper service to Sri Ramakrishna is performed from 7.00-7.30 pm followed by *bhajans*, devotional reading and meditation.

Regular Activities

- Swami Manyananda conducted classes and discussions on the *Vedanta Sara* - 'Fundamentals of Vedanta' every Wednesday from 11:00 am to 12:00 noon.
- Swami Manyanand also conducts classes on the *Narada Bhakti Sutras* on Sundays from 11:00 am.
- Every alternate Saturday, Swami Manyananda has been conducting a reading and discussion on *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* before the evening *aratrikam*.

Celebrations

- Sri Krishna Janmashtami* was celebrated on 30 August 2021. The evening program included

aratrikam, *puja* of Sri Krishna, reading and explanation from the *Srimad Bhagavatam* by Swami Manyananda on the Divine birth of Sri Krishna, *pushpanjali* and *prasad* distribution.

Other Activities

- The Vedanta Centre of Adelaide in collaboration with the Telugu Association of South Australia organized an event on 'Vedanta and Harmony of Religions'. Swami Manyananda sang *bhajans*, conducted meditation, undertook the talk, question and answers, led the discussion, and sang *aratrikam*. *Prasad* was distributed at the end.



Vedanta and the Harmony of Religions Seminar

BRISBANE

96 Vedanta Drive, (next to 2 Poppy Crescent),
Springfield Lakes, QLD 4300

Email: info@vedantabrisbane.org

Contact: Swami Atmeshananda (07) 3818 9986

URL: <http://vedantabrisbane.org>

Daily Activities

- Daily meditation and the chanting of hymns were conducted between 6:15 am and



Sri Krishna Janmashtami in Adelaide

7:15 am.

- Vesper service (*aratrikam*), *bhajans*, and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* were held between 6:30 pm and 7:15 pm.

Regular Activities

- Sunday mornings:- (a) Yoga class from 8:00 am to 9:15 am. (b) *Srimad-Bhagavad Gitā* Class (10:00 am—11:00 am). (d) *Bala Sangha* or children's classes and *Yuva Sangha* (10:00 am—11:00 am during school term).
- A class on the *Brahma Sutras* was conducted on Tuesdays from 11 a.m. to 12 noon. In the evening Yoga classes are conducted from 6:30 to 7:45 pm.
- A Vedic Chanting class was held online on Wednesdays from 8:30 am to 9:30 am online.
- A Monthly Satsang was held at Sunnybank Hills on the first Monday of every month at 19, Scribbly Gum Street, Sunnybank Hills.
- Classes on *Meditation and Spiritual Life* from 7:30 pm — 8:30 pm at 134 Fleming Rd, Chapel Hill, Qld, on alternate Fridays.
- A reading from the direct monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna is conducted on their birthdates after the evening *aratrikam*.
- Chanting of the *Sri Ramanama Sankirtanam* was held fortnightly at the Centre on *ekadashi* days (7:30 pm — 8:00 pm).
- Devotees took turns in decorating and worshipping Sri Ramakrishna's image every week at the Sri Selva Vinayakar temple, South Maclean, Qld.
- Swami Atmeshananda conducted *Vivekachudamani* classes for the Vedanta Group at Toowoomba on the first Wednesday of every month.
- A class on the *Ashtavakra Gita* was conducted at 101 Sharpless Drive, Springfield Lakes, on a fixed day of the month.
- On alternate Saturdays, the *Bhagavad Gita* was studied by the Vedanta group on the Gold Coast from 5.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.
- On alternate Fridays, the Centre's volunteers cooked food at its soup kitchen for the benefit of the needy. An average of 100 meals per week are cooked by volunteers, packed into containers and frozen. They are distributed free of cost through the Westside Community Centre, Goodna Street Life shop, Queensland Youth and Fami-

lies Support Services and the Base Youth Support Services.

- Every Friday the Centre's food bank distributed groceries to the needy. An average of 12 grocery hampers along with cooked food and free bread were distributed to the needy.
- The Maa Sarada's kitchen prepares and sells food at a reasonable cost to people. On an average, about 110 persons avail themselves of this service. The kitchen is efficiently managed by volunteers.



Maa Sarada's Kitchen

- On Fridays, a Justice of the Peace (JP) renders service at the Centre from 10 am to 11 a.m. People needing the service access this free service.

Other Activities

- The Centre was admitted as a member of Queensland Faith Communities Council (QFCC) at the AGM held on 17 June 2021.
- Hindi language classes were conducted weekly on Sundays from 18 July 2021 by a volunteer teacher. Fees are not charged for participation.
- The Centre conducted a programme on the occasion of International Yoga day on 20 June 2021. A talk on the effect of yoga on the body and mind, followed by yoga exercises and high tea formed part of the programme on this day. There were separate sessions for children and adults.
- Swami Atmeshananda was invited by the Brisbane Theosophical Society to give a talk on the subject "Problem of suffering and solution in Vedanta" on 25th August 2021.



International Yoga Day



Guru Purnima

Krishna, devotional songs, *aratrikam* and *prasad* distribution.

Forthcoming Programmes

- During school holidays from 20 to 24 September, the Centre will conduct holiday camps for children aged from 5 to 11.
- The Annual Multicultural programme of the Centre is scheduled to be organized on Sunday, 3 October 2021 at the Coorparoo Secondary College from 5.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. The programme will showcase multicultural talents from Brisbane.
- Mental health week activities:-In preparation for Mental health week in October (9 to 17), two activities are being undertaken. They are, a) A fortnightly gardening workshop held by Ann Osborne, our volunteer gardening expert, started on 28 August 2021. The participants were happy to learn about setting up home gardens using kitchen scrap and readily available materials. B) Making of mini smiley plush toys (craft) taught to a few interested persons; once ready, the plush toys would be donated to the frontline workers (nurses and the like) at Ipswich hospital and at another place (to be decided).



