

Middle School Social Studies Enrichment

1 of 2



World Religions

W3.2 Growth and Development of World Religions Explain how world religions or belief systems of Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Sikhism, and Islam grew and their significance (Sikhism and Islam are included here even though they came after 300 CE). The world's major faiths and ethical systems emerged, establishing institutions, systems of thought, and cultural styles that would influence neighboring peoples and endure for centuries.

7 – W3.2.1 Identify and describe the core beliefs of major world religions and belief systems, including Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Sikhism and Islam.

One of the major concepts in Middle School Social Studies is World Religions. It is one of the concepts we see on the MSTEP Assessment. We have added a Chapter from MiOpen Book Project, which is a free resource to teachers, students, and parents. This is NOT required reading, but can be used for Enrichment Lessons. Each section has Key Vocabulary, and Inquiry Questions. You can have your children read in small sections, answer the questions, and discuss the key terms. If you have access to the internet there are video links/titles that can enrich the reading sections. Again, all of this is to be for enrichment purposes NOT required. If you have an 8th Grader the concept of World Religions will be review. However, review is always good! If you have ANY questions please feel free to reach out to your child's Social Studies teacher.

Respectfully,

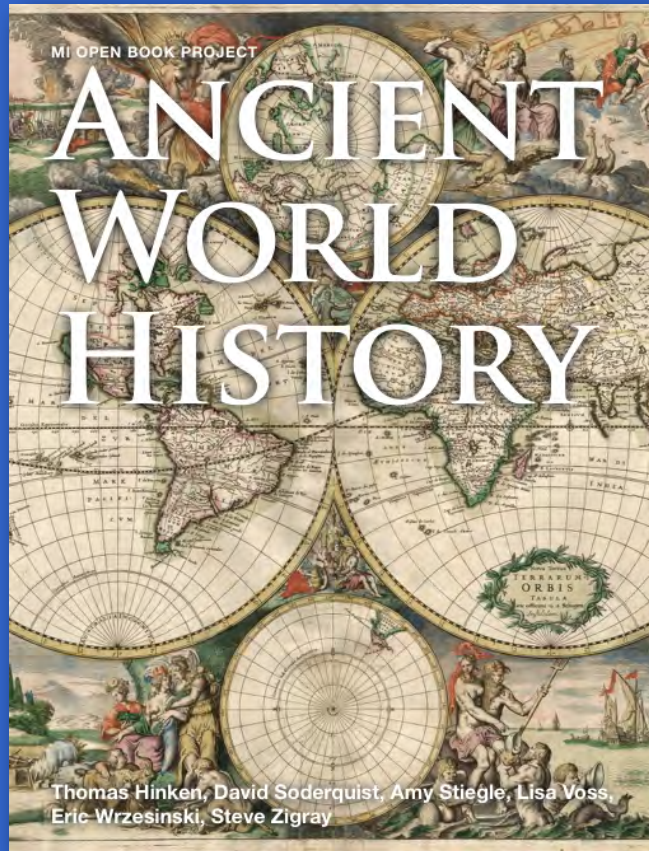
Your Middle School Social Studies Department

MI OPEN BOOK PROJECT

ANCIENT WORLD HISTORY

Thomas Hinken, David Soderquist, Amy Striegle, Lisa
Voss, Eric Wrzesinski, Steve Zigraff

Social Studies Section Page 3



This is version 1.1.4 of this resource, released in August 2018.

Information on the latest version and updates are available on the project homepage: <http://textbooks.wmisd.org/dashboard.html>



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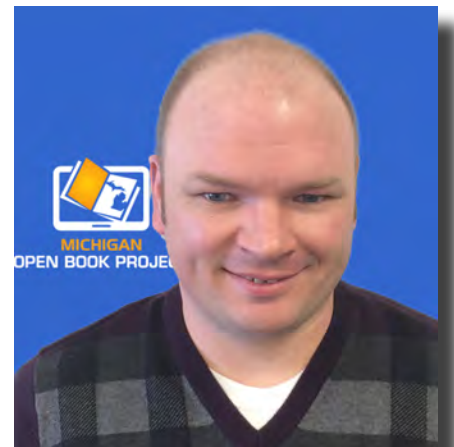
Tom teaches world geography and history at NBC Middle School in Montague. A graduate of the Defense Language Institute, Tom served as an Arabic Linguist in the U.S Air Force before receiving both bachelors and masters degrees from Grand Valley State University. He is currently pursuing Masters in Education Technology from MSU. Along with teaching Tom is also the advisor for the NBC Robotic club and the student leadership organization. When away from school Tom and his wife Kristin love to travel and spend time outdoors; biking, hik-

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For the Past 11 years David has taught 6-8 grade Social Studies for Three Rivers Middle School. He serves as Department Head, School Improvement Member and Social Studies Rep for his area. Over the past few years he has completed his Masters Degree in Curriculum and Instruction and become a state recognized Instructional Coach.



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Amy has been teaching 7th grade Social Studies and Economics at Hamilton Middle School for 17 years. She has a BA in Geography/ Social Studies and a Masters Degree in Middle School Education both from Western Michigan University. She is also a PASST assessment participant and the Social Studies Department Chair. When not in the classroom she enjoys traveling with her husband Dan.





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East K-7

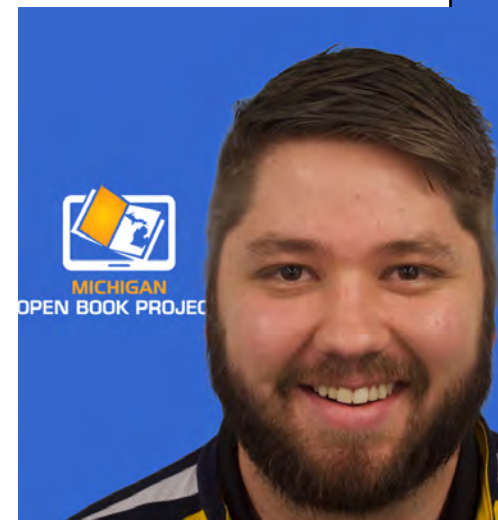
Lisa Voss has been teaching at Holland's East K-7 since 1993 working with students in grades 5-8. She enjoys teaching adolescents to be global thinkers in her geography and world studies classes. Teaching in Holland has been fulfilling and challenging in so many ways for Mrs. Voss. She studied education and trained at Michigan State University and then earned her masters degree at Grand Valley State University. She starting teaching elementary social studies content and methods to aspiring teachers for Hope College's Education Department in 2010. Lisa and her husband Jon have four sons and they live in Zeeland.

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Eric is a social studies teacher at Pewamo-Westphalia Middle/High School where he teaches 7th grade world history, 8th grade U.S. history, and AP U.S. History. He also serves as social studies department head, was a TRIG coach, worked on the schools strategic plan, and is a member of the school improvement team. He graduated with an undergraduate degree from Central Michigan University and grew up near Lansing, MI. He currently resides in Portland, MI with his beautiful wife who he enjoys travelling and spending time with.



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Concord Middle School

Steve Zigray is a 6th grade teacher. He holds a Bachelor's Degree from Central Michigan University and a Masters Degree in K-12 Administration from Eastern Michigan University. Honors Steve has been awarded are the 2001 Junior Achievement Educator of the Year and he was nominated for Jackson Magazine's, Educator of the year in 2014. He has also coached high school and middle school sports, worked on various school improvement committees, wrote the 6th grade Common Assessment tests for Jackson County ISD and is an active member in the community as well as the PTO. He lives in southeast Jackson County with his

The Michigan Open Book Project Team would like to thank the following individuals for their help in reviewing some content in the book and guiding the development process.

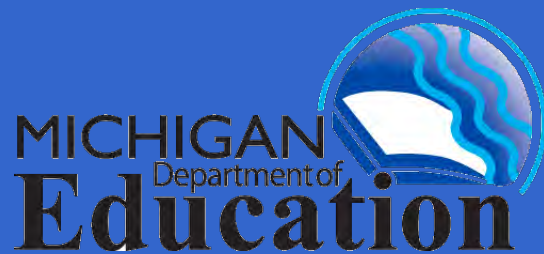
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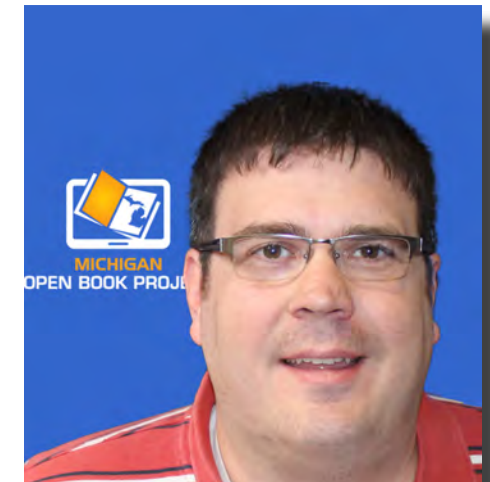
David Klemm is the Social Studies and Special Projects Consultant for the Muskegon Area Intermediate School District (MAISD), serving 12 local school districts and numerous charters and private schools. While spending most of his time with the Social Sciences, he also works with Art, Music, World Language and Physical Education teachers. He has successfully directed two Teaching American History grants, coordinated We the People and Project Citizen programs, developed companion materials for the award-winning film documenting African-American migration to the Muskegon area, "Up from the Bottoms: The Search for the American Dream," worked with community development partners including the Michigan Humanities Council's Prime Time Family Reading Program, made numerous state and national presentations and worked with individual schools and teachers on curriculum, instruction and assessment. Mr. Klemm is a charter member of the Board of Directors of the Muskegon Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies and currently serves on the National Council for the Social Studies Board of Directors. Prior to his current position at the Muskegon Area ISD, Mr. Klemm taught high school U. S. History for 15 years and served 3 years as

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Dave began his career teaching 8th grade United States History in Mesick, Michigan. After almost a decade in the classroom, he took a job at Wexford-Missaukee Intermediate School District (WMISD) as an Instructional Consultant for Social Studies. He is shared across 11 ISDs in Northern Michigan that form the Northern Michigan Learning Consortium. He completed his Masters in Educational Leadership through Central Michigan University in 2011 and is Co-Project Director of the Performance Assessments of Social Studies Thinking (PASST) Project in addition to his duties as the Project Manager for MI Open Book.



Chapter 5

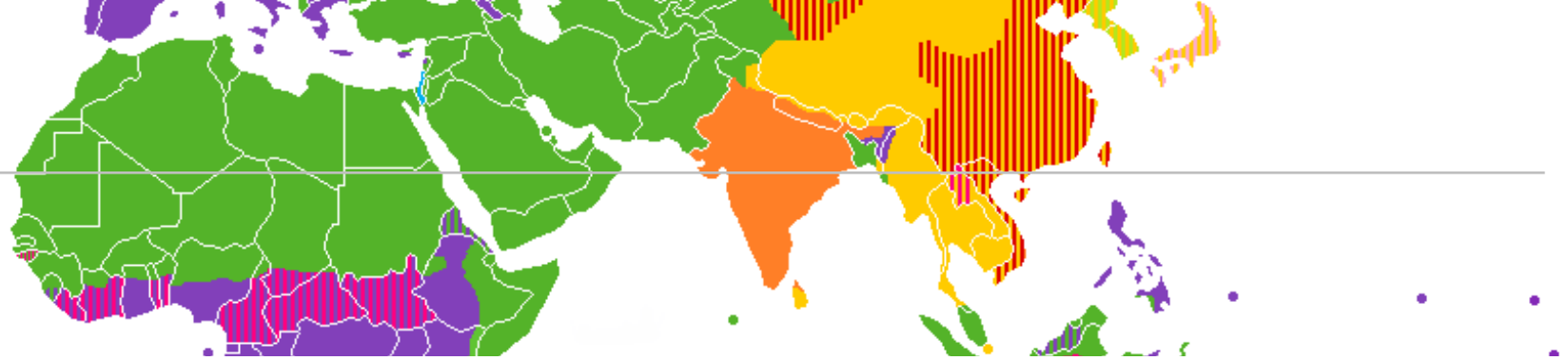
What Role Do Religious Beliefs and Practices Have on the Development of History, Culture, and Society?

1. What are the various beliefs of the five major world religions?

2. How does geography play a role in the development and spread of religion?

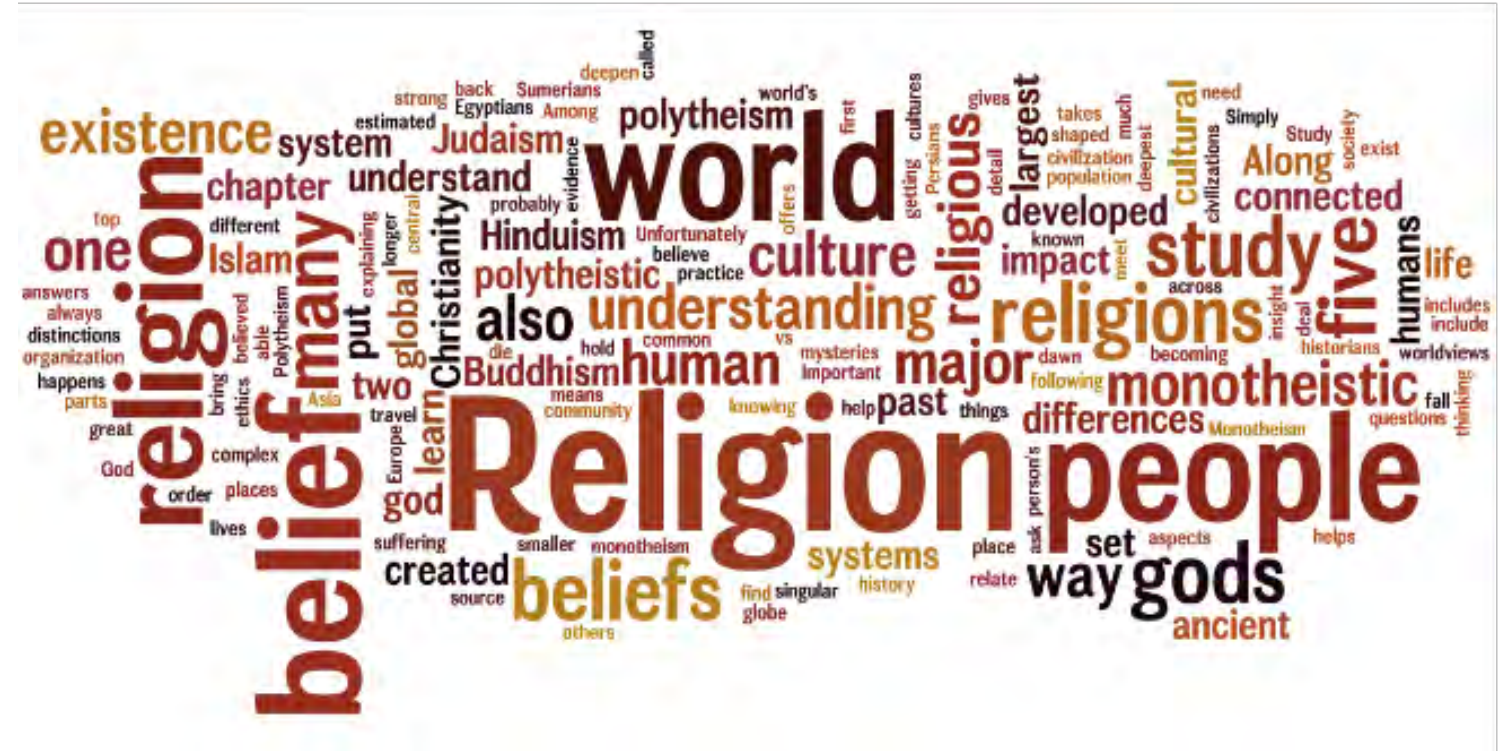
3. What effect does religion have on economic, political and social institutions?

