


TOP "SET OF BELIEFS" OVERVIEW:

Types of Belief in God (I)



- Theism**
 - Belief in the existence of a God or any gods
 - The generic term, of which other -isms are subcategories
- Atheism**
 - The opposite: Belief that God and/or gods do "not exist"
- Agnosticism**
 - "Not knowing" whether God exists; overall non-belief
- Gnosticism**
 - A religious system that believes salvation comes through "knowledge" (Gk. *gnosis*) of one's divine origin and destiny

Types of Belief in God (II)



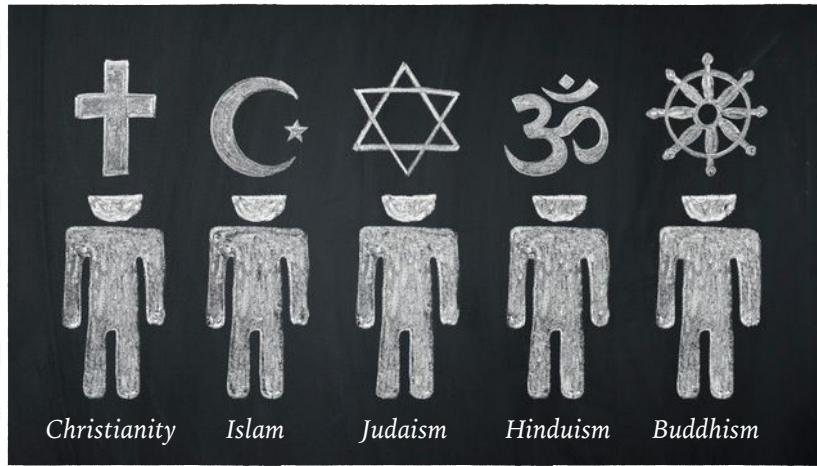
- Polytheism**
 - Belief in the existence of "many" (Gk. *poly*) gods
 - Egyptian: many gods, mostly in animal form
 - Greek & Roman: a large family of gods, on Mount Olympus
- Pantheism**
 - Belief that divinity resides "everywhere" (Gk. *pan*)
 - The whole universe is divine; divinity is within everything that exists
 - But there is no "God" separate from or external to the world
- Deism**
 - Belief that God created the world, but then abandoned it
 - God exists, created us, but exerts no further influence on the world
 - Based on 18th-century rationalism (e.g. Thomas Jefferson)



HUMANISM is a progressive philosophy of life that, without theism and other supernatural beliefs,

AFFIRMS our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of **HUMANITY**

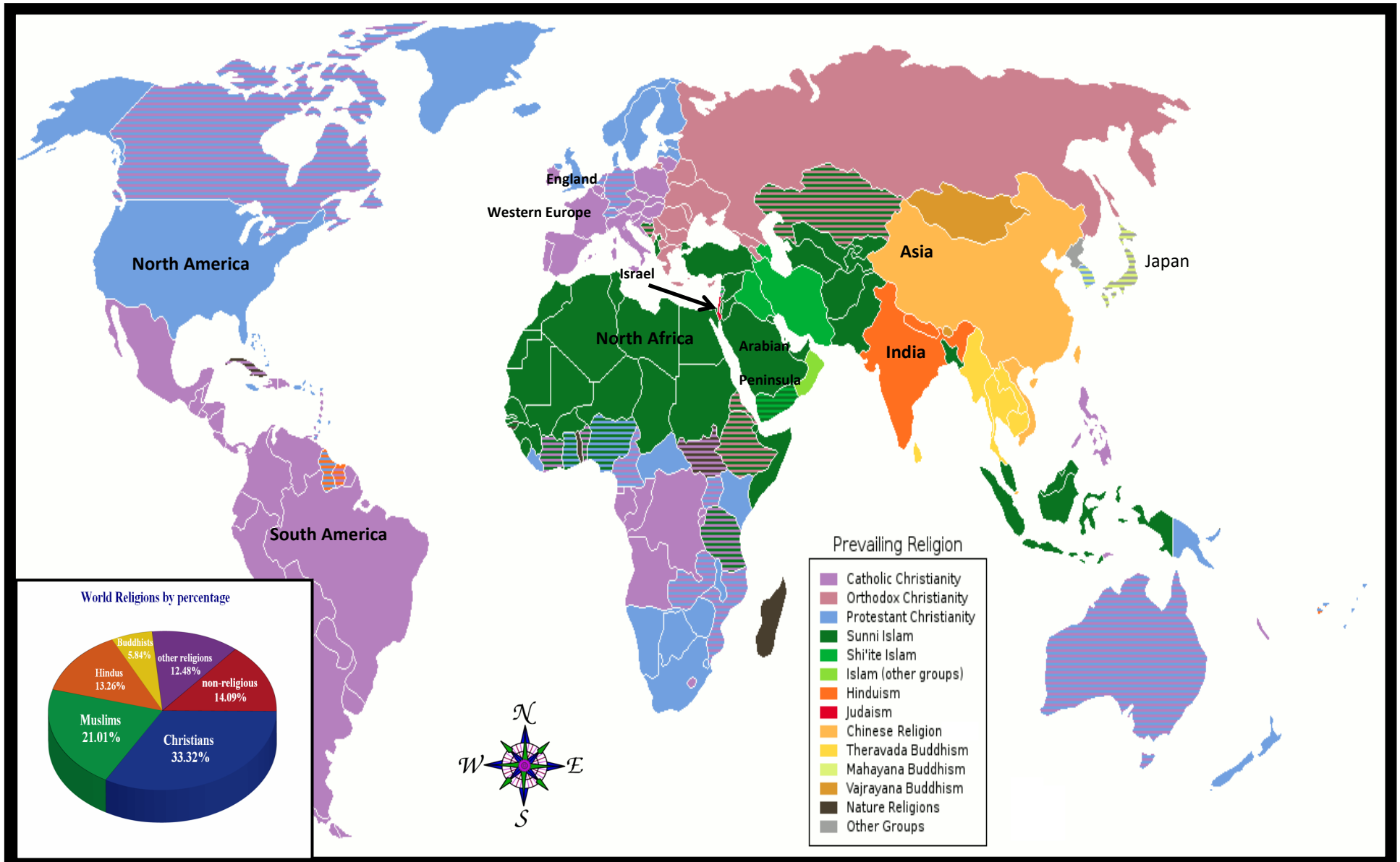
THE TOP 5 "WORLD RELIGIONS" OVERVIEW:



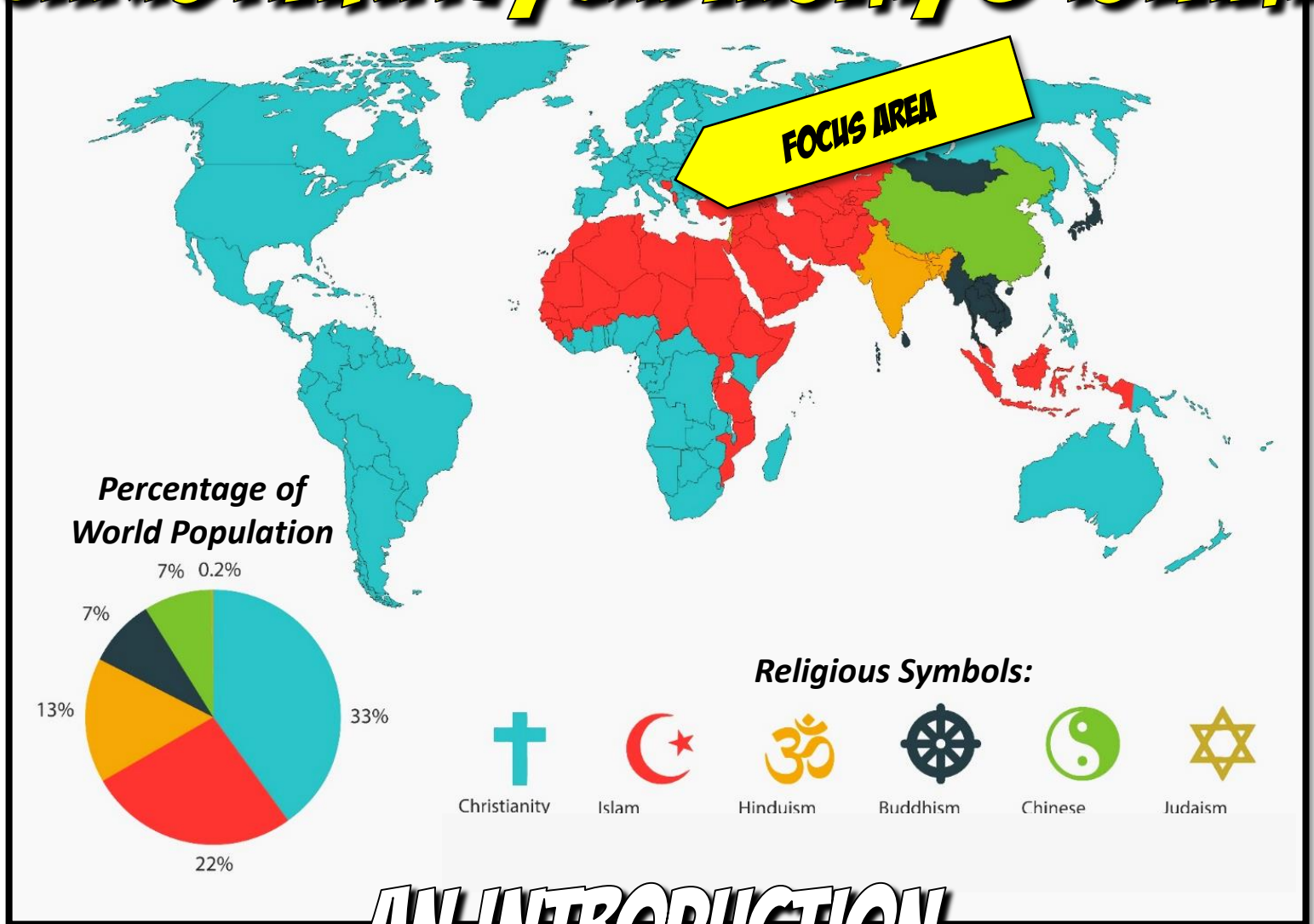
Christianity *Islam* *Judaism* *Hinduism* *Buddhism*

WHY STUDY RELIGION?

As a key concept of social science, religion is a key factor that influences the development of civilizations and culture. Religion helps students to identify and understand behaviors. Furthermore, as the map below suggests, the study of religion offers students a global perspective on traditions and cultural expectations.