Talk at the Brisbane Theosophical Society

- The Centre organised children's vacation programmes during school holidays from 5 to 8 July 2021. Meditation, Yoga, story-telling, painting workshop, skit, gardening, creative writing workshop etc were conducted during this programme. 20 children participated in this programme.

Celebrations

- *Guru Purnima* was celebrated on 24 July 2021 at the Centre. Worship, devotional music, a talk on the 'Significance of the Concept of Guru' and distribution of *prasad* constituted the programme.
- *Sri Krishna Janmashtami* was held on 30 August 2021 at the Centre in the evening. On the occasion, there was chanting from the *Sri Vishnu Sahasranamam*, reading from the 'Life of Sri

CANBERRA

17 Bean Crescent, Mckellar, ACT 2617

Email: vedacanberra@gmail.com

Contact: Mr Jaishankar Venkataraman 62587612/0433593860

Regular Activities

- On account of the Covid 19 pandemic the *Bhagavad Gita* classes have been suspended temporarily.

ly. Friends and devotees are accessing the classes online. When the classes recommence they will be held at the Belconnen Community Meeting Room, 12 Chandler St, Belconnen, ACT. Monthly lectures are advertised by e-mail once scheduled.

MELBOURNE

5-7 Angus Ave, Ringwood East VIC 3135

Email: vedanta.melb@gmail.com

Contact: Swami Sunishthananda (03) 8684 9594

URL <http://www.vedantamelbourne.org>

Regular Activities

- The shrine was open from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm seven days a week.
- Vesper service (*aratrikam*), *bhajans*, reading from the Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda literature and meditation were conducted between 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm daily.
- *Ramanama Sankirtanam* on *Ekadasi* Days.
- The *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* is discussed online and onsite, when there is no lockdown, on Tuesdays from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
- A class on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* is conducted on Thursdays from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm. This class is conducted online and onsite, when there is no lockdown.
- A scriptural class on Sundays from 10:00 am to 11:00 am on the *Bhagavad Gita* online and onsite when there are no lockdowns.
- Guided meditation is conducted online and onsite, when there is no lockdown, on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 7:30 pm to 8:00 pm and on Sundays from 9:30 am to 10:00 am.

Celebrations

- *Guru Purnima* was celebrated online on the evening of Saturday, 24 July 2021, and morning of Sunday, 25 July 2021. The programme included *aratrikam*, chanting and special worship on the evening of 24 July and a talk on 'Sri Ramakrishna as Guru' on morning of 25 July.
- *Sri Krishna Janmashtami* was celebrated online. On

the evening of Monday, 30 August 2021. The programme included *aratrikam*, special worship, *Shyama Nama Sankirtanam* and *bhajans*.



Guru Purnima in Melbourne



Sri Krishna Janmashtami in Melbourne

PERTH

51 Golf View Street, Yorkine, WA 6060

Email: vedantaperth@gmail.com

Contact: Sumita Chetty (04) 3892 8136

Parthiv Parekh 0430 511 699

Regular Activities:

- *Aratrikam* was conducted each night by a person or family taking the responsibility for it.



Monthly satsang in Perth

- Monthly *satsangs* were held on 13 June 2021, 18 July 2021 and 15 August 2021.

Other Activities

- The Bengali Association of Western Australia, represented by Dr. Ashis Roy and the Vedanta Centre of Sydney (Perth Chapter) represented by Hiren Mukhopadhyay secured a grant of AUD \$100,000 from the Government of Western Australia, for the Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan, India, for providing Covid 19 relief services.

SYDNEY

2 Stewart Street, Ermington, NSW 2115

144A Marsden Road, Ermington, NSW 2115 (Entry)

Email: vedasydney@vedantasydney.org

Contact: (02) 8197 7351

URL: www.vedantaaustralia.org

Daily Activities

- The shrine was open from 6:30 am to 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm to 8:30 pm seven days a week.
- Meditation from 6:30 am to 7:00 am and chanting from 7:00 am to 7:30 am.
- Vesper service (*aratrikam*), *bhajans*, and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* were conducted from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The times

change on special occasions.

Regular Activities

- Swami Sridharananda conducted his study of the *Srimad-Bhagavad Gitā* on Sundays between 9:30 am and 10:30 am. Due to the current restrictions owing to Covid 19, the talks were pre-recorded and uploaded to the Centre's website and Youtube Channel.
- Swami Sridharananda conducted a class on the *Mundaka Upanishad* on Saturdays from 11:00am to 12:00 noon. Due to the current restrictions owing to Covid 19, the talks were pre-recorded and uploaded to the Centre's website and Youtube Channel.
- *Sri Ramanama Sankirtanam* was conducted on *ekadashi* days after the vesper service.
- Devotees also received spiritual counselling and guidance.

Celebrations

- *Guru Purnima* was observed in a simple way in the *ashrama* because of the Covid lockdown with *aratrikam* and *bhajans* on 24 July 2021.
- *Sri Krishna Janmashtami* was celebrated on 30 August 2021. On account of the current lockdown, the celebrations were confined to the members of the *ashrama* and included *puja*, *aratrikam*, chanting of *Shyama Nama Sankritana* and *bhajans*.