4. What effect does religion have on art, language and literature?



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- Polytheism
- Monotheism
- Religion



Social Studies Section page 9

- how the world was created
- why it was created
- why there is life and death
- what happens when people die
- why there is suffering

Among the many belief systems of the world, it is estimated that about 84% of the world's population is connected to one of the five largest religions. These are: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. All five fall under one of two categories: monotheism or polytheism. In this chapter, we will deal with the monotheistic religions first in the order they developed. Then we will learn about the two major polytheistic religions.

Monotheism vs Polytheism

Most people in the ancient times believed in many gods. This belief is called **polytheism**. The ancient Sumerians, Egyptians, and Persians all had strong religious beliefs that included following many gods. Today, the largest polytheistic religions are Buddhism and Hinduism. Those belief systems that believe there is a single God are known as **monotheistic**. Of the five major beliefs, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity are all monotheistic.

Why Study Religion

Religion has had a major impact on the way human civilization has developed. Religion has always been with us. As historians study the past, there is evidence all the way back to the dawn of existence that religious beliefs have been a part of human thinking. Religion helps to bring answers to some of the deepest questions humans can ask. It also takes a central place in the lives of all civilizations and cultures.

When we study religion we are able to deepen our understanding of others and ourselves. Along with this general understanding, religion offers great detail about how different aspects of a person's culture impact who they are. Religion has shaped the culture of people all over the world. Knowing what those beliefs are help us to understand many of the cultural differences that exist in our world.

Along with understanding history and culture, the study of religion also gives people global insight.

You may have heard people say, "The world is getting smaller."

What that really means is that people from around the globe are more connected with each other today than in the past. We no longer need to travel across the world to meet someone from Asia



or Europe. You can probably meet people from all over the world online. And you can find people in your own community from places all over the world. With our society becoming more global it is important to understand the differences we have and the things we hold in common. Religious beliefs include some of both.

What is Judaism?

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE INQUIRY

1. What are the various beliefs of the five major world religions?
2. How does geography play a role in the development and spread of religion?
3. What effect does religion have on economic, political, and social institutions
4. What effect does religion have on art, language, and literature?

TERMS, PLACES, PEOPLE

Torah

Judaism

Exodus

Rabbi

Sabbath

In this section you will learn about the religion of **Judaism**. You will discover what the central teachings of Judaism are and how the faith has continued today. Judaism is described as a religion, a culture, and a nation. All these descriptions have some validity to them depending on the context you are speaking of. In truth, the Jewish people, those who follow Judaism, are best described as an extended family.



It has been said that an estimated one-third of Western Civilization has been influenced in one way by Jewish ancestry. The evidence is found in the names we choose for our children. For example: Adam, Noah, David, Isaac, Rebecca, and Sarah are all names with their roots in the ancient texts of Judaism. Some of our laws today have roots in Jewish law from thousands of years ago. The influence of Judaism also extends far beyond our western cultures; both Christianity and Islam find their belief systems holding strong ties to the extended history of Judaism.

History of the Israelites

The history of Judaism is the history of the Jewish people. Jewish civilization developed over time, beginning around 1950 BCE and continuing on today. This group, sometimes referred to as Israelites in ancient texts and as Hebrews in others, originally lived in Mesopotamia. Around 1950 BCE they migrated to Canaan, a strip of land that runs along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

Much of the information historians have on the origins of Judaism and the history of the Jewish people comes from many artifacts and writings. The **Torah** is an example of one such source. The Torah is Judaism's most sacred text,

Interactive 5.1 Religions of the World - Judaism



consisting of the first five books of the Jewish Bible. The Torah tells the history of the Jewish people and outlines the laws and guidelines for their society. According to the Torah, a man by the name of Abraham lived in Mesopotamia. In 1950 BCE, Abraham moved his family to Canaan, there the Israelites began to herd cattle, primarily sheep and goats.

Around 1800 BCE the Jewish people were forced from Canaan due to a famine. In hopes of surviving, they were forced to settle in Egypt. For a time, they found success in Egypt, but eventually were seen as a threat and enslaved by the Egyptian pharaoh. Eventually, the Jewish people were led to freedom by one of their most influential leaders, Moses. The Torah refers to this as the



exodus. The exodus is the event that marked the escape of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt.

The Torah says for the next 40 years the Jewish people traveled in the Sinai Peninsula, until they were able to once again settle in Canaan. After a period of living mostly as separate city-states and smaller political groups, the Jewish people were able to establish their own kingdom of Israel in their homeland of Canaan around 1000 BCE. The kingdom of Israel was ruled by many kings, most notable are King David and his son King Solomon. With the passing of King Solomon, the kingdom divided into two kingdoms, Judah in the south and Israel in the north

Important Jewish Leaders (Abraham, Moses, David)

The history of Judaism reaches far back into ancient times. With so much history, you can see there are many important leaders in Jewish history. It is important, however, to identify three who stand out as most significant for our understanding of Judaism. They are Abraham, Moses, and David.

Abraham- According to the Torah, God spoke to Abraham first, telling him to take his family and move to the land of Canaan, an area referred to as Palestine today. God promised Abraham that, if he followed his directions, he would become the father of great nations and that they would be blessed. Abraham took his family and moved out of Mesopotamia and into Canaan. This is the reason Abraham is called the Father of the Jewish people.

At this time, most people followed religious beliefs that worshiped many gods and goddesses. According to the Torah, Abraham introduced the belief in a single God to the region. The belief in only one God, monotheism, is a central idea in Judaism.

Moses- Moses is widely believed to be the greatest leader in the history of the Jewish people. According to the Torah, Moses was born into slavery in Egypt but would eventually rise to a position of power and lead the Jewish people out of slavery and out of Egypt. Moses told the people that God had sent him to lead them back to Canaan, the “promised land” where Abraham had lived centuries earlier. God directed Moses that if, the Hebrews faithfully followed and showed obedience, they would be given this “promised land.” Once they were able to escape from Egypt, they lived in the Sinai Peninsula for decades before finally returning to Canaan.

Moses not only serves as a great leader, the person who confronted the Egyptian pharaoh and led the Jewish people out of slavery, but he was one who had the largest influence on the fundamental teachings of the religion. According to the Torah, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments or laws that the people were to follow. These teachings became the foundation of Judaism.

David- Once the Jewish people were able to move back into Canaan, they established a single united kingdom known as Israel after a long period of instability. Once united, Israel’s first King,

Saul, was appointed. While he brought some stability and unity to the Jewish people living in Canaan, his rule proved to be unpopular and a new King, David, was appointed during a period of civil war and attacks from surrounding city-states. David became King approximately 1000 BCE.

King David brought structure to Israel. David's reign is often looked back on as a golden era in the history of the Jewish people. He established Jerusalem as the capital of Israel as well as a holy city. A temple would be built there by David's successor that was seen as the center of the Jewish faith and the Jewish people.

David established a strong central government with a strong army, courts, and officials. As King, David defeated many enemies of Israel and brought a measure of security to the Jewish state. Because of the leadership of David, Jerusalem is still seen



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David#/media/File:David_SM_Maggiore.jpg

as the most holy city to the Jews, as well as a symbol of their faith.

Exile and Rule by Foreign Powers

During the time of Diaspora, the Jewish people would be under the rule of a number of different nations. While in Babylon, the Babylonian empire held many Jewish people captive. In 539 BCE the Persians overthrew the Babylonians. At this point, the Persian king ended the exile and allowed some Jewish people to return to Judah and rebuild their temple. From that point on, the Jewish people would be mostly ruled by the conquering empires you read about in the previous chapter. Following the Persians, the Greeks took control and ruled over the Jewish people for many years. Finally around 170 BCE the Jewish people were able to force the Greeks from Jerusalem. At this time they reclaimed their temple. Today Jewish People celebrate Hanukkah to honor this victory.

The Jewish people in Palestine were able to live as an independent nation for almost 80 years after the war with the Greeks. Then in 63 BCE the Roman Empire took control of the area they called Judea (Judah). Under Roman rule, the Jewish people were treated harshly in an attempt to prevent any acts of rebellion. For about 200 years, the Jewish people were under Roman control. After many attempts to gain their independence, a final Jewish revolt was put down in 135 CE. The Romans took control of Jerusalem and banned all Jewish people from entering.

Although many were able to remain, most were spread throughout the world. They did, however, adapt and keep many cultural traditions and core religious beliefs alive. Many continued to look at Jerusalem as the center of their religious life. It won't be until 1948 CE that the Jewish state of Israel will be created and the Jewish people are able to return to their ancient homeland.

Central Teachings

The most important Jewish text is the Torah. This instructs the Jewish people how to lead a moral life. The Torah is how God teaches morality (a standard of right and wrong) to Jewish followers. Many of these laws and teachings are found in the ten Commandments, some of the oldest laws and teachings in Judaism. According to the Torah, the ten Commandments were given to Moses on the top of Mount Sinai in the transition period between slavery in Egypt and conquering the land of Canaan. Some of these



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Philippe_de_Champaigne_-_Moses_with_the_Ten_Commandments_-_WGA04717.jpg

commandments list the duties that the Jewish people have towards God. “You shall have no other God” is an example of these duties, reminding them that they are only to worship one God and practice monotheism. Other commandments list out the moral teachings (concepts of right and wrong) for interacting with others. For example, “You shall not commit murder.” Other

commandments speak of how to treat others and forbid stealing and lying.

In addition to the ten commandments found in the Torah and the other teachings of the Torah, the Talmud is very important to Jewish life. The Talmud is a collection of written text versions of the Jewish oral law and commentaries of that law. The Talmud originates from the 2nd century CE. This holy book guides Jewish believers in the interpretation of the laws and teaching found in the Torah and other sacred writings.

Worship

The Jewish place of worship is called a synagogue and there were many established all over the world as Jewish communities survived and grew in the various places they settled after the Diaspora. The synagogue is a place of worship and study. Many times it also serves as a community center. The religious leader in the Jewish faith is known as a

Rabbi. The rabbi is not a priest. They are simply a teacher, a person who is educated in Jewish law and tradition. They are charged with instructing the community and to answer questions. Rabbi have also taken over the spiritual leadership within the Jewish community. In Judaism, any adult who is sufficiently educated can lead a religious service. It is not unusual for a service to be conducted without a rabbi or for other members of the community to lead the service even when a rabbi is there.

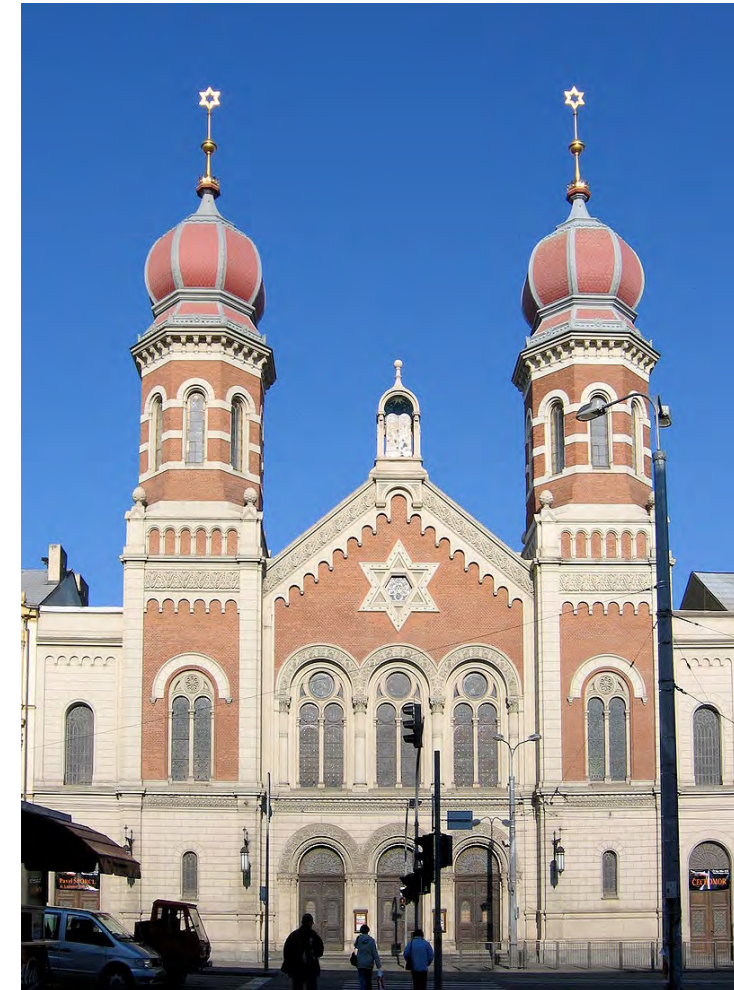
Services are mostly conducted in Hebrew, however, some will mix Hebrew with the local language, including English. Songs are sung without music added, many times in Hebrew as well. Everyone, with the exception of unmarried women, wear a type of “hat” in the synagogue in order to show reverence to God. The most common “hat” is called a yarmulke (yamaka). Many times adult men will often wear a Tallit, or prayer shawl, as well.

