Interpretations of Nibbana (Nirvana)

Terminology

**bodhi**  - knowing/being awakened

**Buddha**  - one who knows/is enlightened/is awakened – We know about Gotama Buddha who started Buddhism but other people can become buddhas as well.

**moksha** - release from Samsara

**Nibbana (Nirvana)** - (literally extinction/snuffing out) a perfect state of freedom from greed, hatred & ignorance

**Samsara**  - the cycle of birth, life, death & rebirth

*Nibbana* is not heaven. Buddhists are aiming to reach a perfect state of being where there is no longer any suffering. In Buddhist thought, *Nibbana* is when a person has let go of all attachments and become free from the Three Poisons of greed, hatred & ignorance. When this happens the person is released from *Samsara*. This release is called *moksha*. It means that the person is free and does not have to be reborn or suffer again.

Buddhists believe that it is possible to do what Gotama did and also achieve enlightenment and become buddhas as well, although this is extremely hard and takes many lives to achieve. Such a person would come to a knowledge of what causes suffering and have no expectation of permanence. They would live according to the Five Precepts and live a perfect life of compassion, etc.

Did Buddha know everything?

This has been debated by Buddhists over the centuries. Probably most Buddhists would say that he knew all about the nature of existence, suffering, *Samsara*, the Three Marks of Existence, etc. but he did not have omniscient total knowledge of every possible fact, like the Christian view of God. Buddha is not a god; he is seen as an inspirational human to follow.