Sri Krishna Janmashtami in Sydney

2. OBITUARY: SWAMI SHIVAMAYANANDA, VICE PRESIDENT, RAMAKRISHNA MATH & RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

Swami Shivamayananda, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, passed away on 11 June due to Covid 19, a heart attack and other complications. He was 86. During his formative years, he associated with some of the disciples of the Holy Mother and other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. This compilation will concentrate on these initial contacts. It is compiled from the booklet *Swami Shivamayananda* which is published by the Ramakrishna Math. Readers are directed to the original booklet for further and complete account of his life.

Swami Shivamayanandaji Maharaj, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, was known as Ranendranath Sen. He was born on Thursday, 20 December 1934, in the town of Supaul in Bihar. His ancestors belonged to Mulghar village in the Khulna division of Bangladesh. His farther Jitendranath settled with his family at Varanasi in 1941, where Charubala Devi, his wife, continued to stay with her children, even after Jitendranath passed away in 1945.

Ranendra began his academic career in the local Education Academy and moved to the well-known *Chintamani Mukherjee Anglo-Bengali Collegiate School* in Benares. It was from here that in 1952, he passed the High School exam. In 1954 he passed the Intermediate (higher secondary) exam from the Central Hindu College, Kamachha (Varanasi), as a science student. He completed his graduation studies in Science-Mathematics from Benares Hindu University (BHU) in 1956 and his postgraduation course in Mathematics in 1959 from the same university passing in the first division.

One of his father's sisters (*pishimaa* in Bengali), called Monee *pishimaa*, stayed in Purnea (Bihar). She frequently visited the *Chandra Villa* near *Agastya Kund*. She was a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. From the age of 15 itself Ranen had been her companion during her visits to the Advaita Ashrama at Varanasi (a branch of the Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math). Swami Apurvananda, a disciple of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and also a *sevak* of Mahapurush Maharaj (Swami Shivananda), was the head of the Advaita Ashrama then. Many senior sadhus of the Ramakrishna Sangha who were disciples of either the Holy Mother, or Swami Brahmananda or Mahapurush Maharaj stayed there during those days. He also had the good fortune to interact with Swami Arupanandaji (Rashbehari Maharaj, a *sevak* of the Holy Mother) who compiled the book *Sri Sri Mayer Katha* (in Bangla).

Gradually his visits to the Advaita Ashrama increased. On holidays he would almost always come to meet these advanced souls and listen to their words of wisdom. Swami Dharmeshananda (Dhiren Maharaj, a disciple of Mahapurush Maharaj, who had



the good fortune to associate closely with Master Mahashay 'M') was then the librarian at Advaita Ashrama. This library had a rich collection of invaluable books. Dhiren Maharaj slowly became very affectionate towards the young Ranen and would entrust him with library work. Many moth-eaten old books had just been carefully cleaned. Ranen was entrusted with the task of recording their titles in a new register since he had very good handwriting. Ranen would also sometimes go and see Swami Jnanadananda (Neelakantha Maharaj, who was Thakur's pujari at Belur Math and had done puja on the consecration day of the Sri Ramakrishna temple), another senior swami, and unabashedly say that he was hungry

and the swami always gave him some sweets or fruits.

Swami Arupanandaji was impressed with this young boy endowed with good *samskaras*. Ranen was then engaged in his postgraduate studies at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and would do the library work at the ashrama in the afternoons. Seeing him working with full concentration in the library, Arupanandaji one day asked him (in *Bangla* in his typical East Bengal accent): “Do you attend to your studies also or do you just do this library-work?”. With a soft smile, Ranen replied that he also attended to his course studies. Another question: Did you eat *Thakur’s Prasad* (food offered to Sri Ramakrishna)? Yes, I did, was the answer from Ranen. Ok then, eat this betel-roll (*paan*). Ranen was taken aback because elders would always discourage youngsters from eating *paan*. Seeing Ranen’s hesitation, the swami persisted, saying ‘eat, eat’! And then he explained that the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi always gave her children a betel-roll after meals (*Prasad*) and said that she felt very happy to see them eat *paan* after food. In later life Swami Shivamayanandaji cultivated this habit of chewing *paan* after having *Prasad*.

Swami Vishuddhanandaji Maharaj, then one of the Vice-Presidents of the Ramakrishna Sangha, had decided that he would spend the rest of his life at Varanasi. He was accordingly staying at the Home of Service where he would give *mantra diksha* (spiritual initiation) to aspir-

ants. Swami Arupanandaji asked Ranen to get *mantra diksha* from Swami Vishuddhanandaji. Ranen asked Rashbehari Maharaj in turn: Is this swami a *brahmajna* (knower of Brahman)? Arupanandaji in his usual East Bengal style told him point blank: “Keep aside all these enquiries! What you will get here is genuine, unadulterated stuff! (*ekhane dikhaatee nilay, bhe-jaal paabee naa*)”. And so it came about that on 26 October 1956, Ranen was blessed with *mantra diksha* by Swami Vishuddhanandaji Maharaj.

One particular incident from the life of Rashbehari Maharaj had especially impressed Ranen. He once saw Swami Arupanandaji Maharaj sitting on a cot in the shade of a fruit tree on the Advaita Ashrama campus, listening to the radio. Young Ranen said to Maharaj: “You are a sadhu. Instead of utilising your time for *japa* and meditation, you are listening to the radio!” Unabashed, Arupanandaji replied: “I am not doing anything secretly!” The scene left an indelible impression on the young Ranen and this trait of complete openness was noticeable in the life of Shivamayanandaji Maharaj himself.