Holidays and Celebrations

Along with many holidays and celebrations, Jewish people also keep a holy day each week. This day is called the **Sabbath** or Shabbat. The Sabbath occurs on Saturday. It is a holy day where work is forbidden. The Sabbath begins at nightfall on Friday and lasts until nightfall on Saturday. God commanded the Jewish people to observe the Sabbath and to keep it holy as the fourth of the Ten Commandments. The Sabbath is part of the Covenant, or binding agreement, between God and the Jewish people. The Covenant is a central part of Judaism, and according to the Torah

was first made with Abraham. God promised to love and protect Abraham and his descendants. In return Abraham promised that he and his people would always devote themselves to God. The Sabbath is a reminder of this covenant, and most Jewish people see the Sabbath as a day set aside to devote to God.

Judaism has a number of holidays and celebrations throughout the year. The main Jewish holidays include Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Passover, and Hanukkah. Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year. During this time Jews celebrate the hope of a new year. Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, a sacred and solemn occasion where Jews look back on their life over the past year and look to improve on it. It is a day of fasting, reflection, and worship.



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Synagogue_\(Plze%C5%88\)#/media/File:Synagogue_Plzen_087.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Synagogue_(Plze%C5%88)#/media/File:Synagogue_Plzen_087.JPG)

The Passover holiday falls in the spring time; this is one of the most important Jewish festivals. During Passover, the Jewish people remember the events that led to the liberation from slavery in Egypt. There are blessings, songs, and events that symbolize the event. During the eight days of Hanukkah, Jews celebrate the recapturing of Jerusalem from the Syrian Greeks in 164 BCE. Jews say prayers, feast on fried foods, light a menorah (seven branch candlestick) and exchange gifts.

Summary

Judaism is one of the oldest faiths in the world. Like we will see with other religions, not everyone who calls themselves a member of this religion acts the same way or believes exactly the same thing. Religions often have many different interpretations of their core beliefs reflecting the culture or the time period, but it is their core beliefs that defines them. As we look at more religions, consider what are the core beliefs that define that religion.

What is Christianity?

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE INQUIRY

1. What are the various beliefs of the five major world religions?
2. How does geography play a role in the development and spread of religion?
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TERMS, PLACES, PEOPLE

Christianity

Jesus

salvation

messiah

disciples

Trinity

Introduction

“Of all the great religions, **Christianity** is the most widespread and has the largest number of adherents. The figure is probably inflated, but some estimates suggest almost one out of every three persons today as Christian, bringing the number into the neighborhood of 2.2 billion.” (Huston Smith, *The World’s Religions*)



Christianity was founded by **Jesus**, and “Christianity is referred to as a historical religion, meaning that it is not founded on just abstract principles, but on concrete events, actual historical happenings.” (Huston Smith, *The World’s Religions*) Who is Jesus and how did he become the central figure in the world’s largest religion? How do the teachings of one person become the basis for a religion that lasts for over two thousand years and spreads worldwide?

Judaism connection

To understand Christianity we need to understand the connection it has with Judaism. Christianity is rooted in Judaism; however, the two religions begin to take separate paths in the first century of the common era. Christianity focuses on an understanding of a New Covenant which is rooted in the writings of a number of Jesus’ followers. This collection of letters and records of the events of Jesus’ life along with other writings came to be known as the New Testament, a part of the Christian Bible. Judaism places emphasis on the Mosaic Covenant, (the covenant made with Moses) as recorded in the Torah and discussed above, other

Interactive 5.2 Christianity - from Judaism to Constantine



Learn more in this Crash Course World History video.

writings of ancient Judaism and the Talmud. The primary difference here is twofold: the purpose of Judaism is to carry out what it holds to be the only covenant or agreement between God and the Jewish people. Jews believe in an individual and collective relationship with God through prayers, tradition, rituals and actions. Christians believe that there is a path to **salvation** through the faith in a savior or **Messiah**.

Origins/History

How did Christianity begin? As mentioned, Christianity has a deep connection with Judaism. The Old Testament of the Christian Bible is essentially recognized by Judaism as well. As you might expect, there are many things the two religions hold in common including monotheism. However, this monotheistic religion is based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, a small village in Palestine, later known as Jesus Christ.

Jesus (Life and Death)

According to the gospels, a part of the Christian New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth was born into a small Jewish family. His mother, Mary, was a young woman when he was born. Christians believe that his father is the Holy Spirit, making Jesus both fully human and fully divine. The celebration of Christmas in the Christian faith is the celebration of the birth of Jesus. Very little is known about Jesus’ early life. By piecing together accounts from the gospels and other historical records, Christians believe Jesus

Did you know that one of the most well-known religious names is not really a name?

Christ is actually a title. It comes from the Latin and Greek words which mean, anointed, a rough translation of the Hebrew word, Messiah.

was born around 4 CE in Bethlehem. Very little else is recorded in the gospels of his childhood; the only other parts of his life that are recorded is about three years of his adult life where he preached and eventually was executed by crucifixion.

According to the gospels, during his preaching, Jesus traveled around the

region healing the sick, teaching in parables, short stories that use analogies to teach religious truths, and preaching sermons that taught what God wanted people to do. The focus of those teachings was to love God and love your neighbor as yourself, something often referred to today as the golden rule. Jesus' teachings focused on love and the need for forgiveness. This is still the central idea of the Christian belief today.

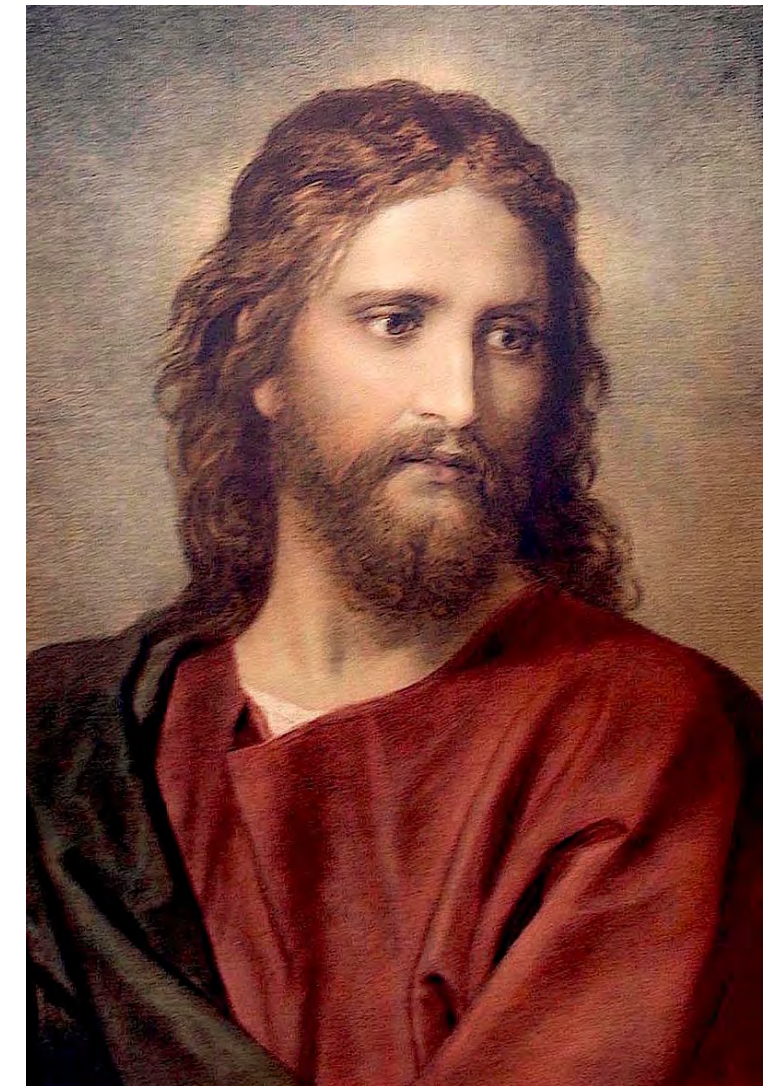
Jesus' teaching challenged the religious authorities of that region and time and, not surprisingly, made many enemies among the religious and political leaders. These powerful leaders believed that Jesus was looking to lead a revolution against the Roman Empire. Eventually, they would attempt to find a way to get rid of him and would use the authority of the Roman Empire to do it. Becoming convinced that Jesus and his growing following might be a threat to Roman control and stability in the region of Palestine, the Roman governor sentenced Jesus to death and

had him crucified, a common penalty of the time used to punish revolutionaries and criminals. To be crucified meant the punished would be nailed to a wooden cross and left to publicly die.

During his three year period of teaching and preaching, Jesus built up a very loyal following, led by his twelve **disciples**, or followers. Though Jesus' execution was meant to stop his following from growing, the opposite took place.

According to the Gospels, Jesus' rose from the dead three days after his execution. The gospels describe how Jesus appeared to many of his followers and eventually ascended into heaven with a promise of returning.

The Resurrection is considered the central event of Christianity and offers everyone the opportunity for eternal life or living forever



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_\(name\)#/media/File:Christ,_by_Heinrich_Hofmann.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_(name)#/media/File:Christ,_by_Heinrich_Hofmann.jpg)

after their own resurrection if they too become a follower of Jesus. Christians believe that the painful sacrifice of Jesus' life on the cross shows how much God loves his people and offers them forgiveness from what they have done wrong. The Resurrection is the sign of God's salvation offered to all people, a hope for eternal life.

Development of the Religion and the Spread of Christianity

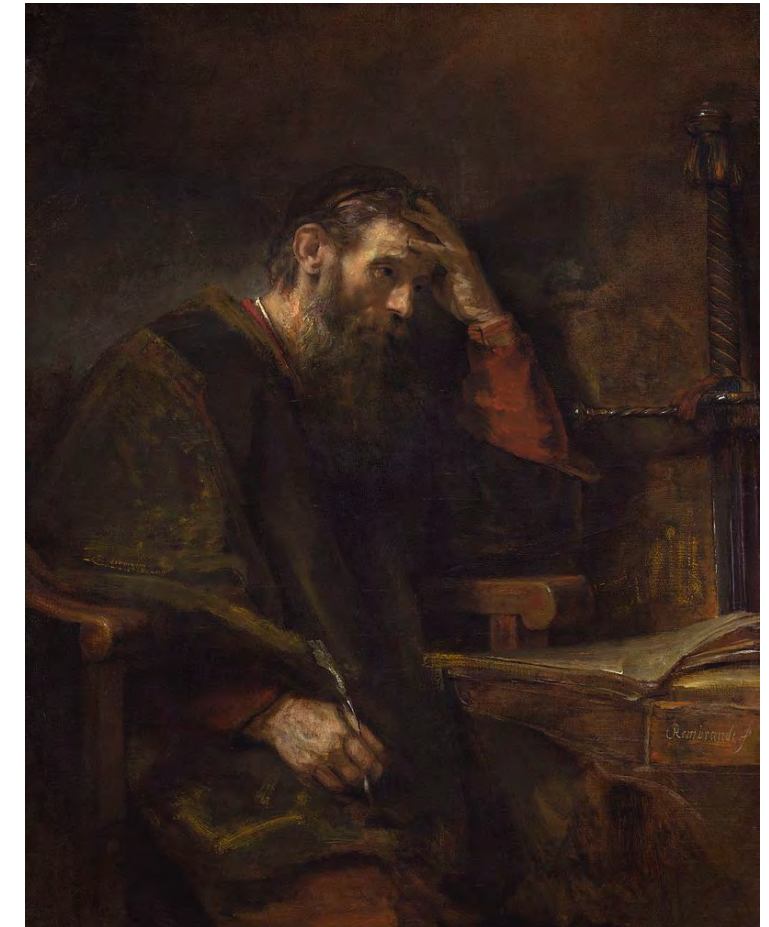
Early on, Christians were not popular with both the Jews and Romans and both attempted to stop the spread of the religion. The early religion was spread by many of Jesus' disciples, now often referred to as Apostles because of their role in spreading the teachings of Jesus and other followers. This was a very small, often persecuted group. Many Apostles and early believers were executed by the Romans. These early Christians often met in secret in small groups at individual homes.

The early religion wouldn't have gone far without the work a few key individuals in the history of the religion. Two people who were significant in the spread of Christianity were Paul and Constantine.

Paul

The spread of the Christian faith would not have made any lasting impact on the world were it not for the missionary work of Paul. Paul converted to Christianity and devoted his life to spreading the teachings of Jesus. Before his conversion, Paul was opposed to the Christian faith, helping to persecute Christians. According to the New Testament, Paul experienced a dramatic conversion while traveling to Damascus in present day Syria. After his conversion, he dedicated his life to teaching and preaching the message of Jesus.

Paul was an educated man who held a privileged position as a Roman citizen and spoke Greek, the common language used for writing in the Eastern portion of the Roman Empire. This made



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle#/media/File:Saint_Paul,_Rembrandt_van_Rijn_\(and_Workshop%3F\),_c._1657.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle#/media/File:Saint_Paul,_Rembrandt_van_Rijn_(and_Workshop%3F),_c._1657.jpg)

Paul an extremely effective missionary to the non-Jewish people sometimes referred to as Gentiles. Paul's journeys took him through much of the Roman empire. Paul stressed the need for people to believe in Jesus as the Son of God. It was his teaching which was essential for the development and success of the early church. Many of the letters he wrote to new churches throughout that portion of the Roman Empire are contained in the New Testament and considered by Christians to be sacred writings. If it were not for Paul's influence and teaching, Christianity might have remained nothing more than another Jewish sect limited to the small area around Palestine where Jesus lived and taught.

