

# Overview of Buddhism

## Key Person, Date, Location

Gautama Siddhartha (563–483 BC), also known as Buddha (“Enlightened One”), founded in modern-day Nepal and India as a reformation of Hinduism.

## Key Writings

The *Mahavastu* (“Great Story,” a collection covering the Buddha’s life story), the *Jataka Tales* (550 stories of the former lives of the Buddha), the *Tripitaka* (“Three Baskets”), and the *Tantras* (as recorded in Tibetan Buddhism).

## Who Is God?

The Buddha himself did not believe in the existence of God. Others speak of the Buddha as a universal enlightened consciousness or as a god.

## Who Is Jesus?

Jesus Christ is not part of the historic Buddhist worldview. Buddhists in the West today generally view Jesus as an enlightened teacher, while Buddhists in Asia believe Jesus is an avatar or a bodhisattva, but not God.

## Who Is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is not part of this belief. Buddhists do believe in spirits, and some practice deity yoga and invite spirit possession.

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## How to Be Saved

The goal of life is nirvana—to eliminate all desires or cravings, and in this way escape suffering. The Eightfold Path is a system to free Buddhists from desiring anything and eventually achieve nonexistence.

## What Happens After Death?

Reincarnation. People do not have their own individual souls or spirits, but one's desires and feelings may be reincarnated into another person.

## Other Facts, Beliefs, or Practices

The Eightfold Path recommends right knowledge, intentions, speech, conduct, livelihood, right effort, mindfulness, and meditation. Some Buddhist groups talk about an “eternal Buddha” (life-force) through the “Doctrine of Assimilation.” The belief systems of other religions are blended into their form of Buddhism.