Even as a student of the BHU, Ranen had become a volunteer at the Advaita Ashrama. During the Durga Puja he would stay at the ashrama for the entire duration of the puja’s 5-6 days. He would also stay overnight in the ashrama during Kali Puja, helping in the puja jobs. Thus from 1952 itself he had the good fortune of associating closely with Swami

Vishuddhanandaji Maharaj. For several years he had observed Maharaj remaining absorbed in deep meditation when the puja was in progress. He was charmed with such singular attention to *japa-dhyana*.

The seed of renunciation started sprouting in Ranen’s mind around this time. After completing his Master of Arts exam he went to Lucknow with his brother to their elder sister’s house. Their mother was not at the *Chandra Villa* home then. On the way back, Ranen got down from the train at Varanasi and his younger brother journeyed further to reach the Shilpa Mandir of Saradapitha at Belur Math for studies.

Ranen had now decided that he would join the Ramakrishna Order and accordingly conveyed this intention to his guru. Swami Vishuddhanandaji asked him to report to Swami Premeshanandaji Maharaj (both were Holy Mother’s disciples) at the Sargachhi Ashrama, who was then leading a retired life. He wrote a letter to his *gurubhai* and handed it to Ranen asking him to go to Belur Math. Just on the day Ranen had decided to leave the *Chandra Villa*, his elder brother Niren arrived there. Though taken aback a little initially, Ranen boarded a Howrah-bound train early next morning and, after visiting Dakshineswar first, he came to Belur Math. With him was the 5th volume of *Sri Sri Ramakrishna-Kathamrita* (which he had obtained surreptitiously from his brother!). He had asked his elder brother: “By losing which volume of the Kathamrita would you feel the least pain?” A strange question indeed! After

some thinking, the brother said that loss of the 5th volume would perhaps be the least painful. And so that night Ranen took away this volume from his brother's possessions. From Belur Math Ranen wrote a postcard to his mother conveying his decision to join the Ramakrishna Order.

Ranen arrived at Belur Math on 11 July 1959. He was allowed to stay in the *Visitors' Room*. He would do odd jobs at the Math: dressing vegetables, cleaning Swamiji's temple, etc. Soon, he was asked to go to Sargachhi. Thus on 29 July 1959, Ranen arrived at Sargachhi Ashrama. A senior swami at Belur Math reminisced: One day in the month of June or July, I went to see Swami Premeshanandaji Maharaj at Sargachhi. There I saw a good-looking young lad dressed in typical Bengali attire of (white) dhoti and (blue) shirt staying at the *Vinod Kutir*. I asked Premesh Maharaj about this boy. Premeshanandaji explained that Jiten (Swami Vishuddhanandaji's pre-

monastic name) has sent this talented boy from Kashi (Benares) saying: "Maharaj, this boy is well educated, well mannered and of good character. Please keep him with you. He will serve you through which he will get both his food (daily requirements) and medicine (spiritual guidance)". Swami Suhitanandaji Maharaj (then as Br. Sanatan) was attending to all the needs of Swami Premeshanandaji Maharaj. Calling Swami Sukhadanandaji Maharaj, the then secretary of Sargachhi ashrama, Premesh Maharaj said to him: "Entrust this lad with school work. He will prove to be an asset". Swami Sukhadananandiji was naturally very glad to hear this. From that time onwards, up to August 1967 (barring the 2 years at the Probationers' centre at Belur Math and the 1 year for completing the BT course—Bachelor of Teaching then, now called B.Ed.), Ranen served the multipurpose high school at Sargachhi, including as its headmas-

ter. During this period he also became conversant with school administration work, puja, etc. Swami Vishuddhanandaji Maharaj would often enquire about the welfare of his disciple, Ranen.

During this time he had the good fortune to serve Premesh Maharaj in an indirect way. Premesh Maharaj was then quite old and was suffering from old-age related ailments. There was need for an assistant who would stay through the night. Two or three young boys would do this by turns. Ranen also started reporting here for vigil after finishing his school work. When, after finishing his duration of the seva, one of the assistants would retire for rest, Ranen would go to wake up the second sevak to report for work.

2. FEATURE ARTICLE: CHRISTIANITY

(COMPILED PRIMARILY FROM THE BBC'S WEBSITE AND OTHER SOURCES)

Historical/Social Context

Christianity originated in Jewish Palestine, a province of the Roman Empire. The first Christians were Jews who attended temple, read the Jewish [scriptures](#), kept the [Sabbath](#), and adhered to Jewish dietary and religious [practices](#). In the decades following the death of Jesus, Jewish Christians quickly spread to other Mediterranean provinces of Rome and began converting Gentiles.

Two or three centuries passed before a religion completely sep-

arate from Judaism took shape, a religion that we now recognize as Christianity. The Jewish, Greek, and Roman cultures of the first two centuries of the Common [Era](#) had deep and lasting influence on the new faith during this formative time.

Christianity is founded on the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and those who follow him are called "Christians". Christianity has many different branches and forms with accompanying varie-

ty in beliefs and practices. The three major branches of Christianity are Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism, with numerous subcategories within each of these branches.

Who Was Jesus?

Most historians believe that Jesus was a real person who was born between 2 B.C. and 7 B.C. Much of what scholars know about Jesus comes from the New Testament of the Christian Bible.

According to the text, Jesus was

born to a young Jewish virgin named Mary in the town of Bethlehem, south of [Jerusalem](#) in modern-day [Palestine](#). Christians believe the conception was a supernatural event, with God impregnating Mary via the Holy Spirit.