But Paul was instrumental in spreading it through much of the Roman Empire.

Constantine

Paul established Christian churches all throughout the Roman Empire, but these churches remained small and often secretive due to the persecution of the early church by Roman emperors. Nero (54 CE - 68 CE) and Domitian (81 CE-96 CE) were examples of tyrannical Roman emperors who persecuted many Christians. For hundreds of years, under Roman rule, many Christian believers died for their faith. These people are often referred to as martyrs. Even under duress, Christianity grew. By 300 CE there were as many as 30 million Christians living in the Roman lands in Europe, North Africa, and western Asia. Then, in 312 CE, the emperor Constantine won a decisive victory over a rival in battle.

He credited the success to the "Christian God" and proclaimed himself a follower of the Christian faith. Christianity, the Roman Empire, and the world would be dramatically changed forever.

One year later, In 313 CE, Emperor Constantine announced the Edict of Milan. The edict, or order, gave all Christians the freedom to practice their religion openly. This opened the door for future emperors to accept the new faith and then, by 380 CE, Christianity was the official religion of the Roman Empire. Now



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Constantine_the_Great_Statue_in_York)

[File:Constantine the Great Statue in York, commissioned in 1998 and sculptured by Philip Jackson, Eboracum, York, England \(7643906080\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Constantine_the_Great_Statue_in_York)

instead of small secretive groups, Christianity grew rapidly throughout the Roman Empire and became one of the unifying factors of the Roman Empire.

Important Historical events

Throughout history there have been many events that have shaped the Christian faith to create the religion we know today. As you might imagine, many different Christian groups see different ones as important, but two stand out with great significance in creating the different branches of Christianity we know today. Even though they occur much later, they help explain the major branches of Christianity today.

- The Great Schism- In 1054 differences between Eastern and Western Christianity culminated in an event where the two were unable to resolve their differences. The differences led to the split and the creating of the Orthodox church in the east and the Roman Catholic church in the west.
- The Reformation-Another conflict took place in 1517, when a German priest named Martin Luther called for a series of reforms in the Roman Catholic church. Those who followed the reforms became known as the Protestants. Other reformers followed Luther's lead. Today many different denominations exist under the Protestant branch of Christianity.

Central Teachings

Today, there are many different divisions and denominations (or religious groups) in Christianity. Although many different interpretations exist, most Christians accept a set of central beliefs about God and his relationship with humans. Christians are bound in their belief in the teachings of Jesus, found in the New Testament of the Christian Bible. The New Testament tells how Jesus brought a message of love, as displayed by his life and words.

Main Beliefs

First, most Christians believe that Jesus Christ was the son of God, fully human and fully divine. Christians also believe that Jesus died willingly for humanity, that God raised him from the dead, an event known as the Resurrection, and that this event saves or provides salvation from a spiritual death for those who believe in it. After the Resurrection, Christians believe that Jesus appeared to his disciples and then joined his father in heaven. Christians believe that they can look forward to their own resurrection and a life after death as well. After the end of this life, Christians believe each person will face judgement. God will then decide who should be saved from sin and evil and enjoy eternal life in heaven. This belief, that God will save people from sin and grant them an everlasting life, is known as salvation. Christians believe that salvation is a gift from God, that this gift is

open to anyone who has faith in Jesus and asks God to forgive them.

Christianity is a monotheistic religion, though, as you can see in the above references to a Father and a Son, there is sometimes some confusion about this. Christians interpret the different references to God in their Bible as being three beings in one; the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This union of the three-in-one God is known as the **Trinity**.

Each part of the Trinity has a different role. God the Father is the creator of the universe and everything in the world reveals his power and love. The son is Jesus, the Son of God who Christians believe that he was both divine and human, living and dieing like a human. The Holy Spirit is God's power at work in the world today.

Worship

The Christian place of worship is referred to as a church. For most Christians, going to church and worshiping with others is a big part of practicing their faith. Churches around the world vary in size - from simple homes to massive cathedrals. Some are highly decorated with stained glass and paintings while others are kept very plain as not to distract worshippers from focusing on God. Most churches hold their worship services on Sunday. This is because it is believed that Sunday is the day Jesus rose from the dead. Sunday services combine hymns and other music with



<https://pixabay.com/en/sanctuary-church-worship-519617/>

readings from the Bible and a teaching, or sermon, from the church leader. Spiritual leaders are called priests or ministers.

Wherever Christians live, sacred rituals called sacraments are part of the way they worship. The number of sacraments vary among different Christian groups or denominations, a term which means a specific religious groups, but all believe in the two sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. Both of these rituals can be celebrated differently depending on the denomination, but they remain the two most widely practiced sacraments.

Baptism involves the use of water to symbolize a new phase in a person's life. The sacrament marks a person's entry into the Christian faith. Churches differ on when they baptize their members. Some will baptize children when they are infants;

others wait until the person is old enough to choose to be baptized. Churches also differ on how they carry out this ritual. Some sprinkle water on the person's head; others immerse the person completely in water. Regardless of how it is performed, Christians see this as a central to their identity as a follower of Christianity.

Holy Communion is the also central to Christian worship. The New Testament tells that Jesus began this sacrament on the night before he was executed, an event known as the Last Supper. As he served the bread to his disciples, he said, "This is my body," then as he poured the wine, saying "This is my blood." He told them to practice this in remembrance of him. Most churches celebrate Holy Communion in some way. Generally, it involves sharing bread and wine or grape juice. Christian churches perform this sacrament differently and at different times depending on the denomination.

Holidays and Celebrations

The Christian year is marked by events in the life of Jesus and by events important to the faith. Christmas and Easter are by far the most widely celebrated holidays. There are many other important moments in the Christian year, but these vary once again based on the denomination. However, Christmas and Easter are held in common by most Christians, though the date of celebration may vary.

Christmas is the holiday that celebrates the birth of Jesus. The story of Jesus' birth is told in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. Christians celebrate by getting together with family and attending church services to sing songs and rejoice in the birth of Jesus. They strive to let the peace and goodwill shine during this holiday season.

Easter is the most important holiday in Christianity. This day celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus. Easter is celebrated in the springtime. Leading up to Easter, many observe a season called Lent. Lent is the 40 days leading up to Easter. This remembers the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness before he began preaching. During this time Jesus went without food, or fasted. In honor, many Christians observe Lent by giving up something that means a lot to them. The week prior to Easter marks the Holy week, starting with Palm Sunday and ending with Good Friday. Palm Sunday recalls the arrival of Jesus to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Passover. Good Friday marks the day that Jesus was crucified. This is a solemn day of remembrance. In contrast the following Sunday, Easter, is a day of celebration: death has been overcome once and for all.

Interactive 5.3 Christian Calendar



What are some of the important upcoming dates? See here on this website!

What is Islam?

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE INQUIRY

1. What are the various beliefs of the five major world religions?
2. How does geography play a role in the development and spread of religion?
3. What effect does religion have on economic, political, and social institutions
4. What effect does religion have on art, language, and literature?

TERMS, PLACES, PEOPLE

Islam

Muhammad

Qur'an

Hajj

Caliph

Ottoman Empire

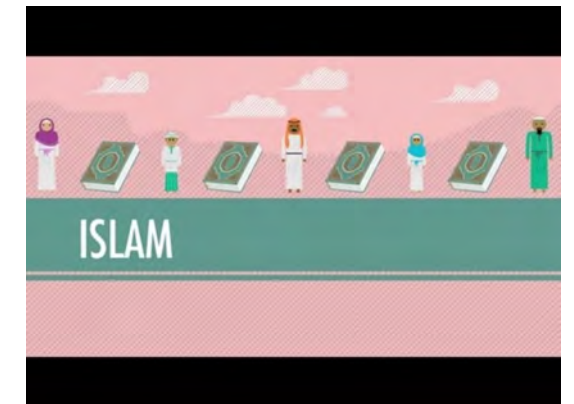
Ramadan

With over 1 billion followers, **Islam** is the second largest religion in the world. Islam is a monotheistic faith. The Arabic word Islam means submission. This definition reflects the faith's central belief in submitting to the will of God. Followers of Islam are called Muslims, or those who submit. The religion began about 600 years after Christianity with a man named Muhammad who was born in 570 CE. The Muslim faith tracks its start all the way with the "beginning." "In the beginning was God..." according to the book of Genesis, found in both the Torah and Christian Bible. The **Qur'an** agrees, and in this we can see a connection with Abraham of the Jewish and Christian faiths.

Origins

According to the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic faiths, God created the world and all humans. According to the holy books of all three, the first human was Adam. All three also refer to a great flood which was survived by Noah and his three sons. One of those sons, Shem settled and repopulated the region we now refer to as the Middle East, the region where all three of the major monotheistic religions would develop. According to these beliefs held in common, one of the

Interactive 5.4 Crash Course - Islam



descendants of Shem many generations later, Abraham, would have two sons, leading to the people from which Judaism and Islam would develop.

Abraham is called Ibrahim by Muslims. There's no difference here

other than the sacred texts being written in different languages.

He is believed to be the father of the Arab people as well as the Jewish people.

Abraham is promised that God will make a great nation through his lineage. The first divergence between the people from whom the two faiths would spring happens when Abraham banishes his son Ishmael in favor of another son, Isaac.

According to the Qur'an, Ishmael

settled in the place where Mecca would rise. His descendants

flourished in the Arabian Peninsula where Mecca is located, the area where Islam would be born many hundreds of years later.

Abraham's son Isaac, would remain in the region of Canaan and his descendants would become the Jewish people.

Development of Islam

“The tradition of God testing Abraham's devotion to him by sacrificing his son is at the heart of the Abrahamic tradition that all three faiths are built on. This test showed submission to God. Since the time of Abraham, Muslims believe, there have been many prophets and messengers. Abraham was the first Prophet, being asked for the ultimate sacrifice to show submission to God. Moses and Jesus are others to be designated as well. Finally, it is the Prophet **Muhammad** through whom Muslims believe Islam reached its final and definitive form. He is seen as the culmination of all prophets prior to him, because of this he is referred to as “The ‘Seal of the Prophets’, meaning no valid prophets will follow him.” (Huston Smith, The World's Religions).



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham#/media/>

File:Moln%C3%A1r_%C3%81brah%C3%A1m_kik%C3%B6lt%C3%B6z%C3%A9se_1850.jpg

History

Muhammad was born into the leading tribe of Mecca in approximately 570 CE. During his childhood years, he experienced a number of tragedies. His father died just before he was born, his mother passed away when he was six and his grandfather, who cared for him after his mother passed away when he was eight. At this point in his life, Muhammad was adopted into his uncle's home, where he spent much of his time as a pastoralist, tending the family's flocks.

Eventually, Muhammad would take up the caravan business, and around the age of 25, he began working in the service of a wealthy widow named Khadija. As time passed, the two would become more than business associates, eventually marrying. Muhammad was a deeply spiritual man, and he often spent time meditating in the outskirts of Mecca in an area known as Mount Hira. During this time he would investigate the mysteries of good and evil. According to the Qur'an, Muhammad was meditating in his cave when visited by an angel in 610 CE,



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_Ali_of_Egypt#/media/File:ModernEgypt,_Muhammad_Ali_by_Auguste_Couder,_BAP_17996.jpg

instructing him to recite, or proclaim. Over time, Muhammad would receive further revelations, which would eventually be written down to form the Qur'an. The key message was one of monotheism: there was only one God and Muhammad was his prophet.

At this time, polytheism was practiced in much of the region. Religion was not focused on morality, rather on earthly life. Blood feuds, violence, and general immorality abounded during Muhammad's life. He would return to Mecca and begin sharing his experience with others, his wife becoming his first convert. The voice of God returned repeatedly to Muhammad and each time the command was always the same, proclaim. Muhammad never claimed to be anything more than a “preacher of God’s words”, the one to deliver God’s message to mankind. From this time on, he would preach with unwavering purpose in the face of relentless persecution, insult, and outrage by the people of the region for the next twenty-three years.

The reaction to his message by the people of Mecca was hostile. The people were deeply entrenched in polytheistic beliefs, but Muhammad’s moral teachings demanded an end to the immoral actions of the day and challenged the social hierarchy of the day.

Over time, the leaders of Mecca became more determined to destroy this message that went against the current society. Gradually, some people began to follow the message, and by the end of a decade, converts numbered several hundred. Finally, in 622 CE, a group from the nearby city of Medina approached Muhammad. His teachings had won over many in that city. The city was in need of a strong leader from outside and they hoped that Muhammad would be the man. The group pledged that they would all worship one God, referred to by the Arabic word for God, Allah, and would observe Muhammad's teachings. Muhammad saw this as a sign from God to accept the position and left for Medina. This event is seen as a turning point in world history by Muslims and marks the date that begins their calendar. (Huston Smith, World Religions.)

Over the next ten years, Muhammad would take on a different role, one more of an administrator. "According to Muslim Tradition, his administrations was an ideal blend of justice and mercy" (Huston Smith, World Religions). Eventually he would gain so many followers that he was able to return and conquer Mecca. Muhammad continued to lead his followers, both spiritually and politically, until his death in 632 CE.

Expansion of Islam

Under Muhammad's leadership, the Islamic world spread through the Arabian Peninsula. When the Prophet died, he left behind the religion of Islam as well as a community of over one hundred

thousand Muslims who were unified religiously and politically. The question of who should succeed the Prophet and lead created a large divide. The new leader would not only lead the faith, but be the controlling head of state.

To make matters worse, the Prophet had not left a clear plan as to who should lead or how to choose a leader.

This created a divide within the Islamic faith. The larger group of Muslims chose Abu Bakr, a close companion of Muhammad's, to be the political and social leader. Known as a **Caliph**, he would be the new political leader, but not the spiritual leader. A smaller group believed that the Prophet's son-in-law, Ali, should be Caliph. They believed that he had been appointed by Muhammad prior to death to succeed him in both political and spiritual terms. In the end, Abu Bakr was appointed First Caliph. This separation would create a division in the Islamic faith that developed further and still exists today.