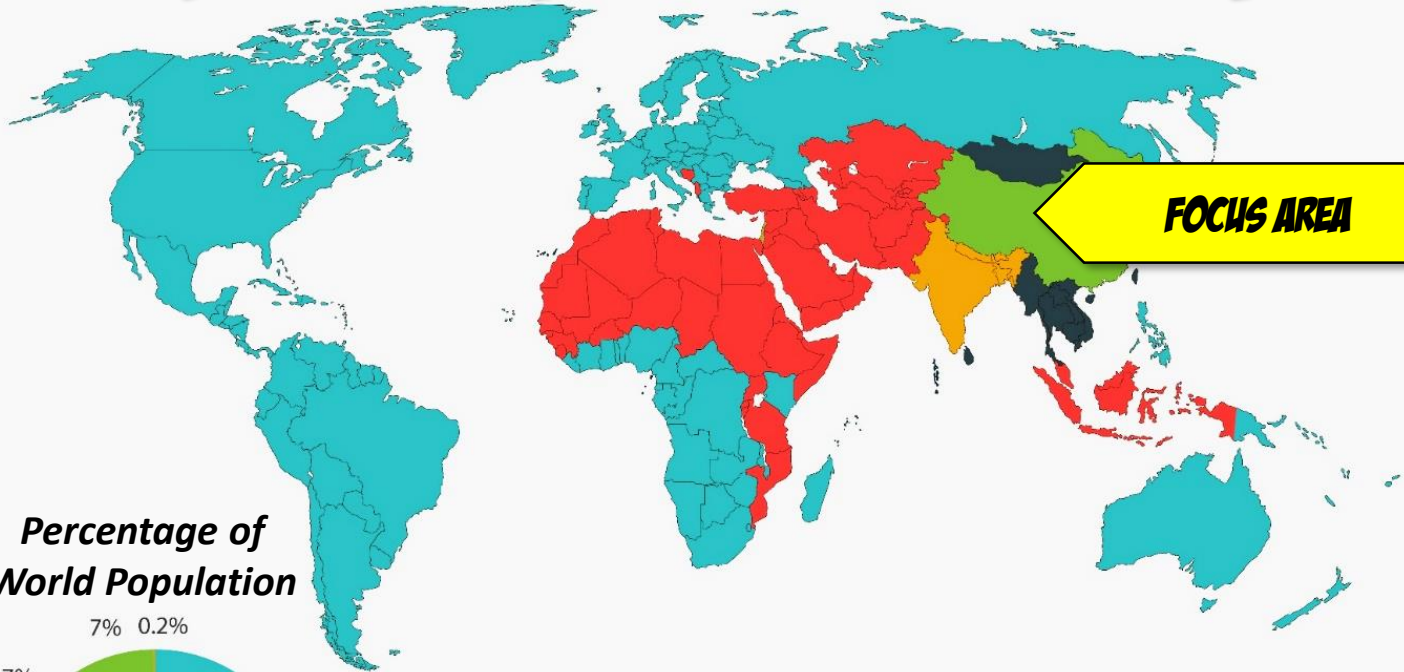
CHRISTIANITY, JUDAISM, & ISLAM



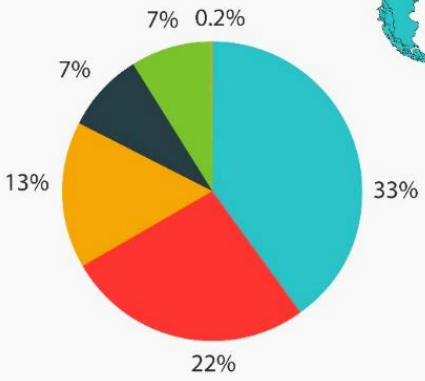
AN INTRODUCTION

Christianity, Islam, and Judaism are all monotheistic (believe in one god) religions. All three religions were broadly founded on the continent of Asia in the geographic region called the Middle East. These three faiths share common history and traditions. All three have a respect for the Bible, especially the Hebrew Bible or “Old Testament” as all three religions believe in many of the same prophets (messengers of God) such as Abraham and Moses. They all maintain that there is one God and that Jerusalem is a holy city. However, Christianity, Islam and Judaism also differ significantly in both belief and practice. The belief in Jesus is at the forefront of their differences. While Christians believe he is a messiah (savior) and the son of God, Muslims acknowledge him as a prophet only. Still, most Jews deny that he was a prophet or messiah. The following chart is intended to be a brief overview for understanding the *basics* of these ancient religions and their shared history.

HINDUISM & BUDDHISM



Percentage of World Population



Religious Symbols:



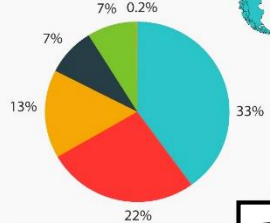
AN INTRODUCTION

Hinduism and Buddhism are two of the oldest religions in the world! Hinduism originated in the Indus River Valley as early as 7000 B.C.E, while Buddhism dates back to the 400's B.CE. Both religions are similar in their beliefs with regards to reincarnation, that is that souls will be reborn again. They also both adhere to the idea that meditation, or quiet focused thinking is important. However, they differ in beliefs about gods. Buddhists do not worship a god as creator, but stress self-examination and improvement. Hindus are pantheistic, which means they believe that everything encompasses God and God is virtually present everywhere. However, Hindus worship three different supreme beings. Today there are over one billion Hindus worldwide (mostly in India) and 360 million Buddhists (mostly in China).

CHRISTIANITY



Percentage of World Population



Religious Symbols:



ORIGINATION

The Middle East - Roman province of Palestine.

Based on life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, c. 30 CE.

BELIEFS ABOUT GOD

Monotheistic (believe in one god)

Holy Trinity (One God in three persons)=God the Father + God the Son + God the Holy Spirit

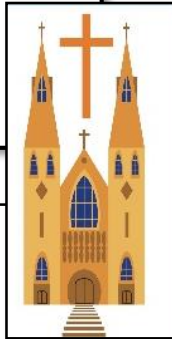
BELIEFS ABOUT JESUS

Christians believe he was the son of God, as God made in flesh (part of the holy trinity). They consider him to be the Jewish **messiah** (savior of the world)



FOLLOWERS & PLACE OF WORSHIP

called Christians practice Christianity worship in a church



TEXTS

Bible= Hebrew Bible (referred to as Old Testament) and the New Testament.

The Old Testament or Hebrew Bible -

Comprised of thirty-nine books. The texts are about law, history, prophecy, and wisdom of the ancient people of Israel.

For example: The ten commandments are laws given to the Ancient Israelites by God.

The New Testament -Teachings of Jesus and his earliest followers.



