

# *What Folks Believe These Days*

*About God  
About Jesus  
About Heaven*



*About Hell  
About Salvation*

*About The  
Trinity*

*About Satan &  
Evil Forces*

*About Life After  
Death*

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## Introduction

Have you ever wondered if other folks believe as you do? I'd like to focus on what they believe about certain subjects related to Christian Doctrine and religion in general. I decided to look more closely into this because of the statements I was hearing from folks around me. Some of these beliefs include: When I die, I just cease to exist. I'll probably come back as a cat or pig. I don't believe in hell or heaven.

I found the chart below on the Internet. It shows how folks feel about religion.

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### Americans' Ratings of Religious Groups

	Among Total Population (including members of the group in question)				Among everyone EXCEPT members of the group in question			
	Mean Thermometer Rating	Percentage rating group... Warmest (67 or above)	Middle (34-66)	Coldest (33 or below)	Mean Thermometer Rating	Percentage rating group... Warmest (67 or above)	Middle (34-66)	Coldest (33 or below)
Jews	63°	44%	44%	10%	63°	44%	44%	10%
Catholics	62°	44%	41%	14%	58°	37%	46%	17%
Evangelicals	61°	44%	35%	20%	52°	30%	42%	27%
Buddhists	53°	31%	46%	22%	53°	30%	46%	22%
Hindus	50°	24%	52%	23%	50°	24%	52%	23%
Mormons	48°	23%	46%	29%	47°	22%	47%	30%
Atheists	41°	20%	37%	40%	40°	19%	38%	41%
Muslims	40°	16%	41%	41%	40°	15%	41%	41%

American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. REL3a-h. Respondents were asked to rate each religious group on a "feeling thermometer" ranging from 0 (coldest, most negative) to 100 (warmest, most positive). Respondents who declined to provide a rating for a group are not included in the calculation of the mean ratings and their responses are not shown here.

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This report seems to say that Eastern Religions and Cults are favored almost as much as Christianity & Judaism. This is a big increase from the 50s and 60s when most folks were Judeo-Christian believers. The Mormons, Jehovah's Witness, and similar groups were and still are considered part of the occult. Our religious world has surely changed since I was a boy. The U.S. Public Has Warmest Feelings for Jews, Catholics and Evangelicals. Evangelicals Rated More Positively by Republicans than Democrats; Most Non-Christian Religions Viewed More Favorably by Democrats than Republicans.

**Debate.org** asked this question, "Do you think religion is that important? 63% said NO whereas 38% said YES. What does this mean? Only this...more folks feel that religion has no significant value than those that feel it does. This is a snapshot of a society that is or is becoming disillusioned.

One of the cornerstones of Millennial study is *Soul Searching* a book and study by Dr. Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton. Smith is the William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society at the University of Notre Dame. The book, published in 2009, outlines the findings from a study by the National Study of Youth and Religion from July 2002 to March 2003. Here's a excerpt from that study.

Those Millennials who consider themselves non-religious tend to see religion as a neutral crutch that people lean on when they need something to hold them up and when they need purpose in their lives. It is not to be imposed on others. It is not to extend outside of the self, except, of course, when it is being used as a motivation to love.

Now lets look at some beliefs held by folks in our generation. We will start with what folks think about God.

## **What Folks Think About God**

**The Atheist**, of course believes that there is no God. They follow an evolutionary path that leads into the grave with no afterlife. Their purpose for living is not defined and the meaning of life is unsure. They live for today and usually for themselves.

**The Jehovah's Witness**, believe that Jesus was really Michael, the archangel, that there is no Trinity, that salvation is obtained by a combination of faith, good works, and obedience, not grace as the Bible says and God is not personal in any way.

**The Mormons, Latter Day Saints** believe that Jesus was really Adam, that there is no one eternal God, but men, not women, that can attain a god status and dwell in the heavens with other exalted men in a counsel of gods. That these exalted men-gods become the god of their own world.

**The New Ager Movement**, for the most part believes in a Pantheistic view of god. This is to say that god is everything and everything is god. There are no personal relationship possibilities, only the belief that the individual is god because god is everything including all human beings.

**The Muslims** believe that Allah is god but Allah is the name of the Moon-god that Mohamed chose from many other gods in his day to lead his followers into a belief of only one god. Allah is not Jehovah, the God of the Bible. In-fact, Allah can be traced back to the days of King David and the philistines and their false god, Baal.

**WICCA, An Association of Occultic Groups**, believes that god is "the mother goddess" and her companion "the horned god." Who manifest themselves in Nature. This loosely nit association includes such groups as Neo-Pagans, Witches, Mediums, Sorcery, Satanism and more.

**Universalists Believe** in "The Sacres" or any concept of god you feel is right, not what the Bible teaches. They are also an association of sorts including Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Humanist, Jewish, Muslim, Pagan, atheist and agnostic. They do not believe in the Trinity or the Incarnation of Christ.