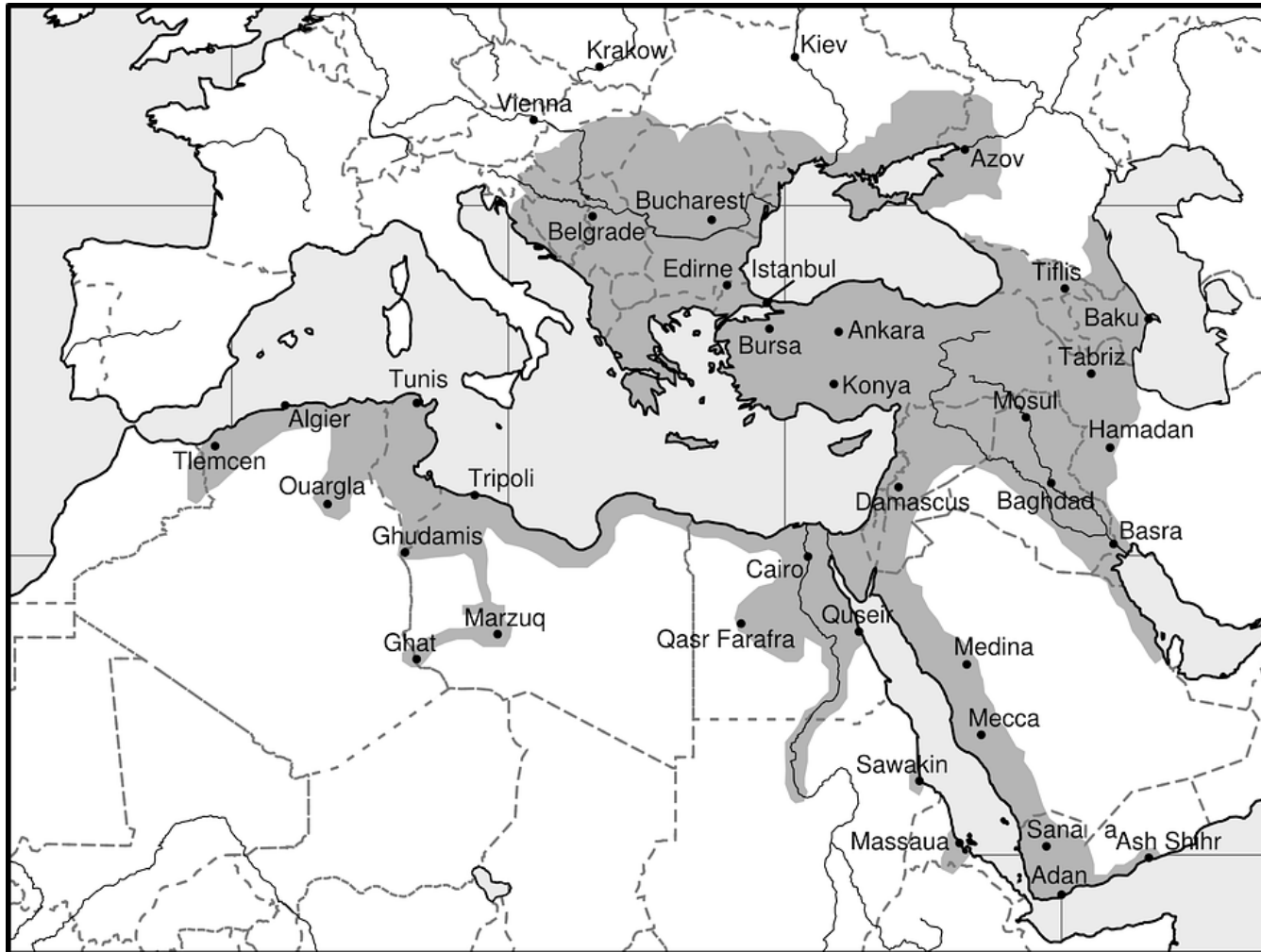
Over the next century, the followers of Muhammad would conquer areas in Armenia, Persia, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, North Africa and Spain. Islamic Spain (711-1492) was a multicultural mix of the three monotheistic religions. The three groups managed to get along well, and to some extent benefit from one another. The

Interactive 5.5 The Expansion of Islam



Learn more in this teacher created video.

Muslim period is often described as a “golden age” of learning and of religious/ethnic tolerance in Spain for the age.



<https://pixabay.com/en/ottoman-empire-map-42644/>

The **Ottoman Empire** (1301-1922) is one of the largest empires in world history. The empire was inspired and built on the Islamic faith and Islamic institutions. In 1301, Uthman, leader of the Ottoman clan, proclaimed himself Sultan. At the beginning, the rule of the Sultans was insecure. To help bring the empire together, the Sultans consolidated their fighting force and created

groups of fanatical fighters, known as the Janissaries. This specialized fighting force was made up of slaves and converts to Islam. Soon the Ottomans were able to inflict a series of defeats on the declining Byzantine Empire and quickly expanded west.

In 1453 Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II overthrew the city of Constantinople making it the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Mehmet renamed the city Istanbul, the “City of Islam,” and soon it would be the political, cultural and economic capital of the Ottoman Empire. The empire reached its peak of power during the rule of Suleiman the Magnificent and his grandson Selim II (1520-1574). At this time, the empire included so much of the territory where Islam was practiced and so many of the Islamic holy places, that the sultans were seen as both political and religious leaders. The power of the empire began to decline in 1683 with the failed conquest of Europe. The empire officially came to an end on November 1st 1922 when Turkey was declared a republic.

Central Teachings

Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam teaches that there is one God, making it a monotheistic religion. Islam has a number of standard beliefs about God, the universe, and humanity. The Qur’an is the sacred text of Islam. It is believed to be the spoken word of God to Muhammad. Muslims have a few main beliefs. Most importantly, there is one God (referred to with the Arabic

word, Allah). Muslims also believe in prophets, or people who are messengers of God. They believe that a number of prophets have come, including Ibrahim (Abraham), Moses, and Jesus. Muhammad is the Final Prophet. Muhammad is not divine in any way. He is seen as “the Seal of the Prophets”, making him the last and greatest of the messengers of God. Other main beliefs include the existence of the soul and a physical existence after death in an afterlife. Beyond the core belief in one God and Muhammad being his Prophet, Muslim **doctrine** is summarized in Five Pillars of Islam; many believe that you must follow these articles to be considered a Muslim.

The Qur'an

The Qur'an is used to teach the Islamic beliefs, values, and practices. It is also an important historical document, telling the story of the origins of the Islamic Faith. The Qur'an is the most sacred text and is believed to be the literal word of God. This word was revealed to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. The text is made up of 114 chapters and is written in Arabic. The Qur'an has been translated into various languages; however, most Muslims are taught to read and recite it in Arabic even if it is not their native language.



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Quran,_Tunisia.JPG

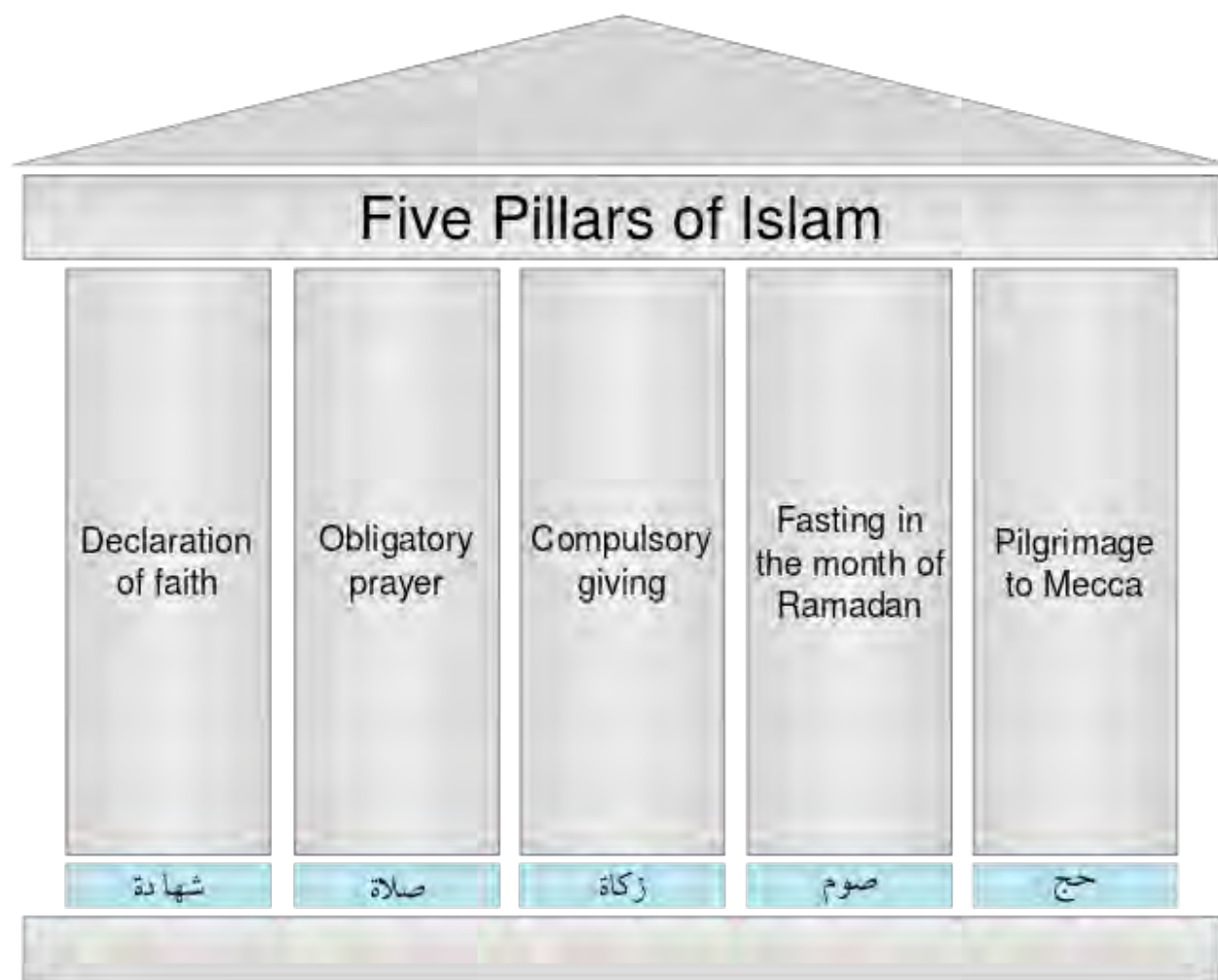
Five Pillars of Islam

The Five Pillars are the most important practices in the Muslim faith. They are five obligations, or tasks that every Muslim must do in order to live a good, responsible life according to their belief. The Five Pillars are:

- Shahadah: sincerely reciting the Muslim profession of faith
- Salat: performing ritual prayers in the proper way five times each day

- Zakat: paying an alms (or charity) tax to benefit the poor and the needy
- Sawm: fasting during the month of **Ramadan**
- **Hajj**: pilgrimage to Mecca

These practices provide a framework for Muslims to carry out their daily lives, in combination with their religious beliefs, creating a continuous form of religious devotion. Followers of Islam see it



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Pillars_of_Islam#/media/File:Five_pillars_of_Islam.svg

as essential to put faith into action and practice. Carrying out the Five Pillars demonstrates that believers are putting their faith first and are not trying to just fit it in around everything else.

Holidays

When compared to other major religions, Islam has fewer holidays. This makes the few holidays and festivals that they have very important to Muslims. When holidays are observed, it is not uncommon for daily routines, such as work and other events, to stop temporarily in order to show respect for the person or event that is being remembered. Traditionally, there are two major festivals, the Eld Ul Fitr (festival of breaking the fast) and the Eld ul Adha (festival of Sacrifice) celebrated by all Muslims.

Muslims also celebrate the month of Ramadan and the popular festival of Milad an-Nabi, which commemorates the birth of Muhammad. Islamic holidays do not always fall in the same season. They follow the Islamic calendar, which, like the Jewish calendar, is lunar and has no way to correctly align with the more traditional solar (western) calendar.

Ramadan is not a holy day but a full month long celebration. In the ninth month of the Muslim year Muslims fast during daylight hours. Ramadan is considered important because it was when the Qur'an was first revealed to Muhammad. Fasting, going without food for a period of time, is seen as a way to:

- Obey God

- Learn self-discipline
- Become spiritually stronger
- Appreciate God's gifts
- Share in the sufferings of the poor

Muslims who are physically or mentally unwell may be excused, as well as those who are pregnant, very old, and under the age of twelve. Fasting is only done during the daylight hours, so many Muslims will eat a large meal just before dawn and then will enjoy evening meals after dark. The evening meal is a time for family and the community to get together and celebrate throughout the month.

Eid ul Fitr marks the close of Ramadan. It is one of the two major festivals in Islam. Muslims not only celebrate the end of fasting, but take this time to thank Allah (God) for the strength he gave them throughout the month. The celebration is marked by special services at mosques, a special meal eaten during daytime, and various other forms of celebrations. This is also seen as a time for forgiveness and making amends.

Eid ul Adha is also known as the Festival of the Sacrifice. This is the second of the major festivals in the Islamic faith. This festival takes place at the end of the Hajj. The Hajj is annual pilgrimage to Mecca, as well as one of the five pillars of Islam. Once a year,

Muslims from every ethnic group, social status and culture gather together in Mecca and stand before the Kaaba to praise God together. Eid ul Adha is celebrated during the final four days of the Hajj, not only in Mecca but around the world. The festival remembers the prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham) willingness to sacrifice his son when God ordered him to. This obedience to the will of God is celebrated by Muslims reminding themselves of their own submission to God and their willingness to sacrifice everything to God.

Another important date in the Muslim calendar is Milad un Nabi, the Birthday of the Prophet. This holiday marks the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. On this day, Muslim parents will tell stories of Muhammad's life to their children. Not all Muslims commemorate the birth of the Prophet, but those who do celebrate joyfully.