MAJOR BRANCHES

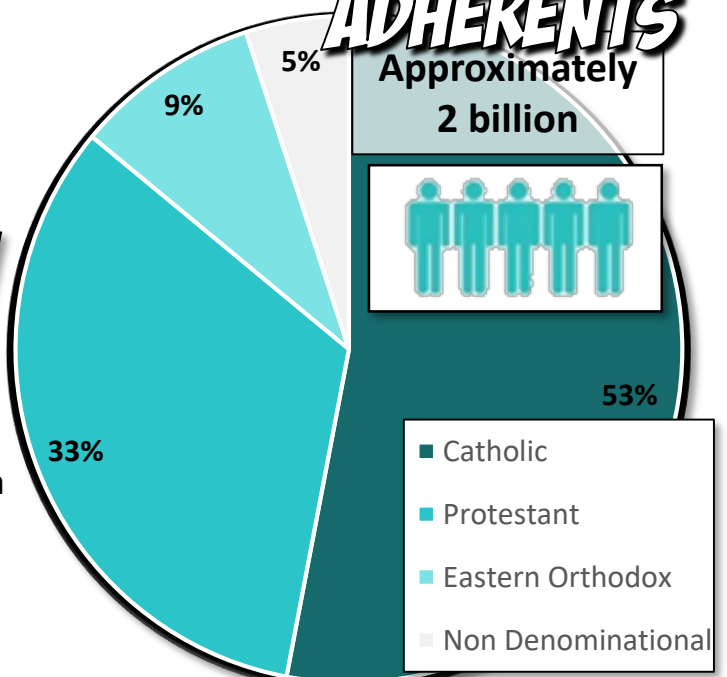
Catholic - Original "Roman Catholic" form of Christianity.

Greek Orthodox (1054) - After the *Great Schism* (a disagreement over the selection of a pope).

Protestant (1500s) - After the Protestant Reformation initiated mostly by *Martin Luther*.

ADHERENTS

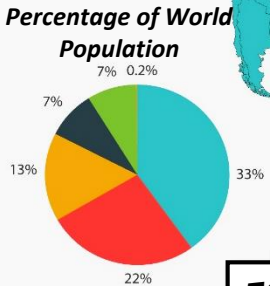
Approximately 2 billion



FUNDAMENTAL DISAGREEMENTS

Christians do not view Muhammad as a prophet. Christians believe Jesus was the **messiah** (savior) that was prophesized about in the Hebrew Bible.

JUDAISM



ORIGINATION
The Middle East-
The religion of the Hebrews. Traces of Judaism are dated back as far as c. 1300 BCE in Ancient Babylonia.

BELIEFS ABOUT GOD

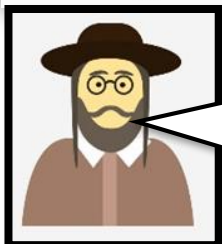
Monotheistic

One God=Yahweh (Hebrew name for God as used in Bible)

BELIEFS ABOUT JESUS

Jews do not believe he is the Jewish messiah. He is also not considered a prophet.

Muslims believe he was a messenger of God or, **prophet**.



FOLLOWERS & PLACE OF WORSHIP
called Jews
practice Judaism
worship in a synagogue or temple



TEXTS

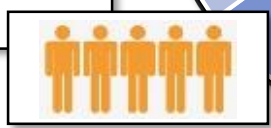
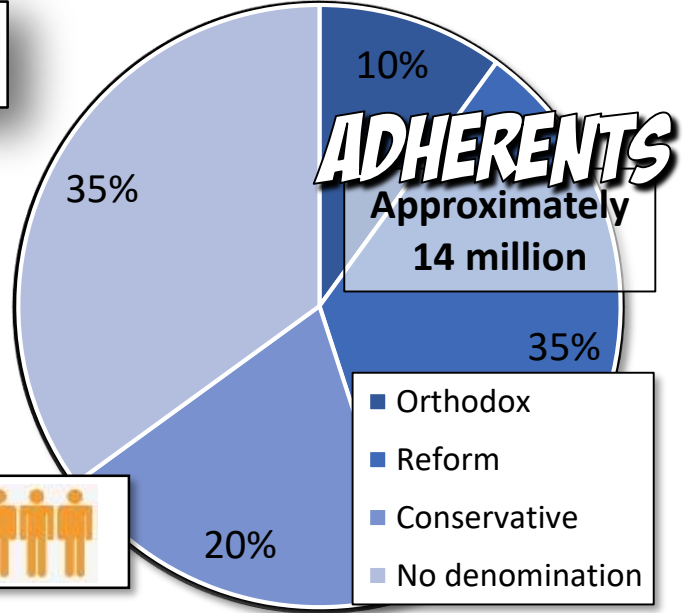
Hebrew Bible or *Tanakh* and the Talmud.



The Hebrew Bible - Comprised of thirty-nine books. Torah (Hebrew: 'Law'), Nevi'im ('Prophets') and Ketuvim ('Writings'). The texts are about law, history, prophecy, and wisdom of the ancient people of Israel.

For example: The ten commandments are laws given to the Ancient Israelites by God.

Talmud - A body of Jewish civil and ceremonial law, customs and culture.



MAJOR BRANCHES

Orthodox (1800 CE) - Believe both the written and oral Torah represent the word of God.

Reform (approximately 1926) - Jewish traditions and ancient laws were modernized to be more compatible with participation in Western Culture (including use of modern technology).

Conservative (1850)- In between Orthodox and Reform Jews. They seek to conserve the traditional elements of Judaism, while also allowing for *some* modernization.

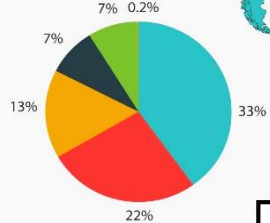
FUNDAMENTAL DISAGREEMENTS

Jews do not view Muhammad as a prophet, nor do they view Jesus as a messiah or son of God. Jews are still awaiting a **messiah** or savior.

ISLAM



Percentage of World Population



Religious Symbols:



ORIGINATION

The Middle East - Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

Based on teachings of the **Prophet** (messenger of God) Muhammad; founded 622 CE.

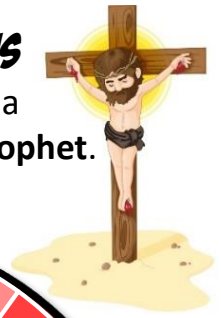
BELIEFS ABOUT GOD

Monotheistic

Allah=Arabic word for God.