**Christians Believe In Jehovah**, the one and only true and living God. All other beliefs related to gods are false. They also believe in the Incarnation of Christ, The atonement, Salvation by grace, the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Folks believe some strange stuff. When you say, do you believe in God?, you will get a lot of, "Yeses" but odds are there will be a radical re-definition of God to suite their belief system.

## Will The Real God Please Stand Up?

How is it that there are so many different concepts of God? I guess it is because most of us create our own god to suite our own needs. We are in a world of “designer gods” fashioned for each occasion. It appears to me that all but one is an example of man reaching upward to an unknown entity. Because they do not know God, they make Him up out of their imaginations of fears.

The only God that reaches down to us is the God of the Bible. He has revealed Himself to man so we could know Him; to redeem us from our own sin; to invite us to share in His kingdom; to love us as his children. Why does man reject so great a salvation? I guess it’s like what the bible says, “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” **John 3:19**

## What Do Folks Believe About Jesus?

We have already noted that the Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that Jesus is Michael, the archangel and that the Mormons believe that Jesus is Adam. We already know that Atheists do not believe in God so Jesus would be out of their belief system too. We know that all the isms follow a pantheistic view of God or like some Eastern Religions, a polytheistic belief in many gods. In all of theses there is no room for Jesus.

Only Christianity believes that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. (**John 3:16**) Only Christianity believes that Jesus was and still is the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of a triune God that was with God from the beginning and in due time came to dwell in human flesh...thus the Incarnation. (**John 1:1-16**) Only Christianity believes that Jesus is the only way to God the Father; that there is not many roads but only one, through Jesus, the Christ of Calvary. (**John 14:6**)

## What Do Folks Believe About Salvation?

In order to be saved, you must first believe that you are lost. That brings up a few questions.

1. **What Am I Lost From?** The Bible says we are lost from the presence of God and his loving fellowship. (**Romans 5:12**)

2. **How Did I Get Separated From God?** Again, The Bible says it was because of our sin against God. **(Romans 3:23)**
3. **How Do I Get Back Into God's Good Graces Again?** The Bible says we were lost and dead in our sins. It was then that Christ died for us. He didn't wait for us to get righteous or to accomplish a set of rules, not even the 10-commandments. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. **(Romans 5:8)** This is God reaching down to us, not us reaching up to Him in some distorted imagination. **(See John 3:16)**

So, Salvation is of God. It is His good pleasure to redeem us. The Bible says that the souls of men are precious to God and His redemption goes on forever, **(Psalm 49:8)**

This is the Christian view. It is far different from the Universalists that see salvation as becoming aware of self, or Mormonism that sees salvation as a self-exaltation into one of many gods with their own planet to rule. It's certainly different than the Atheist that sees salvation as a deliverance from life itself into an endless grave of non-existence.

The fact that the Christian view of salvation is God's outstretched arms to man, calling him to Himself makes it the winner of all religions. It's personal and loving and caring, almost irresistible. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." **John 3:16**

## **What Do Folks Believe About An Afterlife, Hell & Heaven?**

The PEW Research Institute offers these statistics about American's belief in Heaven and Hell. 72% of all Americans believe in a heaven while 58% of those same folks believe in hell.

Muslims are similar to Christians in views of an afterlife, with 89% saying they believe in heaven and 76% believing in hell.

Among other non-Christians, however, beliefs that there are places of eternal reward and punishment after death are not as widely held. Roughly half or fewer of Hindus, Buddhists and Jews believe in heaven. And roughly a third or less of Buddhists, Hindus, and Jews believe in the concept of hell.

Not surprisingly, far fewer religious “nones” — a group that includes atheists, agnostics and people who say their religion is “nothing in particular” — say they believe in the existence of heaven and hell. Fewer than four-in-ten (37%) “nones” say they believe in heaven , while 27% believe in hell.

An exception are those “nones” who say religion is important to them. Their views are similar to the general public’s, with 72% professing a belief in heaven. They also are roughly twice as likely as religiously unaffiliated people in general to believe in hell (55% vs 27%).

LifeWay Research says...Just under half of Americans (45 percent) say there are many ways to heaven—which conflicts with traditional views about salvation being linked to faith in Jesus. Catholics (67 percent) and Mainline Protestants (55 percent) are most likely to say heaven’s gates are wide open with many ways in. Evangelicals (19 percent) and Black Protestants (33 percent) are more skeptical.

As indicated above, most other religions deny the existence of hell or heaven. They either have no view of an afterlife, holding on to evolution or hang their hats on self-exaltation into a god council after death but no Biblical heaven.

## **What Do Folks Believe About The Trinity?**

Christianity has, from the beginning taught that God is a triune being. That is to say, three persons equal in essence, strength and personality. This triune God is one God as the Old Testament teaches. LifeWay research found in a recent study that Americans believe in the Trinity. But the details don’t reflect traditional views of orthodoxy. About 7 in 10 (71 percent) Americans believe in the Trinity. That’s the idea that one God exists as three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

But few—even those in evangelical denominations—seem to grasp the details of how Christians have historically taught the Trinity. More than half

of evangelicals (59 percent), for example, say the Holy Spirit is a force – not a personal being. Ten percent are not sure, while 31 percent agree the Spirit is a person. Overall, two-thirds of Americans (64 percent) say the Holy Spirit is a force.

