

# Christianity and Religions: Philosophies and Religious Systems

	Atheism	Epicureanism	Pantheism	Polytheism	Stoicism	Zoroastrianism
Founder, date, location, and key information		Epicurus, ca. 307 BC, Italy			Zeno of Citium, third century BC, Athens	Zoroaster, sixth century BC, Persia
Key writings		"On the Nature of Things" (poem by Lucretius), writings by other Epicurean philosophers			writings of Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, Seneca; Diogenes Laertius's "Life of Zeno" in <i>Lives of the Eminent Philosophers</i>	Avesta
Who is God?	There is no God.	There are many gods, but they have physical, not spiritual, bodies. They do not influence or care about human life. They did not create the universe.	God is infinite, but He is not personal. "All is God; God is all." Humans, trees, animals, and stars are all God, as everything else is God.	There are multiple gods.  Usually only one or two gods are seriously worshiped. In return for worship, the gods protect humans and offer special benefits for their followers.	God is a force active in all of nature. This force may also be called fate. Stoicism is closely related to pantheism.	Ahura Mazda is the good god who struggles against an equally powerful evil being, Ahriman.
Who is Jesus?	Jesus of Nazareth is a historical figure.	Jesus is not part of Epicureanism.	Jesus is not part of pantheism, except in the sense that everything is part of God.		Jesus is not part of Stoicism.	Zoroastrianism predates Jesus and so does not have a view of Him, though today many Zoroastrians are willing to see all or many religions as valid paths to God.
Who is the Holy Spirit?	The Holy Spirit does not exist.	The Holy Spirit is not part of Epicureanism.			The Holy Spirit is not part of Stoicism.	The Holy Spirit is not part of Zoroastrianism.

	Atheism	Epicureanism	Pantheism	Polytheism	Stoicism	Zoroastrianism
Salvation	There is no need to be saved since there is no God, heaven, or hell.	Since there is no life after death, there is no need to be saved.	Pantheists have various views about what salvation is (if it exists) and how it can be obtained.	Different polytheistic religions have various methods of salvation.	The only thing to be saved from is wrong emotions. A Stoic believes he can control his own will so that he is happy in any situation.	Salvation is achieved by being a righteous person.
What happens after death?	Death is permanent; there is no afterlife. At death a person simply does not exist anymore.	There is no life after death.	A person is either reincarnated or absorbed into God.	A person's soul goes to the "place of the dead."	Souls of all men, according to some Stoics, or of wise men, according to others, live on after death until the end of all things.	After death, people face judgment with the righteous being admitted to heaven and the wicked consigned to hell.
How do people know right from wrong?	People know right from wrong by using their minds to observe their experiences and the world around them.	What is right is what brings peace of mind and pleasure. What is wrong brings pain or displeasure and troubled thoughts.	Right and wrong do not exist—they are only mental concepts.	People know right from wrong by using their minds to observe their experiences and the world around them or by revelation from the gods.	Appropriate actions are determined through reason.	Right and wrong are learned at least in part from the Avesta.
Truth	Humans make their own truth, mainly through science and reason. Truth is whatever the best explanation is.	Truth corresponds with reality and is discerned by reason.	Truth is an illusion; it does not really exist.	Ultimate reality is truth.	Truth is the nature of things, which is to be accepted with objectivity.	Zoroastrians are dualists, and this implies some view of truth and falsehood, but modern Zoroastrians may also be relativistic when it comes to religion.
Evil	Evil is anything that is destructive.	Evil is anything that brings displeasure or pain.	Evil does not exist. It is an illusion.	Evil exists, but it is possible to overcome it.	Evil is only a product of human ignorance of the reason in nature.	Evil originates from Ahriman and is always in a struggle against good.
Where do laws come from?	Humans make laws.	Laws are just rules made by man, but they should not be broken because punishment would cause pain and unhappiness.	Laws are human made, but since the whole world is just an illusion, they are not important.	The gods/goddesses decide what the laws are.	Laws come from nature.	Law is not a focus of Zoroastrianism.
Can miracles happen?	no	no	Yes, but they are an illusion.	yes	no	not an aspect of Zoroastrianism

	Atheism	Epicureanism	Pantheism	Polytheism	Stoicism	Zoroastrianism
What is the meaning of human history?	History continues to repeat itself but has no significant meaning.	Epicureans were not concerned with the meaning of history.	History is an illusion and has no significant meaning.	The purpose of history cannot be known.	All that happens is preordained by fate.	History shows the struggle between good and evil.
How does man get to know God?	There is no God to know.	The gods are not interested in knowing man or man's knowing them.	God is all and all is God, so to know God, a person should look both within himself and at the world around him.	Each deity can be known by reverencing its worship system.	God is another name for the spirit that is in nature. Man gets to know nature by reason and observation.	Zoroastrianism does not stress personal knowledge of God.
What is a human being?	a highly evolved life form	a physical being made of atoms	the essence of God	a creation of the gods	a product of nature	Humans have a body with a soul.  The soul will live forever in heaven or hell.
Are humans basically good or evil? How bad is the flaw?	Humans may be either good or bad, but evil in humans can be amended.	People are basically good. If they know what is good, they will do it.	Humans are basically good; however, they may be confused by the illusion of the world and become flawed. The flaw is also an illusion.	Humans can be either good or evil, but there is no basic flaw.	Humans are basically evil because they are born ignorant. Logic and reason can remove evil from a person.	Humans struggle between good and evil tendencies. They must choose the good to be saved.
Is it possible to know anything at all?	Man can only know what he uses his mind and reasoning to know.	Yes, man can know things through reason.	The only thing that is real is man's recognition of godhood. Nothing else is real—just an illusion.	Man can know things by using his mind to observe his experiences and the world around him and by receiving revelation from the gods.	Yes, man can know things through reason.	Epistemology is not a major concern of Zoroastrianism.
What is real?	what one can see and know through science and observation	the material world	only God  Everything else is an illusion.	the gods and the cosmos	nature and what is observable	both the spiritual and physical world
Origin of what is real	Atheists believe in evolution and the big bang theory. Eventually the universe will implode in some way, and everything will cease to exist.	The material world has always existed.	God is the only thing that is real.	There are many stories and myths about where things came from.	The earth always was. It was not created or suddenly came to be.	Good spirits and good things in the world were created by Ahura Mazda. Bad spirits and bad things in the world were created by Ahriman. Ahura Mazda and Ahriman are both eternal.
Other facts, beliefs, or practices		The objective of life is to seek true happiness.				