Islamic Sects

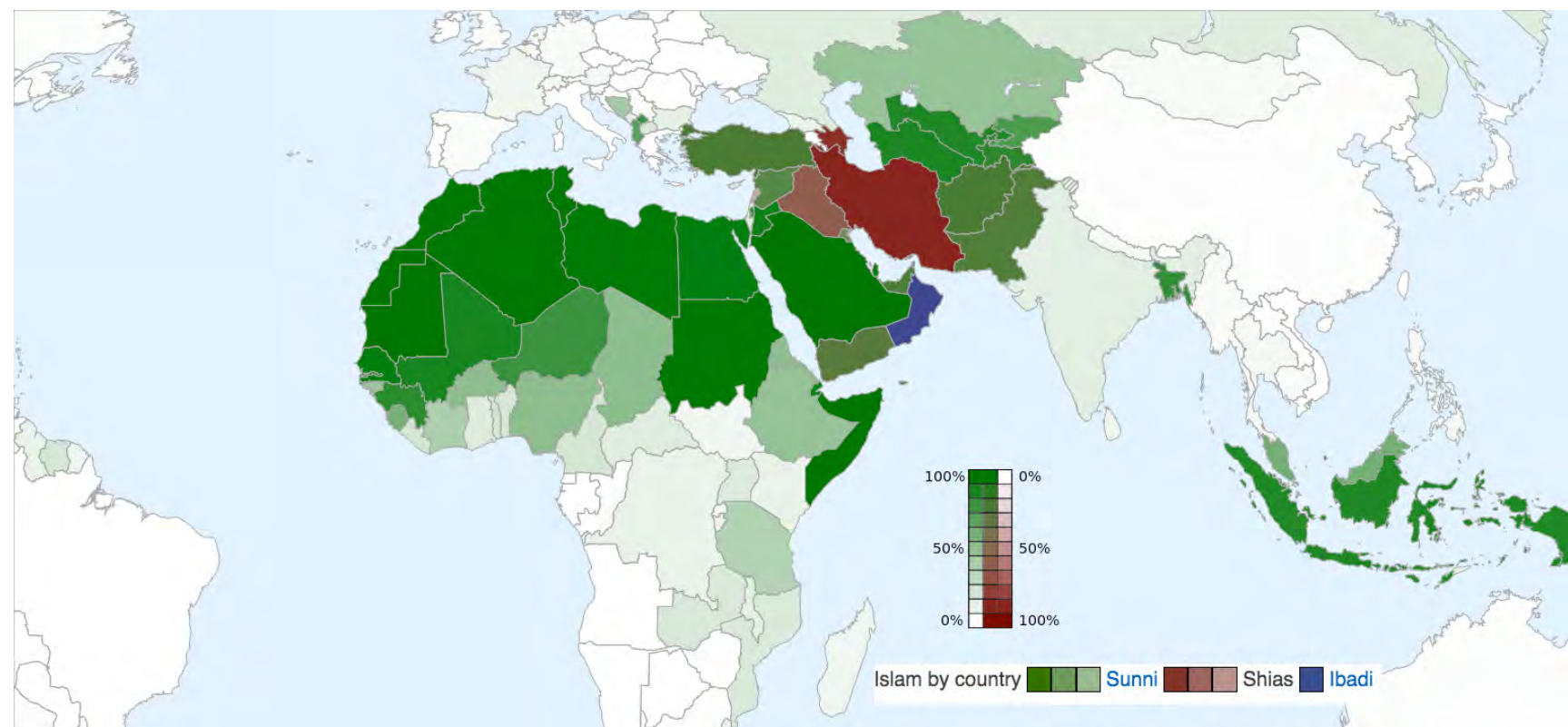
The religion of Islam is divided into two main sects. This division between the two groups, the Sunni and Shia, is deeply rooted in Islamic history. The division revolves around a key historical figure and important core beliefs which have a significant effect on the way Muslims live in the world today. As a Muslim, religion is a part of every aspect of life, and understanding the difference between Sunni and Shia helps to understand the modern Muslim world.

Both groups agree on the fundamentals of Islam and both agree that the Qur'an is the holy book. The differences come from their historical, political and, social differences. The differences began with the death of the Prophet Muhammad. At this time there was no chosen person to lead the Muslim community. At this point in history, the religion of Islam was also a Muslim state of more than one hundred thousand people. Both groups have evidence to support their claim to who should succeed the Prophet. Sunnis argue that Muhammad chose Abu Bakr as the next leader. The Shia claim that on his return from his last hajj, Muhammad stood in front of his companions and proclaimed that Ali would be his successor. It is important to note that neither group believed the successor would be Prophet, as all Muslims believe that Muhammad was the final prophet. This is the beginning of the widening of the two groups. Over time, other social and political events would create the divide we see today. These two major sects are not an equal division at all. Today almost 90% of Muslims are Sunnis, allowing the division to have a smaller effect when compared to the denominational differences of all other religions. You can read more about those differences here.

Interactive 5.6 Sunni and Shia Differences



Learn more in this article from the New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/04/world/middleeast/q-and-a-how-do-sunni-and-shia-islam-differ.html>



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shia_Islam#/media/File:Islam_by_country.svg

Section 5

What is Hinduism?

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE INQUIRY

1. What are the various beliefs of the five major world religions?
2. How does geography play a role in the development and spread of religion?
3. What effect does religion have on economic, political, and social institutions
4. What effect does religion have on art, language, and literature?

TERMS, PLACES, PEOPLE

Hinduism

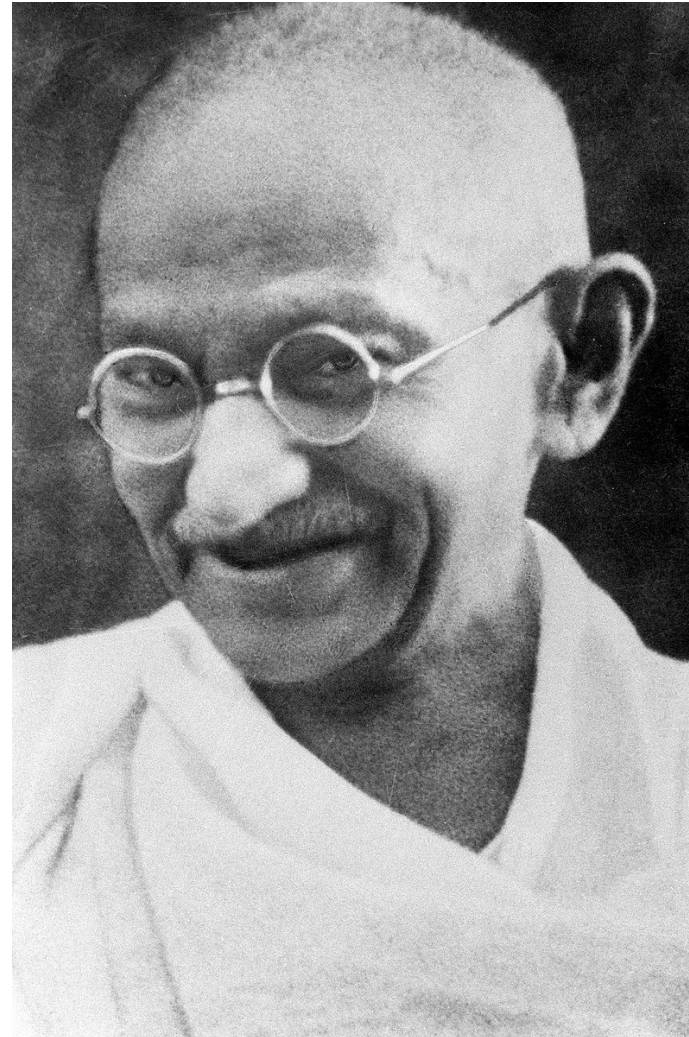
Reincarnation

Karma

Dharma

Caste System

Interactive 5.7 Crash Course - Hinduism



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi#/media/File:Portrait_Gandhi.jpg

“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.” Mahatma Gandhi

Who was Mahatma Gandhi? What influenced this person so much that he was able to change the path of history for one country and arguably the world? Gandhi was the leader of the independence movement from British-rule in India. He lived from 1858-1947 CE. Gandhi led a spiritual life focused on nonviolence, morality, and simplicity. His major spiritual influence would come from the many texts of Hinduism.

Hinduism, the world's third largest religion (following Christianity and Islam), is a polytheistic religion. As noted earlier, polytheistic religions believe in more than one god. In Hinduism, the belief about God or gods is not considered essential, so this separates it from the monotheistic beliefs. Hinduism includes

numerous traditions; however, these do not create a unified set of beliefs or practices. The extensive texts and the long rich history of the religion shape what we see today.

Hinduism is considered the oldest living religion in the world. Elements that lie within the religion stretch back thousands of years. Even with all this rich history and wide array of information, the religion cannot be easily defined as it also is closely associated with concepts and histories of the Indian religions of Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. To complicate things further, Hinduism has no founder or date of origin. Most of the sacred texts, authors, and dates are unknown. Many scholars describe

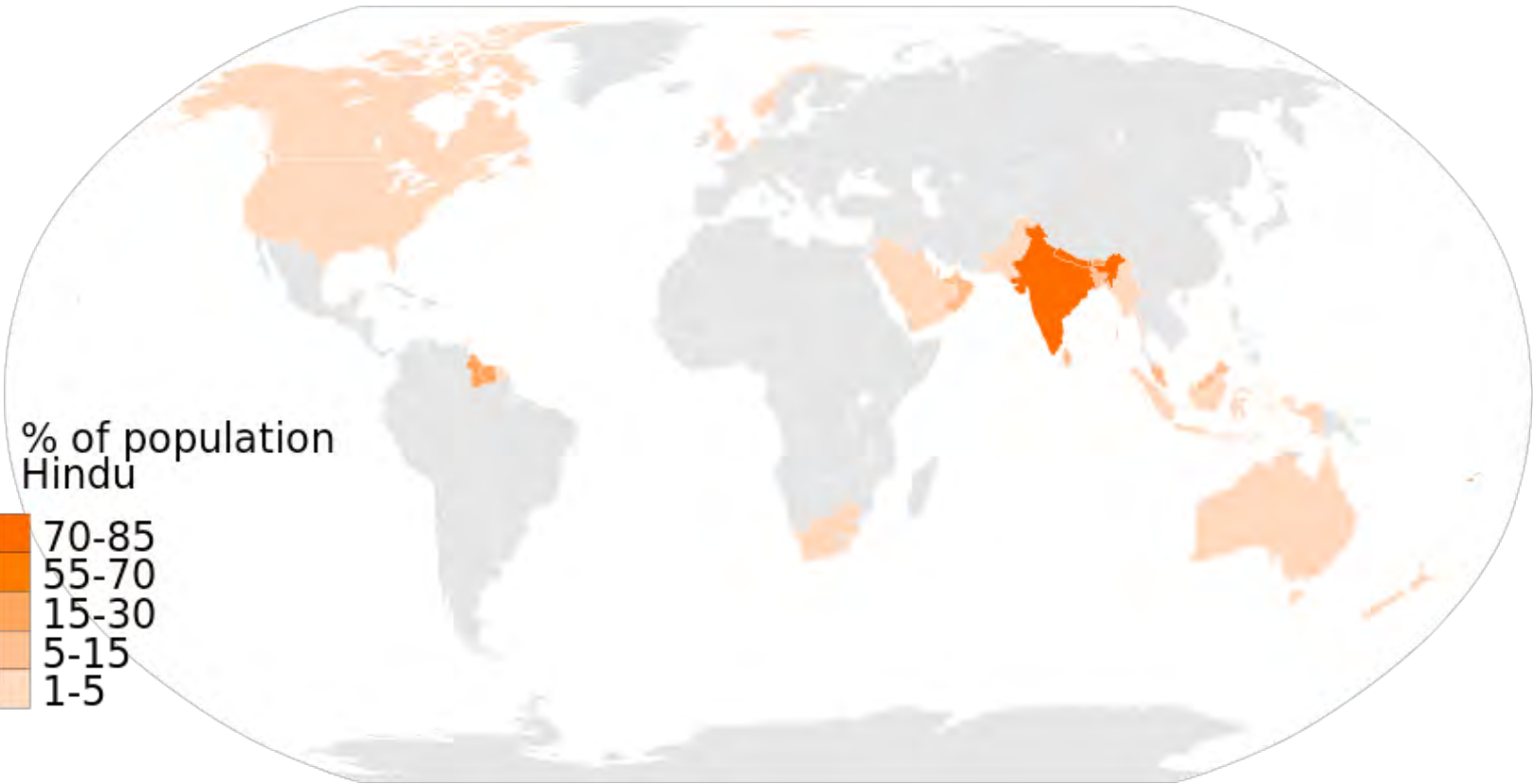
Hinduism as a religion that has developed in India for nearly four thousand years. With all this in mind, what is Hinduism?

Hinduism is the religion of the majority of the people living in India and Nepal. There are also significant populations living in many countries all over the world, estimated to be over 900 million followers worldwide. The term “Hinduism” is relatively new when naming the religion. The term itself has only been used since the early part of the 20th century within the context of British colonialism. The goal here was to distinguish between the Muslims in portions of British controlled India and the followers of other traditions. Those followers would be called Hindus. During

this period of time, Hinduism was a cultural, political, and geographical term. Today, the term is widely accepted, although the broad definition is still a subject of debate.

Origins/History

It is difficult to track the history of Hinduism for a number of reasons. First, Hinduism doesn’t recognize a single founder. Second, Hinduism is not a single religion, but it embraces many traditions. Thirdly, the religion has no definite starting point. The traditions which flow into the religion date back thousands of years, with some



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism#/media/File:Hinduism_percent_population_in_each_nation_World_Map_Hindu_data_by_Pew_Research.svg

claiming that the Hindu revelation is eternal.