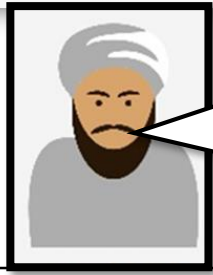
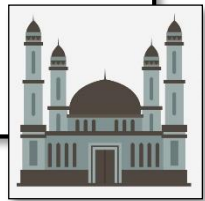
BELIEFS ABOUT JESUS

Muslims believe he was a messenger of god or, prophet.



FOLLOWERS & PLACE OF WORSHIP

called Muslims
Muslims practice Islam worship in a mosque



TEXTS

Qur'an or Koran (Scripture) and the Hadith (tradition).

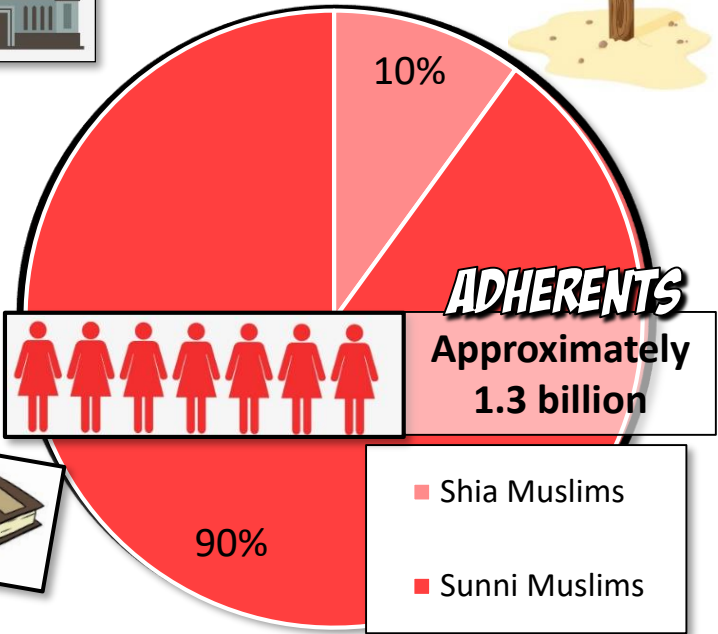
Qur'an - Believed to be the word of God as dictated to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel.

Hadith - Collection of traditions containing sayings of the prophet Muhammad that, with accounts of his daily practice (the Sunna), constitute the major source of guidance for Muslims apart from the Qur'an.



ADHERENTS

Approximately 1.3 billion



MAJOR BRANCHES

The difference between Shia and Sunni is about the *leadership* of Islam (in its original boundaries).

Shia -Believe God chose Ali (Muhammad's blood relative) to be Muhammad's successor. Hence he was the first acceptable caliph (head of state) of Islam.

Sunni (c. 650 CE) - Deny that a blood relative of Muhammad needed to be the leader of Islam, hence leaders before Ali were acceptable.

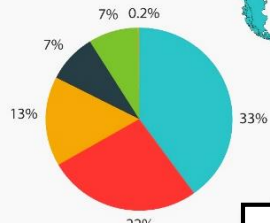
FUNDAMENTAL DISAGREEMENTS

Muslims believe that **Muhammad** was the last prophet and that Jesus was also a prophet, but not the son of God.

BUDDHISM



Percentage of World Population



Religious Symbols:

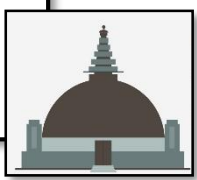
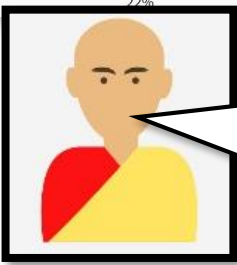


ORIGINATION
 Northern India (present day Nepal)
 400s B.C.E.

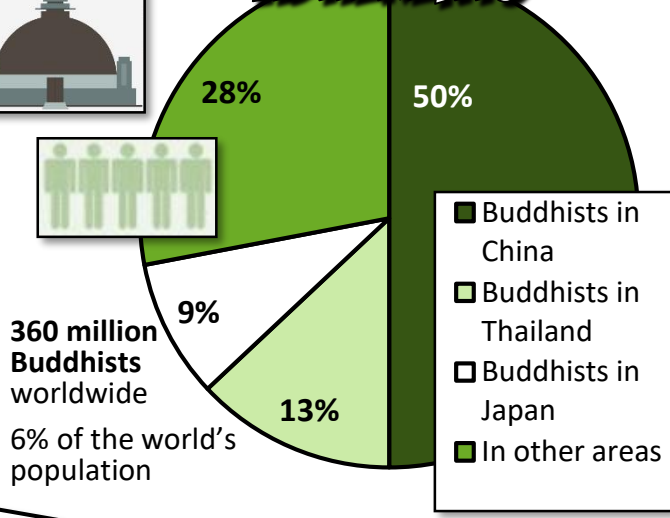
BELIEFS ABOUT GOD

Buddhists do not worship a god as creator, but stress self-examination and improvement. Buddhism doesn't fit neatly into either category of **religion or philosophy**. When people asked **Buddha** what he was teaching, he said he teaches "the way things are."

FOLLOWERS & PLACE OF WORSHIP
 called Buddhists
 Buddhists practice Buddhism worship at home or temple



ADHERENTS



TEXTS

The Tripitaka/The Pali Cannon=
 Handed down orally then written down in the 3rd century B.C. E. (50 volumes)
Contains the Four Noble Truths:
 1.All life is suffering. 2.Desire is the cause of pain 3. End pain by overcoming one's desires. 4.To overcome desire, have virtue and compassion for all living things.
Contains the Eightfold Path that will end desires and lead to a path of Enlightenment.