More than 1 in 7 Americans (15 percent) say the Holy Spirit is less divine than God the Father and Jesus. A third (33 percent) believe God the Father is more divine than Jesus. One in 5 (19 percent) say Jesus was the first creature made by God. All of those run counter to Christian doctrine as found in historic creeds of the Church. (*Bob Smietana is senior writer for Facts & Trends magazine.*)

## **What Do Folks Believe About The Rapture of The Church**

According to the PEW Research Report, 41% of Americans believe that by the year 2050, Jesus Christ definitely (23%) or probably (18%) will have returned to earth.

However, a 46%-plurality of the public does not believe Christ will return during the next 40 years. Fully 58% of white evangelical Christians say Christ will return to earth in this period, by far the highest percentage in any religious group.

Only about a third of Catholics (32%) and even fewer white mainline Protestants (27%) predict Christ's return to earth by 2050. One-in-five religiously unaffiliated Americans also see Christ returning during the next four decades.

Americans with no college experience (59%) are much more likely than those with some college experience (35%) or college graduates (19%) to expect Jesus Christ's return. By region, those in the South (52%) are the most likely to predict a Second Coming by 2050.

Here's what the Bible says. "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." **Matthew 24:44**

# **What Do Folks Believe About Satan, The Devil And Evil Forces?**

A 2009 nationwide survey of adults' spiritual beliefs, conducted by The Barna Group, suggests that Americans who consider themselves to be Christian have a diverse set of beliefs –but many of those beliefs are contradictory or, at least, inconsistent. The survey explored beliefs about spiritual beings, the influence of faith on their life, views of the Bible, and reactions to faiths other than their own.

## **Views on Spiritual Beings**

The Barna survey asked questions about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, Satan, and demons.

## **The Existence of Satan**

Four out of ten Christians (40%) strongly agreed that Satan “is not a living being but is a symbol of evil.” An additional two out of ten Christians (19%) said they “agree somewhat” with that perspective. A minority of Christians indicated that they believe Satan is real by disagreeing with the statement: one-quarter (26%) disagreed strongly and about one-tenth (9%) disagreed somewhat. The remaining 8% were not sure what they believe about the existence of Satan.

## **The Influence of Evil Forces**

A majority of Christians believe that a person can be under the influence of spiritual forces, such as demons or evil spirits. Two out of three Christians agreed that such influence is real (39% agreed strongly, 25% agreed somewhat), while just three out of ten rejected the influence of supernatural forces (18% disagreed strongly, 10% disagreed somewhat). The remaining 8% were undecided on this matter.

The Gospel Coalition says in their recent report... The latest YouGov research has found that more than half of all Americans (57%) believe in the existence of the devil and a slight majority (51%) believe in possession by evil spirits. Regardless of religious identity levels of belief top 50%, except for Jews, who theologically reject the idea of a sentient Satan. “Born-again” Christians are the most likely to both believe in the devil (86%) and possession (72%).

“Born again” Christians, Protestants, and Catholics are most likely to believe the devil exists (86%, 70%, and 66%) and demon possession is possible (72%, 59%, and 59%), while Jewish and Muslim Americans are the least likely religious groups to believe Satan is real (17% and 25%). Muslims are more likely to believe someone can be possessed an evil spirit (49%) than believe in the devil.

What does all this mean? It means that many in today’s Christian Community, for the most part has turned away from their beginning doctrines to a social gospel where their unbelief can better thrive. By not believing in that which makes you a Christian, you can better gain the respect and acceptance of the world. This is nothing more than backsliding away from the light of God’s truth into darkness and chaos.

## Conclusion

Now that you are somewhat familiar with how other folks view God, Life Afterdeath, The Rapture, Heaven & Hell and other matters of Faith, let me ask you this... **What Do You Believe?** I know what I believe. I have searched the scriptures and sought the Lord for answers. I have questions and rethought many premises for Bible explanations.

Someone once said, “You are what you believe”. If I believe I am stupid, I am because I think I am. If I say I am smart, I am because I can learn until I become smart. The same is true in Spiritual things. However, in Spiritual things, God is the one who speaks into my soul, telling me who I am and what my ability really is. Only then can I say I am because He said it first.

This is exemplified with Abram. God told him that he would be the father of many nations. He was not at the time God spoke it into his soul. Then God changed his name to Abraham and from that day forward, he declared what God said. He said, “I am Abraham, which meant literally, the father of many nations. Read it for yourself in Romans 4:17 “(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, *even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.*”

When you follow Christ, He will speak things over you calling things,

which be not as though they were. When that happens, we can only proclaim what He has said to be, even if we do not see it at that moment in time.



**May Our Lord Bless You  
And Keep You In All That You Do**