Very little is known about Jesus's childhood. Scriptures reveal that he grew up in Nazareth, he and his family fled persecution from King Herod and moved to Egypt, and his "earthly" father, Joseph, was a carpenter.

Jesus was raised Jewish, and according to most scholars, he aimed to reform [Judaism](#)—not create a new religion.

When he was around 30 years old, Jesus started his public ministry after being baptized in the Jordan River by the prophet known as John the Baptist.

For about three years, Jesus traveled with 12 appointed disciples (also known as the 12 apostles), teaching large groups of people and performing what witnesses described as miracles. Some of the most well-known miraculous events included raising a dead man named Lazarus from the grave, walking on water and curing the blind.

Many scholars believe Jesus died between 30 A.D. and 33 A.D., although the exact date is debated among theologians.

According to the Bible, Jesus was arrested, tried and condemned to death. Roman governor [Pontius Pilate](#) issued the order to kill Jesus after being pressured by Jewish leaders who alleged that Jesus was guilty of a variety of crimes, including blasphemy.

Jesus was crucified by Roman

soldiers in Jerusalem, and his body was laid in a tomb. According to scripture, three days after his crucifixion, Jesus's body was missing.

In the days after Jesus's death, some people reported sightings and encounters with him. Authors in the Bible say the resurrected Jesus ascended into Heaven.

On the Sunday following his execution, some of his women followers discovered that the tomb into which his body had been placed was empty.

Jesus then appeared to them, alive, as the Jesus they had known prior to his death. His followers realised that God had raised Jesus from the dead.

Jesus was seen by many of his disciples and followers over the next few days before, according to the Gospel accounts, he was taken up into Heaven.

It has been suggested that the work of Jesus Christ and the impact of his death and resurrection would not have made any lasting impact on the world were it not for the missionary work of [Paul](#).

The account of Paul's conversion to Christianity is contained in the New Testament book, the Acts of the Apostles.

Before his conversion Paul had been known as Saul and had been violently opposed to the Christian faith as taught by Jesus and after his death, by his disciples.

Saul experienced a dramatic conversion, known as the Damascus Road conversion, when he was temporarily blinded.

He found himself filled with the

Holy Spirit and immediately began preaching the Christian Gospel.

Jesus's Teachings

Jesus used parables—short stories with hidden messages—in his teachings.

Some of the main themes that Jesus taught, which Christians later embraced, include:

- Love God.
- Love your neighbor as yourself.
- Forgive others who have wronged you.
- Love your enemies.
- Ask God for forgiveness of your sins.

Jesus is the Messiah and was given the authority to forgive others.

- Repentance of sins is essential.
- Don't be hypocritical.
- Don't judge others.

The Kingdom of God is near. It's not the rich and powerful—but the weak and poor—who will inherit this kingdom.

In one of Jesus's most famous speeches, which became known as the *Sermon on the Mount*, he summarized many of his moral instructions for his followers.

The Christian Bible is a collection of 66 books written by various authors. It's divided into two parts: The Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament, which is also recognized by followers of [Juda-](#)

[ism](#), describes the history of the Jewish people, outlines specific laws to follow, details the lives of many prophets, and predicts the coming of the Messiah.

The New Testament was written after Jesus's death. The first four books—*Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John*—are known as the "Gospels," which means "good news." These texts, composed sometime between 70 A.D. and 100 A.D., provide accounts of the life and death of Jesus.

Letters written by early Christian leaders, which are known as "epistles," make up a large part of the New Testament. These letters offer instructions for how the church should operate.

The *Acts of the Apostles* is a book in the New Testament that gives an account of the apostles' ministry after Jesus's death. The author of Acts is the same author as one of the Gospels—it is effectively "part two" to the Gospels, of what happened after Jesus's death and resurrection.

The final book in the New Testament, *Revelation*, describes a vision and prophecies that will occur at the end of the world, as well as metaphors to describe the state of the world.

Types of Christianity

Christianity is broadly split into three branches: Catholic, Protestant and (Eastern) Orthodox.

The Catholic branch is governed by the Pope and Catholic bishops around the world. The Orthodox (or Eastern Orthodox) is split into independent units each governed by a Holy Synod; there is no central governing

structure akin to the Pope.

There are numerous denominations within Protestant Christianity, many of which differ in their interpretation of the Bible and understanding of the church.

Some Beliefs

The concept of Original Sin

Original sin is an Augustine Christian doctrine that says that everyone is born sinful. This means that they are born with a built-in urge to do bad things and to disobey God. It is an important doctrine within the Roman Catholic Church. The concept of Original Sin was explained in depth by St Augustine and formalised as part of Roman Catholic doctrine by the Councils of Trent in the 16th Century.

Original sin is not just this inherited spiritual disease or defect in human nature; it's also the 'condemnation' that goes with that fault.

Some Christians believe that original sin explains why there is so much wrong in a world created by a perfect God, and why people need to have their souls 'saved' by God.

Original sin is a condition, not something that people do: It's the normal spiritual and psychological condition of human beings, not their bad thoughts and actions. Even a newborn baby who hasn't done anything at all is damaged by original sin.

In traditional Christian teaching, original sin is the result of Adam and Eve's disobedience to God when they ate a forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden.

Original sin affects individuals by separating them from God, and bringing dissatisfaction and guilt into their lives.

The only way people can receive God's grace is by accepting his love and forgiveness, believing that [Jesus Christ died on the cross](#) to redeem their sins, and getting baptised.