MAJOR BRANCHES

- 1.Theravada Buddhism** (doctrine of the elders) is popular in Southern Asia: Burma, Thailand, Laos, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia
- 2. Mahayana Buddhism** (greater vehicle) is most commonly found in Northern Asia : Tibet, Nepal, China, Korea and Japan.
- 3. Zen Buddhism** (Japan)

BELIEFS ABOUT KARMA

Believe in **karma**: the result of our own past actions and our own present doings. That people are responsible for our own happiness and sorrow.
 Believe people are **reincarnated** (re-born on earth) until they have reached inner peace/enlightenment (**Nirvana**).

CONNECTIONS TO OTHER BELIEF SYSTEMS

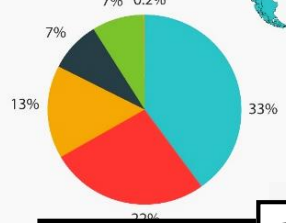
--Buddhists also believe in **reincarnation**.
 -Many comparisons have been made between **Buddha and Jesus**. Both men were believed to have miraculous births, they both began their spiritual teachings at the age of 30 and they both had a great passion for the poor and oppressed.

HINDUISM



ORIGINATION
 Indus River Valley
 1500 B.C.E., The Vedic Age
 Based on Indus and Aryan cultures

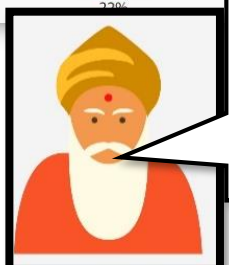
Percentage of World Population



Religious Symbols:

Christianity
 Islam
 Hinduism
 Buddhism
 Chinese
 Judaism

BELIEFS ABOUT GOD
Pantheism (the universe is God and God is the universe).
 Supreme being is worshiped in 3 forms: Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver) and Shiva (the destroyer).



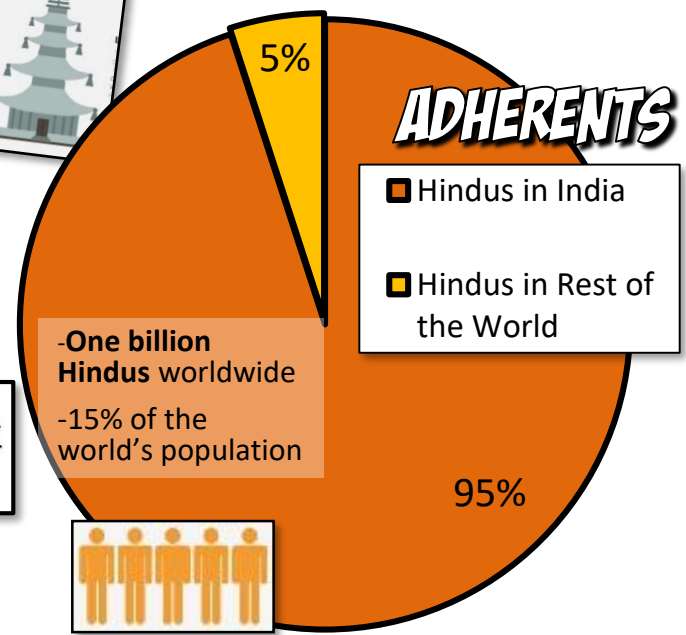
FOLLOWERS & PLACE OF WORSHIP
 called Hindus
 Hindus practice Hinduism
 worship in a mandir or temple



TEXTS

The Vedas:
 Four books of knowledge written in Sanskrit. Believed to be the work of a deity (higher being)

Later Writings:
 The Brahmanas, the Aranyankas and the Upanishads.
 The Upanishads, written between 700-500 B.C.E., contain the final part of the Vedas (the dialogues of spiritual masters)



MAJOR BRANCHES

1. **Vaishnavas** worship Vishnu (The Preserver)
2. **Shaivas** worship Shiva (The Destroyer or Purifier)
3. **Shaktas** worship Devi (Female Deities)
4. **Smartas** worship 5 Deities: Vishnu, Shiva, Devi, Ganesh (Remover of Obstacles) and Surya (god of the sun)

BELIEFS ABOUT KARMA

Believe in **karma** : that people create their own destiny through every action, word or thought.

Believe in **Samsara** (known in the west as **reincarnation**): that after death, the souls of humans and animals will be reborn depending on the karma of their past life. This cycle can be broken when all karma has been purified through conduct, meditation, and other Dharma (religious duties).

CONNECTIONS TO OTHER BELIEF SYSTEMS

- Hindus believe in samsara/reincarnation.
- Celebrate **holy days** like Christianity, Islam and Judaism and Buddhism.
- Like the hajj of Islam, **religious pilgrimages** play an important role in Hinduism. There are several sites in India, each dedicated to a certain god, a group of gods or a famous happening.

CHRISTIANITY

A Brief History of the Worlds Most Practiced Religion

Early Christians were Jews looking for a *messiah*, or savior and believed that they found him in the person of the Jewish Jesus of Nazareth. Proclaiming that his mother, Mary, was a virgin, and that he was the son of God, Jesus is called the *Christ*, which in Hebrew means *messiah, or deliverer*. Born during the time of Roman occupation in what is today Israel, Jesus was seen as the fulfillment of the promise of a heavenly deliverer found in the Jewish Torah.

BIRTH OF CHRIST AND BAPTISM

Jesus's immaculate conception and birth signifies to Christians that while divine by nature, God's son, took on an earthly form in order to save his followers from *sin*, or wrongdoing. The story of Jesus's birth relates that shepherds from nearby fields came to Bethlehem to pay homage to the young savior. This reminds Christians that Christ is like a shepherd constantly tending and caring for his flock of sheep or believers. This event is celebrated by Christians each December and is called *Christmas*.