With the early history difficult to track, a rough chronology can be followed:

- Before 2000 BCE: The Indus Valley Civilization
- 1500–500 BCE: The Vedic Period
- 500 BCE–500 CE: The Epic, Puranic, and Classical Age
- 500 CE–1500 CE: Medieval Period
- 1500–1757 CE: Pre-Modern Period
- 1757–1947 CE: British Period
- 1947 CE–the present: Independent India

Central Teachings

With so many traditions and a rich history, how can one define the beliefs of Hinduism? There are some primary beliefs and traditions held by the majority of Hindu believers. The fundamental Hindu beliefs include the recognition that the Vedas are the authoritative text; the existence of supreme spirit (Brahman); the existence of an enduring soul that can move from one body to another at death (**reincarnation**); and the law of



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism#/media/File:Shiva_Bangalore.jpg

karma, which determines one's destiny in both this life and the next.

Many Hindus are devoted to following the gods Shiva or Vishnu, while others look toward an inward divine Self referred to with the word Atman. Most also recognize the existence of a supreme reality or unifying principle, Brahman, that is a one supreme spirit. Hindus believe that God is in all things in the world and that all

make up Brahman. Brahman does not just exist; it IS existence. With this in mind, all other “gods”, such as Vishnu and Shiva, are Brahman in different forms.

What is Hinduism’s scripture? The sacred text of Hinduism are a collection of works developed over the life of the religion. The Vedas are the fundamental collection of these texts. They came to be in their present form between 1200-200 BCE and were brought to India by the Aryans, a group of migrants which came to the Indian subcontinent from areas to the north and west. Hindus believe that the texts were spoken to scholars directly from God. For hundreds of years, the Vedas were never written down- they were only spoken or sang. Eventually the Vedas would be brought together and written down. The Upanishads are another collection of holy writings. These were written 500-1000 years after the Vedas and contain ideas about Hinduism and how to practice the religion.

Basic Beliefs/Concepts

A major difference between Hinduism and the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam is the view on life and death. Most Hindus believe in reincarnation. This is the belief in the rebirth of the soul, when the body dies the spirit is

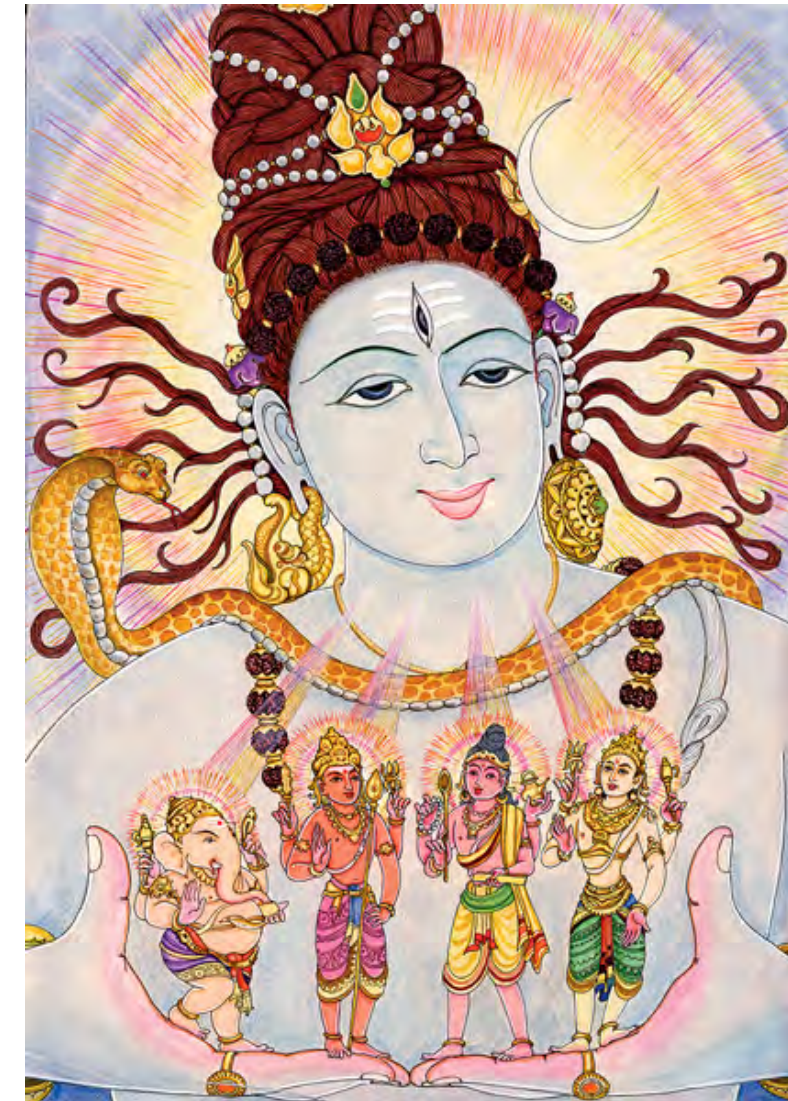
Interactive 5.8 Hindu Gods and Goddesses



Learn more here!

reincarnated or reborn into a new form. The soul is not limited to being reborn in one way. It can be reborn in many forms such as another human, an insect or animal. In that sense, Hindus believe that all life contains a soul.

Karma is a Sanskrit (the primary sacred language of Hinduism) word that literally means “action”. In Hindu beliefs, this term refers to the idea that every action has an equal reaction, either now or at some point in the future. Good actions will have a good reactions or responses and bad actions will have the opposite effect. In Hinduism, karma has an effect not only in this lifetime but across lifetimes, therefore it affects reincarnation.



https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_gods#/media/File:Gods_AS.jpg

Hindus believe this process of reincarnation is called samsara, a continuous cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Hindus believe that when one dies the soul is then reborn into a new body. The ultimate goal (moksha) is to break free from this cycle. Moksha is “oneness” with god. Once a Hindu is reborn as a Brahman and they live a life of perfection, they will end their cycle of birth, death and rebirth, becoming part of the spirit of Brahman. Moksha is also sometimes referred to as, Nirvana. That term will have a similar meaning in the other polytheistic religion we will examine, Buddhism, later in this chapter.

A very important part of the Hindu belief, Dharma is “duty”, “virtue”, or “morality” of a Hindu believer. Dharma is the power that keeps society together; it makes us moral people. This idea is not the same for everyone; different people have different duties according to their age, gender, or social position.

An important aspect of Dharma is the **caste system** that exists in India. The caste system is a model of social order in society. A person's place in the caste system is dependant on the level where they were born. The four classes in the caste system are:

- Brahmins or Brahmins - the intellectuals and the priestly class who perform religious rituals
- Kshatriya (nobles or warriors) - who traditionally had power

- Vaishyas
(commoners or merchants) - ordinary people who produce, farm, trade, and earn a living

- Shudras
(workers) - who traditionally served the higher classes, including labourers, artists, musicians, and clerks



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:Pyramid of Caste system in India.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pyramid_of_Caste_system_in_India.png)

As you can see, castes are normally linked to a certain job. Another group has existed at the bottom of the system, the Dalits or “untouchables”. This group is looked at as being so low they are outside the caste system. Hindus believe if their karma was good they will move up in the caste system when they were reincarnated. They also believe that bad karma would be punished by people being reborn in lower castes or as an untouchable.

Religion Today

Today the Hindu religion has become well established throughout the world socially, economically, and academically. Even with

many spread throughout many countries, about 95% of believers live in India. Today Hinduism has faced change brought on by youth who look for a rational basis for the practices that have been passed down by family custom. There are changes being made to many of the traditional views of the caste system (now illegal in India), societal views on women, and intermarriage between social levels.

Holidays and Festivals

It has been said that the Hindus could have a holiday for every day of the year. It has also been noted that this could be an understatement. It is not known for sure exactly how many festivals are celebrated, but in general most festivals are intended to purify, advert malicious influences, and renew society. Holi and Diwali are two of the more famous festivals. Holi is an annual festival celebrated in early March. It celebrates spring, offering followers to disregard many social norms and indulge in general “merrymaking”. Diwali is the festival of lights, which last for five days. This celebration is also New Year for many Hindus.

What is Buddhism?

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE INQUIRY

1. What are the various beliefs of the five major world religions?
2. How does geography play a role in the development and spread of religion?
3. What effect does religion have on economic, political, and social institutions
4. What effect does religion have on art, language, and literature?

TERMS, PLACES, PEOPLE

Siddhartha Gautama

Buddha

Buddhism

Enlightenment

Nirvana

Middle Way

Four Noble Truths

Eightfold Path

Bodhi

Karma

Meditation

Introduction

“What are you?” A question not normally asked of people. “Who are you?” is a much more common approach to get to know someone's name, origin, ancestry, but never “What are you?” Buddha was asked this question, and his answer gives us a look at his identity and therefore the identity of an entire religion: “I am awake.”

Interactive 5.9 Crash Course - Buddhism



How can a religion not be based on an idea of a god or gods? If a religion follows more a way of life or philosophy is it still a “religion”? Many have asked these same questions about the religion of Buddhism. Buddhism is not based on the following or idea of a god-it is a way of life. Buddhism focuses on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama. Buddhism is the 4th largest religion in the world, having about 376 million followers worldwide.

Origins/History

Buddhism is the dominant world religion in the Eastern part of the world. The religion began in India about 2,500 years ago. Buddhism is based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama who was born around 563 BCE in what is now Nepal, close to the Indian border. Siddhartha Gautama of the Sakyas was born into a wealthy family. His father was a king; as a result Siddhartha's upbringing was luxurious. At the age of 29, the prince left his royal life in search of spiritual truth. As he journeyed, he believed he learned great truths that would ultimately change his life. These truths would be shared with others and become the foundation for the religion of Buddhism.

Prince Siddhartha was born about 566 BCE in the village of Lumbini, located in present-day Nepal. King Suddhodana and Queen Maya were devout Hindu followers. According to Buddhist tradition, just prior to the prince's birth, his mother had a dream. In the queen's dream, she saw a huge white elephant come into a room carrying a lotus flower. The elephant trumpeted, walked around her and pierced her right side with one of its tusks.

The king and queen asked the Hindu priests to explain the dream. The priests declared that the king and queen would give birth to a great and noble son. The child would have two paths to choose from. As prince, he could be a good and powerful ruler. But if he left the royal life to see the suffering of the world, he would become one who is enlightened.

The prince's father wanted his son to grow up and be a great and powerful ruler, not a holy man. This led to the decision to keep his son protected from the world. The prince enjoyed a life filled with all the lavishes of being royalty. Eventually he grew up, married, and had a son of his own. At this point in his life, the king felt that it was time to give Siddhartha more freedom. The prince was



https://an.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siddhartha_Gautama#/media/

File:Buddha_meditating.jpg

now able to travel outside the royal palaces.

One day, according to traditions, Siddhartha decided to travel outside the protection of the royal enclosure. It was during these travels that he first discovered what he would call the three forms of suffering. First he encountered an older man walking with the aid of a stick. Next he came upon a sick man lying on the ground, crying out in pain. Finally, the prince encountered a group of people walking down the road. They carried with them a man wrapped in a white cloth. It was Siddhartha's first experience with death. All of this suffering greatly disturbed him. Siddhartha came to believe he had learned a great truth: sickness, age, and death were the inevitable fate of all human beings, something no one could avoid.

On his travels, Siddhartha also encountered a Hindu monk. He decided that this was a sign for him to leave the royal life and pursue the life of a holy man. He began to search for a way to escape suffering. Siddhartha later would encounter an Indian ascetic who encouraged him to follow a life of extreme self-denial and discipline. For six years he followed this way, but it didn't satisfy him, he still could not escape from the suffering of the world.

Finally, he abandoned the lifestyle of self-denial, however, he did not return to the pampered life of royalty. He instead followed the Middle Way; a life of neither luxury nor poverty. Around his 35th birthday, Siddhartha had a strong feeling that he would soon gain



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_sights#/media/File:Four_Heavenly_Messengers.jpg

enlightenment. As the day wore on, he walked until reaching a tree that would become known as the Bodhi tree, or tree of awakening. Siddhartha sat beneath the tree and fell into a deep meditation. He reflected on all his life experiences and was determined to find the truth.

Buddhist tradition tells that Siddhartha was then tempted by a wicked god named Mara. Her three daughters -Discontent, Delight, and Desire all tried to tempt Siddhartha, but he resisted

them all. At this point, the Buddha continued to meditate through the night about the nature of reality and a way to reach nirvana, or true happiness and peace. He saw the past lives he lived and the importance of karma. Eventually, he saw the way to gain freedom from the cycle of rebirth, ending all suffering. Here he finally achieved enlightenment, a state of spiritual insight and became the Buddha. He would have been happy to dwell in the state of enlightenment. But Brahma, the king of the gods (Hinduism), asked him to share his understanding with others.

The truths that the prince discovered under the Bodhi tree would become the founding principles of Buddhism. They are often referred to as the Four Noble Truths. The Buddha would spend the remainder of his life sharing these teachings with the rest of the world.

Central Teachings

Buddhism is more a way of life than the typical “religion”. This is not to mean that Buddhism isn’t a religion and religious beliefs aren’t important to all Buddhists. Depending on the sect, beliefs may include gods, ancestors, and the afterlife. However, the most important of the Buddhist beliefs are about suffering and how to escape it. After becoming enlightened, the Buddha taught that the way to escape suffering begins with an understanding of the true nature of the world. He urged his followers to focus on the Four Noble Truths; by following this path they can free themselves from suffering.

Four Noble Truths

The Four Noble Truths are the essence of the Buddha’s teachings. These four principles are what he came to understand while gaining enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. The Buddha would spend the rest of his life sharing the truths with people all over India.

1. The truth of suffering (Dukkha)
2. The truth of the origin of suffering (Samudāya)
3. The truth of the cessation of suffering (Nirodha)
4. The truth of the path to the cessation of suffering (Magga)

The essence of the Four Noble Truths is the idea that things change. To change the pattern of suffering, a Buddhist should travel the Eightfold Path. This path follows the “middle way”, the way to achieve a release from suffering.