The Immaculate Conception

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception teaches that [Mary, the mother of Christ](#), was conceived without [sin](#) and her conception was thus *immaculate*.

Mary's sinless conception is the reason why [Catholics](#) refer to Mary as "full of grace".

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated by Catholics on **December 8th** each year.

Atonement and Reconciliation

The events leading up to the arrest and [crucifixion of Jesus](#) are well-told by the Gospel writers, as are stories of the Resurrection. Christians [believe](#) that [Jesus](#) was far more than a political radical. For them the death of Jesus was part of a divine plan to save humanity.

The death and resurrection of this one man is at the very heart of the Christian faith. For Christians it is through Jesus's death that people's broken relationship with God is restored. This is known as the Atonement.

The word *atonement* is used in Christian theology to describe what is achieved by the death of Jesus. William Tyndale introduced the word in 1526, when he was working on his popular

translation of the [Bible](#), to translate the Latin word *reconciliation*.

In the Revised Standard Version the word *reconciliation* replaces the word atonement. Atonement (at-one-ment) is the reconciliation of men and women to God through the death of Jesus.

Christian theology suggests that although God's creation was perfect, the Devil tempted the first man Adam and [sin](#) was brought into the world. Everybody carries this original sin with them which separates them from God, just as Adam and Eve were separated from God when they were cast out of the Garden of Eden.

God, Jesus and the saints

Christians believe that there is only one God, whom they call Father as Jesus Christ taught them.

Christians recognize [Jesus](#) as the Son of God who was sent to save mankind from death and sin.

Jesus Christ taught that he was Son of God. His teachings can be summarized, briefly as the love of God and love of one's neighbour.

Jesus said that he had come to fulfil God's law rather than teach it.

Christians believe in justification by faith - that through their belief in Jesus as the Son of God, and in his death and resurrection, they can have a right relationship with God whose forgiveness was made once and for all through the death of Jesus Christ.

Christians believe in the [Trinity](#) - that is, in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Christians believe that God took human form as Jesus Christ and that God is present today through the work of the Holy Spirit and evident in the actions of believers.

Christians believe that there is a life after earthly death.

While the actual nature of this life is not known, Christians believe that many spiritual experiences in this life help to give them some idea of what eternal life will be like.

These days, the word [saint](#) is most commonly used to refer to a Christian who has lived a particularly good and holy life on earth, and with whom miracles are claimed to have been associated after their death.

The formal title of Saint is conferred by the [Roman Catholic](#) and [Orthodox](#) Churches through a process called *canonization*.

Members of these Churches also believe that Saints created in this way can intercede with God on behalf of people who are alive today. This is not accepted by most Protestants.

Prayer and Ritual

Prayer is the means by which Christians communicate with their God.

The New Testament records that [Jesus taught his disciples how to pray](#) and that he encouraged them to address God as *Father*. Christians believe that they continue this tradition.

Sometimes the prayers are formal and part of a ritual laid down for hundreds of years.

Others are personal and sponta-

neous, and come from personal or group need.

Whilst prayer is often directed to God as Father, as taught by Jesus, some traditions encourage prayer to God through intermediaries such as saints and martyrs.

Prayers through [Mary](#), as the mother of God, are central to some churches and form a traditional part of their worship.

The Church

The Christian church is fundamental to believers. Although it has many faults it is recognized as God's body on earth.

The church is the place where the Christian faith is nurtured and where the Holy Spirit is manifest on earth.

It is where Christians are received into the faith and where they are brought together into one body through the [Eucharist](#).

Baptism

The Christian church believes in one *baptism* into the Christian church, whether this be as an infant or as an adult, as an outward sign of an inward commitment to the teachings of Jesus.

Eucharist

[Eucharist](#) is a Greek word for thanksgiving. Its celebration is to commemorate the final meal that Jesus took with his disciples before his death (the Last Supper).

This rite comes from the actions of Jesus who, at that meal, took bread and wine and asked his disciples to consume them and continue to do so in memory of him.

At the meal, the wine represented his blood and the bread his

body.

The Eucharist (also known as a Communion meal in some churches) is central to the Church and is recognised as a sign of unity amongst Christians.

The Trinity

Christian beliefs concerning God

- There is only one God
- God is a [Trinity](#) of Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- God is perfect
- God is omnipotent
- God is everywhere
- Human beings can get to know God through prayer, [worship](#), love, and mystical experiences
- God knows everything
- God [created](#) the universe
- God keeps the universe going
- God intervenes in the universe
- God loves everyone unconditionally (though people have to comply with various conditions in order to achieve salvation)
- Human beings can get to know God through God's grace - that is through his love and his power
- God the Son
- God lived on earth as [Jesus](#)
- Jesus was both wholly God and wholly human
- Jesus was born to a human woman, Mary, but conceived of the Holy Spirit
- Because Jesus was wholly human he was subject to pain, suffering, and sorrow like other

human beings

- Jesus was executed by [crucifixion](#) but rose from the dead at the *Resurrection*
- Jesus's life provides a perfect example of how God wants people to live
- [Jesus died on the Cross](#) so that those who believe in him will be forgiven for all their sins

God the Holy Spirit

- After the Resurrection, Jesus remained on earth for only a few days before going up into Heaven
- Jesus promised that he would stay with his followers, so after he went to Heaven he sent his Spirit to guide them
- The Holy Spirit continues to guide, comfort, and encourage Christians

The core belief

The doctrine of the Trinity is the Christian belief that:

There is One God, who is Father, [Son](#), and Holy Spirit.

Other ways of referring to the Trinity are the *Triune God* and the *Three-in-One*.