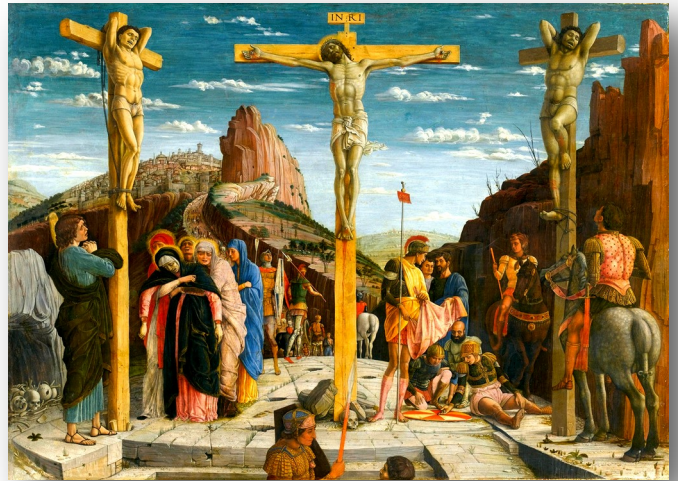
As a young adult, Jesus asked his cousin, John, to baptize him in the River Jordan. *Baptism*, or washing away of sin, is done in the Christian church today with either a small sprinkle of water or total immersion.

CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION

As Jesus's popularity grew the Jewish leadership became more hostile to him and his followers. They believed that Jesus may have come to overthrow the Roman government, threatening their power.

One Passover (Jewish holiday that

commemorates the exodus of the Jews from Egypt), when Jesus and his followers arrived in the city of Jerusalem to celebrate the feast, a very large crowd gathered around Jesus. The crowd waved palm branches at his feet as Jesus rode into the city on a donkey. Christians believe that by doing so, Jesus was fulfilling his role as



Messiah, as prophesied in the *Torah*, or Old Testament. Unable to tolerate such a blatant show of *heresy*, opinion or statement at odds with religious teachings, the Jewish leadership had Jesus charged with *blasphemy*, profaning the name of God.

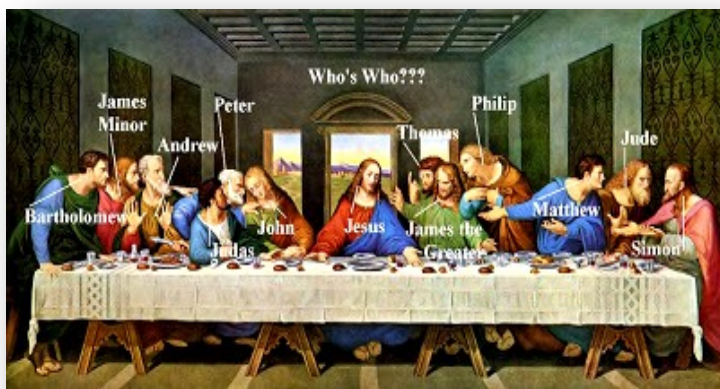
Unable to calm the crowd or satisfy the accusers *Pontius Pilate*, the Roman governor, sentenced Jesus to death on a cross. He was crucified with two criminals, as crucifixion was a common form of punishment at the time. However, Christians believe that this death was necessary for Jesus to suffer in order that he may experience and take on the sins of mankind and experience the consequences of such a life.

After his death, Jesus's followers were allowed to take his body to an empty tomb. There they lay his body and sealed the tomb. Because it was Passover, they are unable to return to the tomb for three days. At that time, they find that the

tomb is empty and that Jesus, the Christ, has risen. Christians believe Jesus made several appearances to different individuals after his death. Following these he *ascended*, or rose, to heaven where Christians believe he sits at the right hand of God. Christians also believe that they too will rise, like Christ, and live eternally in *heaven*, or paradise.

TEACHINGS

After his death, four of Jesus's followers wrote about the life of Christ and his teachings. Known as the *Gospels*, or good news, the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the first four books of the New Testament. In addition, *epistles*, letters, written by early Christian church leaders, and two other books complete the New Testament, or covenant. This New Testament combined with the *Old Testament*, the Jewish Torah, becomes the Christian *Bible*.



SPREADING OF THE CHURCH

Not long after the death of Christ, the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem and scattered its people. This event helped to spread Christianity throughout the Mediterranean including the Roman and the Byzantium empires. Wherever they went they not only *evangelized*, or spread the “good news” of Christ, but also, were persecuted. Along with the Jews, Christians were seen as the cause of harm and misfortune and suffered the consequences of ignorance.

Despite persecution, Christianity slowly gained popularity over the next hundreds of years. By 313 CE, in a political move to win the favor of Christians, Constantine, the Roman emperor converted to Christianity. He declared the faith to be a legal religion. Wanting to insure that the faith was consistent in its teachings, he assembled a council to write a statement of faith. Known as the Nicene Creed, it says that God is three persons or *holy trinity*. There is the creator, Father, the son, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that continues to be the conscious of God in the world.

SPLITTING OF THE CHURCH

The church will follow the history of Roman Empire. When the Roman Empire split in the 5th and 6th centuries, so would the church. Known as the *Great Schism*, two branches of the church emerged. The Eastern Church will become the *Orthodox Church* and the Western Church remained the *Roman Catholic Church*. While steeped in the same philosophies the traditions and manner of worship will distinguish these two churches.

The church will further split when the Reformation arrived in Europe. As man began to think about his place in the universe, he also started to question his place and role in the church. Martin Luther, a German priest, was particularly outspoken about the church's practice of collecting *indulgencies*, money given by people to pay for their sins and the sins of the departed loved ones. Luther was also in favor of people being able to read for themselves the scriptures, so he translated the Bible into German. Another church reformer was Frenchman, John Calvin. Calvin believed that the scriptures taught *predestination*, the idea that God predetermined a man's salvation. The church would further split when King Henry VIII of England would establish himself as head of the



church in England after the pope refused to allow him to divorce his wife. His granddaughter, Queen Elizabeth I, would establish the Church of England also known

as the Anglican or Episcopal Church.

Christians wanting to flee the influences of the Catholic church and wishing for a more simple religion, free of harsh rules and laws found a new home in America as *Puritans* and *Pilgrims*.

CHURCHES AND RITES

There are many types of churches. The church *denomination* or sect often dictates the type of church building. Many Roman Catholic Churches are built with elaborate decorations inside and out. *Protestant*, or non-Catholic churches tend to be more functional.