Eightfold Path The Fourth Noble Truth, the path to cessation of suffering, is the set of principles called the Eightfold Path. This “middle way” avoids both indulgence and extreme self-denial. The eight “paths” are not to be done in order or to be considered a list, but rather support and reinforce each other. As a connection to the basis of Hinduism, the wheel of **Dharma** is seen as a symbol of the Eightfold path

1. Right Understanding- Accepting the Buddhist teachings, followers are to develop a deep understanding of the Four Noble Truths.
2. Right Intention- Living a life of selflessness, love, and nonviolence. It is a commitment to having a right attitude.
3. Right Speech- Speaking truthfully, avoiding things like slander, gossip, and abusive speech.
4. Right Action- Be honest, behave peacefully and refrain from stealing, killing, lying, or overindulgence in sensual pleasure.
5. Right Livelihood- Do no work at a job that causes harm to people or other living beings.
6. Right Effort- Promote good actions and prevent evil actions
7. Right Mindfulness- Be aware of your emotions, thoughts, and feelings. Avoid attachments to these things.
8. Right Concentration- through meditation, developing the mental focus necessary to follow the path.

Other Beliefs

Karma is a concept that is seen in several Eastern religions, not exclusive to Buddhism. As in Hinduism, karma in Buddhism explains that our past actions will affect us in either a positive or negative way. For Buddhists, the effects of good and bad

decisions can have implications beyond this life. Bad actions will cause bad effects on a person in their next life, as good actions will have good effects on the next life. Even after receiving enlightenment, one is not exempt from the effects of past karma. Karma will also determine where a person will be reborn and their status in the next life.



<http://www.publicdomainpictures.net/view-image.php?image=78367&picture=>

Meditation

Meditation plays a large role in virtually all religions, although many don't use the word “meditation” to describe their

contemplative practice. Meditation is the process of spending quiet time in deep thought or contemplation. The goal of Buddhist meditation is not to reach a hypnotic state or in creating a connection with a supernatural entity. The Buddhist goal is to separate the body and the mind. Meditation is a way of making the mind peaceful and focused. This way the person meditating can become more aware of themselves and the world around them. This practice is used to stop the mind from rushing around in aimless thoughts. The goal is that a person can begin to reach the truths of enlightenment through meditation.

Nirvana

When someone gains the undertaking of the world's reality, they have received enlightenment and all of his or her suffering will end. If a person has gained this enlightenment, they will reach Nirvana. Nirvana is the end of all desire, ignorance, and sorrow; it is the end of all suffering. There, the spirit is free and there is the realization that the desires of all humans are pointless. This is also the end of the cycle of reincarnation.

Buddhism Today

Buddhism consists of many different types depending on the why it is practiced and the country that it exists in. Today, two main subdivisions dominate; they are Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. The more traditional of the two, Theravada is strongest in Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, and Burma

(Myanmar). This school of thought believes that it has remained the closest to the first teachings of the Buddha and that those teachings are more a set of tools to help people find truth. They follow the primary beliefs of a Buddhist while accepting fewer historical people as Buddhas and having less adapting views.

Mahayana Buddhism is found in many countries; however, it carries the strongest presence in Tibet, China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea and Mongolia. Mahayana, in fact, is not just one single group but a collection of many different traditions. These include Zen Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism, and Tibetan Buddhism . Both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism are rooted in the same basic teachings. Followers of both wish to achieve the end of suffering (Nirvana).

Holidays and Festivals

Most holidays and festivals in Buddhism celebrate important events in the life of the Buddha. Holidays are joyful occasions. Many begin with visits to a local temple where food will be offered to the monks. The Buddhists will then stay to listen to a talk on various topics, such as Dharma. The remaining time will consist of giving food to the poor, visiting temples, participating in chants, and singing and meditation. The dates of the holidays are based on a lunar calendar and will often be different depending on the country and tradition of the follower.

Some of the holidays and festivals are:

Buddha Day- Also known as Vesak, this day is the most important festival in Buddhism. This is the celebration of the birthday of the Buddha. Celebrated on the first full moon day in May, followers celebrate the birth, death, and enlightenment of the Buddha.

Buddhist New Year- Depending on the location, the new year is celebrated on different days. In Theravadin countries, the new year falls three days from the first full moon in April. In Mahayana countries, the celebration starts with the first full moon in January and for Tibetan Buddhists it is celebrated in March.

With many different traditions encompassing the religion, there are many different festivals depending on which tradition is followed and where the Buddhist lives. More information can be found at Religion Facts and the BBC’s Religions page

Interactive 5.10
Comparing Religions



Use the graphic organizer located here to do a quick compare and contrast between two of the five religions presented above. Then use the information to complete the writing frame.

Interactive 5.11 Buddhism
Calendar



Learn more about important dates here!

How Did Religion Spread?

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE INQUIRY

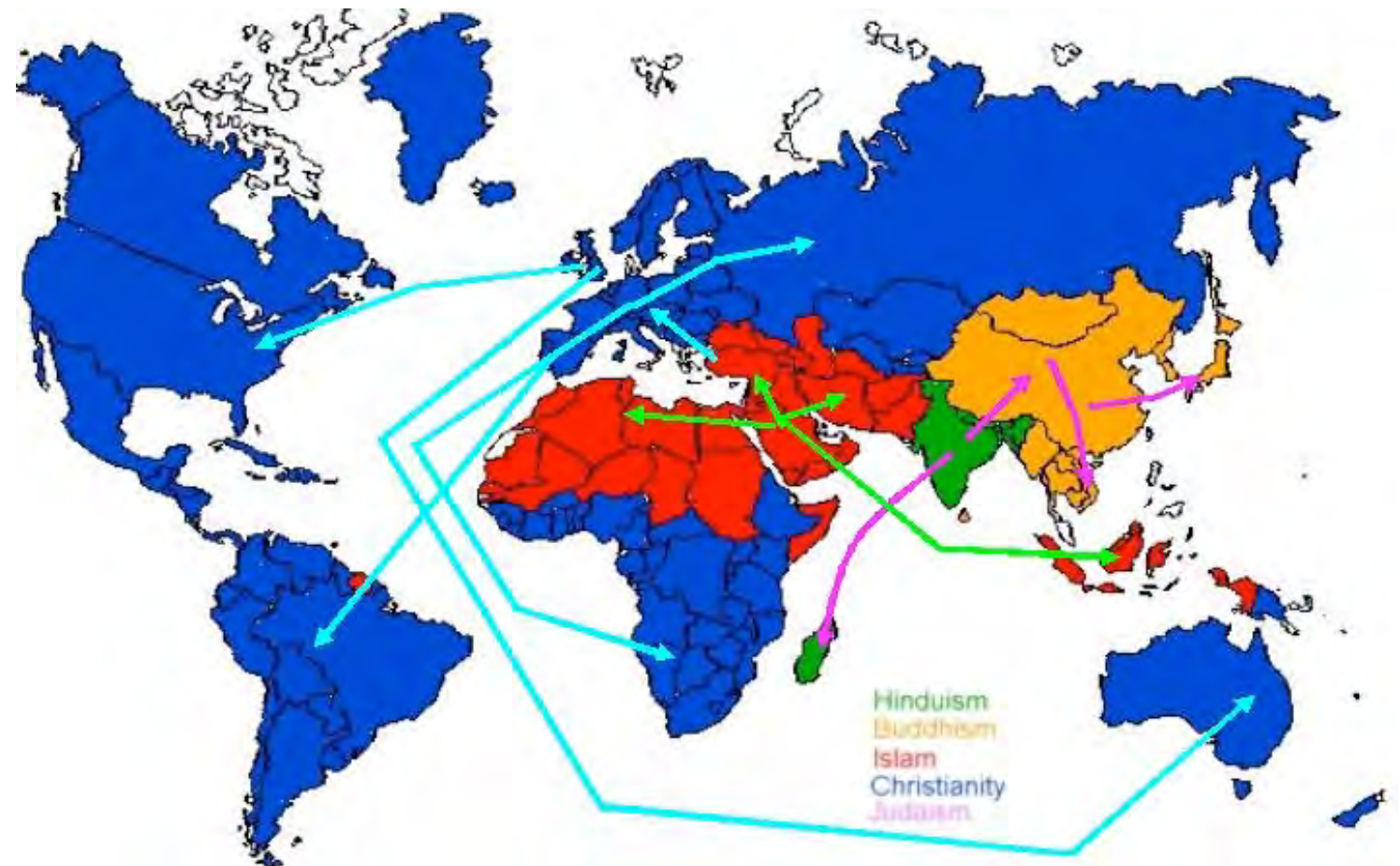
1. What are the various beliefs of the five major world religions?
2. How does geography play a role in the development and spread of religion?
3. What effect does religion have on economic, political, and social institutions?
4. What effect does religion have on art, language, and literature?

TERMS, PLACES, PEOPLE

Taoism

Doctrine

Religion is one of the most interesting and complex part of the human experience. As described, religion is a collection of cultural systems, beliefs, world views, and moral values. Giving a straight definition to religion is hard and one can define religion very differently from another. This makes it difficult to account for all of the religions that exist worldwide.



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:How_did_the_religions_spread.JPG

Religion and “faith” are terms that are many times used interchangeably; however, when we look at the basic difference between the private belief (faith) and the public definition (religion) we can begin to identify differences between the two, and in turn, “count” the number of religions. With that in mind, the purpose of the unit was to cover the basics of five of the major world religions. It is not intended to be an advanced religious study, but an overview with links to gain more depth. Below you will find a short description and a link to a few more religions that have important connections to the five we covered with more depth. A basic familiarity with each will help us understand many things in history and our current world much better.

Taoism (Daoism)

Taoism (or Daoism) is deeply rooted in the Chinese customs and worldviews.

Taoism is a set of ancient traditions and philosophies of how to live. The focus is on the Tao or “the way”; the Tao is seen as a universal principle, where all things are united or connected. The following details are courtesy of the BBC Religions webpage:



- Taoism originated in China 2000 years ago

- It is a religion of unity and opposites; Yin and Yang. The principle of Yin and Yang sees the world as filled with complementary forces - action and non-action, light and dark, hot and cold, and so on

- The Tao is not God and is not worshipped. Taoism includes many deities that are worshipped in Taoist temples. They are part of the universe and depend, like everything, on the Tao

- Taoism promotes:
- achieving harmony or union with nature
- the pursuit of spiritual immortality
- being 'virtuous' (but not ostentatiously so)
- self-development
- Taoist practices include:
- meditation
- feng shui
- fortune telling
- reading and chanting of scriptures

Shinto

Shinto is the Japanese devotion to the spiritual beings and powers called kami. This devotion is displayed in various rituals that are performed at shrines. The focus is performing the rituals that allow humans to communicate with kami. Kami is not a God or gods, they are spirits. They are interested in our well being and want us to be happy. If the spirits are treated correctly, they will intervene in people's lives in a manner that benefits them. The practice of Shinto is very localized. Many followers are more likely to focus on their local shrine and not be as concerned with the religion as a whole. Among the Japanese people, Shinto is not seen as a religion, rather an aspect of life. The following details are courtesy of the BBC Religions webpage:

- The name Shinto comes from Chinese characters for Shen(“divine being”), and Tao (“way”) and means “Way of the Spirits”.
- Shrine visiting and taking part in festivals play a great part in binding local communities together.
- Shrine visiting at New Year is the most popular shared national event in Japan.
- Because Shinto is focused on the land of Japan, it is clearly an ethnic religion. Therefore, Shinto is little interested in missionary work, and rarely practiced outside its country of origin.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Itsukushima_Shrine#/media/File:Itsukushima_Gate.jpg

- Shinto sees human beings as basically good and has no concept of original sin, or of humanity as “fallen”.
- Everything, including the spiritual, is experienced as part of this world. Shinto has no place for any transcendental other world.
- Shinto has no canonical scriptures.
- Shinto teaches important ethical principles but has no commandments.

- Shinto has no founder.
- Shinto has no God.
- Shinto does not require adherents to follow it as their only religion.



Sikhism

Sikhism was founded in Punjab, an area that is now parts of India and Pakistan. The faith was founded in the 1400s by Guru Nanak and is based on his teachings as well as the teachings of the nine gurus who followed. According to BBC Religions webpage:

- Sikhism is a monotheistic religion
- Sikhism stresses the importance of doing good actions rather than merely carrying out rituals
- Sikhs believe that the way to lead a good life is to:
 - keep God in their heart and mind at all times

- live honestly and work hard
- treat everyone equally
- be generous to the less fortunate
- serve others
- The Sikh place of worship is called a Gurdwara
- The Sikh scripture is the Guru Granth Sahib, a book that Sikhs consider a living Guru

The Spread of Religion

All major world religions rely on their “message” to be spread. For centuries, missionaries, pilgrims, and converts of all religions have served as carriers of a message. That message has been transmitted across the world many times over. Regardless of the faith, people of all types have spread their faith to others. As those religions moved they also changed. Some of this change happened when religious leaders interpreted the doctrine, a belief or set of beliefs, differently due to the new context. Change has also occurred due to the influence of other religions. For example, Buddhist beliefs began to spread into China. There they combine with the cultural aspects of China and were changed slightly after being shaped by local Taoist beliefs.

All of the five major world religions have spread far from their origins. This process is one of world history's most important events. The spread of religion has helped to establish connections between many societies. These interactions have influenced economics, politics, social structures, as well as created cultural and intellectual developments around the world.

Take a Closer Look

Visit the [British Library Website online](#) for an interactive activity that presents stories from six world religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism.

Task

Use the following resources to study the spread of religion. As you study each religion keep these questions in mind:

1. How did the religion spread across the world?
2. How might the religion change and adapt to the culture of the new areas?
3. Why did the religion successfully spread to some areas and not to others?

Impact of Geography and development of religion

Keeping all the information in mind, please answer some of the questions below.

What are the various beliefs of the five major world religions?

How does geography play a role in the development and spread of religion?

What effect does religion have on economic, political, and social institutions

If you wish to go further into the development of religion, please consider using the [Spread of World Religions activity found here](#)

Interactive 5.12 World GeoHistoGram



Add religion and the spread of religion to the GeoHistoGram. What do you notice about where religions were practiced and how they spread over time?