Christmas

Christmas is marked on the **25 December (7 January** for Orthodox Christians), a holy day that marks the birth of Jesus, the son of God.

The story of Christmas

Jesus' birth, known as the *nativity*, is described in the New Testament of the Bible.

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke give different accounts. It is from them that the nativity story is pieced together.

Both accounts tell us that Jesus was born to a woman called Mary who was engaged to Joseph, a carpenter. The Gospels state that Mary was a virgin when she became pregnant.

In Luke's account Mary was visited by an angel who brought the message that she would give birth to God's son. According to Matthew's account, Joseph was visited by an angel who persuaded him to marry Mary rather than send her away or expose her pregnancy.

Matthew tells us about some wise men who followed a star that led them to Jesus' birthplace and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Luke tells how shepherds were led to Bethlehem by an angel.

According to tradition, Joseph and Mary travelled to Bethlehem shortly before Jesus' birth. Joseph had been ordered to take part in a census in his home town of Bethlehem.

All Jewish people had to be counted so the Roman Emperor could determine how much money to collect from them in tax. Those who had moved away from their family homes, like Joseph, had to return to have their names entered in the Roman records.

Joseph and Mary set off on the long, arduous 90-mile journey from Nazareth along the valley of the River Jordan, past Jerusalem to Bethlehem. Mary travelled on a donkey to conserve her energy for the birth.

But when they arrived in Bethlehem the local inn was already full with people returning for the census. The innkeeper let them stay in the rock cave below his house which was used as a stable for his animals.

It was here, next to the noise and filth of the animals, that Mary gave birth to her son and laid him in a manger.

The first Christmas

The Gospels do not mention the date of Jesus' birth. It was not until the 4th century AD that Pope Julius I set 25th December as the date for Christmas. This was an attempt to Christianise the Pagan celebrations that already took place at this time of year. By 529, 25th December had become a civil holiday and by 567 the twelve days from 25th December to the Epiphany were public holidays.

Christmas is not only a Christian festival. The celebration has roots in the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, the festivals of the ancient Greeks, the beliefs of the Druids and the folk customs of Europe.

Midwinter celebrations

Christmas comes just after the middle of winter. The sun is strengthening and the days are beginning to grow longer. For people throughout history this has been a time of feasting and celebration.

Ancient people were hunters and spent most of their time outdoors. The seasons and weather played a very important part in their lives and because of this they had a great reverence for, and even worshipped, the sun. The Norsemen of Northern Europe saw the sun as a wheel that changed the seasons. It was from

the word for this wheel, *houl*, that the word *yule* (another name for Christmas) is thought to have come. At Winter Solstice the Norsemen lit bonfires, told stories and drank sweet ale.

The Romans also held a festival to mark the Winter Solstice. Saturnalia (from the God Saturn) ran for seven days from 17th December. It was a time when the ordinary rules were turned upside down. Men dressed as women and masters dressed as servants. The festival also involved processions, decorating houses with greenery, lighting candles and giving presents.

Holly is one of the symbols most associated with Christmas. Its religious significance pre-dates Christianity. It was previously associated with the Sun God and was important in Pagan customs. Some ancient religions used holly for protection. They decorated doors and windows with it in the belief it would ward off evil spirits.

Before Christianity came to the British Isles the Winter Solstice was held on the shortest day of the year (21st December). The Druids (Celtic priests) would cut the mistletoe that grew on the oak tree and give it as a blessing. Oaks were seen as sacred and the winter fruit of the mistletoe was a symbol of life in the dark winter months.

Judaism was the main religion of Israel at the time of Jesus' birth. The Jewish midwinter festival of Hanukkah marks an important part of Jewish history. It is eight days long and on each day a candle is lit. It is a time of remembrance, celebration of light, a time to give gifts and have fun.

Advent is the period of preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus and begins on Sunday nearest to 30th November. The word *Advent* comes from the Latin *adventus* meaning *coming*. Traditionally it is a penitential season but is no longer kept with the strictness of Lent and Christians are no longer required to fast.

Advent wreaths are popular especially in churches. They are made with fir branches and four candles. A candle is lit each Sunday during Advent.

Christmas Day is the Christian festival most celebrated by non-churchgoers, and churches are often completely full for the service late on Christmas Eve.

Father Christmas

An important part of today's Christmas is the myth of Father Christmas (called Santa Claus in America). His origins are in Christian and European tradition. But the visual image of Father Christmas that we have today is the one popularised by American card-makers in the Victorian era. Traditionally, Father Christmas visits houses at midnight on Christmas Eve, coming down the chimney to leave presents. Children hang up stockings - nowadays usually large socks with Christmas patterns knitted into them - for Father Christmas to fill with little toys and presents ('stocking fillers'). In modern times the figures of Father Christmas and Santa Claus are indistinguishable. Today, only around 60 percent of people in the UK are Christian but Christmas remains the biggest holiday in the calendar. It is a largely secular holiday, with the main ele-

ment the exchange of gifts on Christmas day.

Symbolism of the Cross

The cross on which Jesus was executed 2000 years ago has been a symbol for his followers from very early on. At first, they were scared to display it publicly in case they were persecuted or mocked. But after the Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in the 4th Century, crucifixion was abolished as a punishment, and the cross was promoted as a symbol of the Son of God.

Holy Text: The Bible

The Bible is not just one book, but an entire library, with stories, songs, poetry, letters and history, as well as literature that might more obviously qualify as 'religious'.

The Christian Bible has two sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is the original Hebrew Bible, the sacred scriptures of the Jewish faith, written at different times between about 1200 and 165 BC. The New Testament books were written by Christians in the first century AD.

The Old Testament

The Law

The Hebrew Bible has 39 books, written over a long period of time, and is the literary archive of the ancient nation of Israel. It was traditionally arranged in three sections.

The [first five books](#), Genesis to Deuteronomy. They are not 'law' in a modern Western sense: Genesis is a book of stories, with

nothing remotely like rules and regulations, and though the other four do contain community laws they also have many narratives. The Hebrew word for Law ('Torah') means 'guidance' or 'instruction', and that could include stories offering everyday examples of how people were meant to live as well as legal requirements.

These books were later called the 'Pentateuch', and tradition attributed them to [Moses](#). Some parts undoubtedly date from that period, but as things changed old laws were updated and new ones produced, and this was the work of later editors over several centuries.

The Prophets

The Prophets is the largest section of the Hebrew Bible, and has two parts ('former prophets' and 'latter prophets').

The books of 'latter prophets' preserve sayings and stories of religious and political activists ('prophets') who served as the spiritual conscience of the nation throughout its history, reminding people of the social values that would reflect the character of God. Some books are substantial ([Isaiah](#), Jeremiah, Ezekiel), others are much shorter (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi). Sometimes, the prophets could be mime artists and dramatists, accompanying their actions by short spoken messages, often delivered in poetic form. These were the sound bites of their day, which made it easy for others to remember them and then write them down.

The 'former prophets' consist of

[Joshua](#), Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings. They are history books, but what makes them also 'prophets' is that they not only record information, they interpret it, explaining its significance in relation to other events in the history of Israel, and of the wider world of their day.

The Writings

These include Psalms (songs, prayers and liturgies for worship), Proverbs (sayings of home-spun wisdom), Job (a drama that explores the nature of suffering), plus the 'five scrolls' ('Megilloth') which were grouped together because each had associations with a particular religious festival: Ruth (the Jewish Feast of Weeks, also called [Shavuot](#)), Song of Solomon ([Passover](#)), Ecclesiastes ([Tabernacles](#)), Lamentations ([Destruction of Jerusalem](#)), and Esther ([Purim](#)). This section also includes the last books of the Hebrew Bible to be written: Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1-2 Chronicles (all history books), and Daniel (visions of a better world).

The New Testament

The New Testament has 27 books, written between about 50 and 100 AD, and falling naturally into two sections: the Gospels, which tell the story of [Jesus](#) (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John); and the Letters (or epistles) - written by various Christian leaders to provide guidance for the earliest church communities.

The Letters

Letters were the natural way for itinerant church leaders to communicate with their converts, and the earliest ones were written before the Gospels. With

some exceptions (Romans, Hebrews), they were not meant to be formal presentations of Christian belief, but offered advice to people who were working out how to express their commitment to Jesus in ways that would be relevant to the many different cultural contexts in which they found themselves throughout the Roman empire.

Reading them can be like listening to one half of a conversation, as the writers give answers to questions sent to them either verbally or in writing. [Paul](#) was the most prolific writer of such letters, though he was not the only one.

The Gospels

The [Gospels](#) were written to present the life and teachings of Jesus in ways that would be appropriate to different readerships, and for that reason are not all the same. They were not intended to be biographies of Jesus, but selective accounts that would demonstrate his significance for different cultures.

The first three are effectively different editions of the same materials, and for that reason are known as the 'synoptic gospels'. The writer of Luke also wrote the Acts of the Apostles, which tells the story of how Christianity spread from being a small group of Jewish believers in the time of Jesus to becoming a worldwide faith in less than a generation.

The New Testament concludes with the book of [Revelation](#), which begins with a series of letters to seven churches in the area of Asia Minor (modern Turkey), but then offers a visionary presentation of the meaning of all things, from creation to the

end of the world.

Maryology

One of Britain's most popular religious shrines is the shrine of Our Lady of [Walsingham](#), in a village near the east coast of England.

Nearly one thousand years ago, the [Virgin Mary](#), the mother of Jesus, is said to have appeared there and told a pious noblewoman called Richeldis to build a shrine - an exact replica of Mary's own house in Nazareth.

Walsingham still attracts hundreds of thousands of pilgrims every year from countries as far afield as Nigeria and Argentina, Ethiopia and the Philippines. What unites them is their unwavering devotion to Mary. Many of the women who come to Walsingham don't see Mary as a docile young virgin, but a powerful mother figure. To many lay [Catholics](#) Mary is the female gateway through whom they experience the divine. After the pilgrims arrive at Walsingham village, many of them remove their shoes to walk the "holy mile" to the shrine as they pray the rosary and sing to Mary. At the head of the procession, four men carry a beautiful image of Mary in colourful robes, seated on a golden throne, with the baby Jesus in her arms. In the first of many services at the shrine, the image of the Virgin is crowned with flowers, and the pilgrims implore her to return to England.

Conclusion: Global Impact

Until the latter part of the 20th century, most adherents of Christianity were in the West, though it has spread to every continent and is now the largest religion in

the world. Traditional Christian beliefs include the belief in the one and only true God, who is one being and exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the belief that Jesus is the divine and human Messiah sent to the save the world. Christianity is also noted for its emphasis on faith in Christ as the primary component of religion. Central to Christian practice is the gathering at churches for worship, fellowship, and study, and engagement with the world through evangelism and social action.

Source:

<https://www.britannica.com/summary/Christianity>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/atalgance/glance.shtml>

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