Inside the church you will find *pews*, or long benches for worshipers to sit upon. There is an altar at the front of the church from which the *sermon*, or lesson is given. There may also be a baptism font, a receptacle for holding water that is used during the *rite*, religious ceremony, of

baptism.

The church is also the place where other rites take place. Christians remember the last supper of Christ before his crucifixion and celebrate it as a time of thanksgiving. At this time, they say prayers and partaking of the *Eucharist*, a representation of the body and blood of Christ, by the drinking of wine and eating of bread.

FESTIVALS

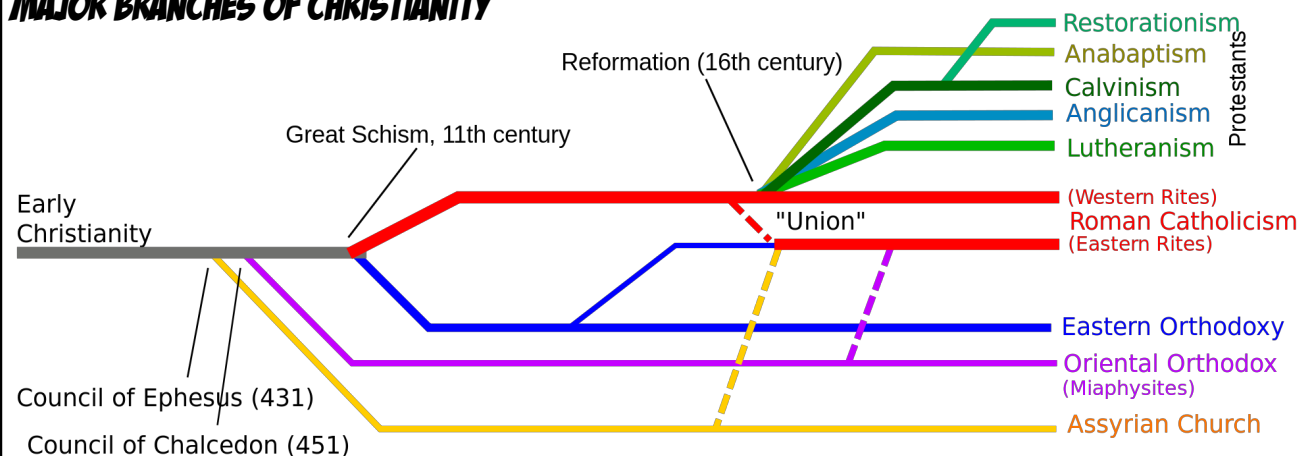
Besides Christmas, Christians celebrate other festivals throughout the year. Some churches celebrate the birth or death of brave Christians *martyrs*, people killed because of their faith.

Easter, which is celebrated each spring, commemorates the death and resurrection of Christ from the cross. This time of year is seen as a time of renewal of one's faith.

DID YOU KNOW?

- 31.5 percent of the world population is Christian.
- There are over 2.2 billion Christians in the world.
- Islam is the second largest religion, with 1.6 billion adherents, or 23 percent of the global population.

MAJOR BRANCHES OF CHRISTIANITY



JUDAISM

History, BELIEFS and Practices

Judaism began with Abraham, a man who lived more than 4000 years ago. When Abraham and his wife were very old and childless, God established a *covenant* or contract with Abraham to make him the “Father of the Jewish Faith”. This covenant promised to make the descendants of Abraham as plentiful as the stars in the sky. Abraham believed God and had a son named Isaac.

THE EXODUS

In 1250 BCE, the Israelites found themselves in Egypt serving as slaves. Moses, an Israelite, is adopted by the Pharaoh's, or king's, sister. Raised in the royal household, Moses is given much authority. God tells Moses to ask the Pharaoh to release the Israelites. When Pharaoh refuses, God sent a series of ten *plagues*, or times of difficulty. These included floods, frog infestations, and hail. The last plague happened one night when all the first-born Egyptian sons died while all of the Israeli first-born sons were spared. With the death of his own son, Pharaoh agreed to let Moses and the Israelites leave Egypt. However, Pharaoh changed his mind once the people had left. When the Israelites reached the Red Sea, the Egyptians were close at hand. God allowed all of the Israelites to cross safely, but closed the Red Sea upon the Egyptians. This miracle of the escape of the Israelites and the parting of the Red Sea is known as the *Exodus*.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

For forty years after crossing the Red Sea, Moses and his people roamed the desert. During this time, God provided for their needs. One day, God called Moses into the mountains. Here Moses received the first ten



of God's laws or commandments, the Ten Commandments. These laws are seen as the foundation of Judaism and have long been regarded as moral codes for western culture. The first commandment



states that the followers of God will only worship him. This makes Judaism a *monotheistic religion*, worship of one god. Later, Christians and Muslims would also follow the ten commandments, as they are written in the Old Testament of the Bible. Muslims accept the Old Testament as revelations of God. For this reason, Muslims, Christians and Jews are referred to as “people of the book” that believe in one god.

THE PROMISED LAND

After receiving the Ten Commandments, God allowed his people to move into *Canaan*, the Promised Land. It is here that the Israelites successfully fought for control and establish their nation. King David, the son of the first king, Saul, makes the city of Jerusalem the capital of Israel. King Solomon, the son of King David, builds the first temple of worship in Jerusalem.

DIASPORA

God sent *prophets*, inspired teachers or proclaimers to remind the people of his laws. The prophets were often faced with criticism, but held fast to their teaching; becoming the *conscience*, or moral guide, of Israel. However, after many years of continuing to be disobedient, God allowed Judah, the region in which Jerusalem was located, to be overtaken by the Babylonians. Thus, in 586 BCE, Solomon's temple was destroyed and thousands of Israelites were taken to Babylonia as slaves. Once again, God allowed the Jews to roam or scatter outside of their homeland. This dispersion throughout the Mediterranean, Spain, Portugal, and beyond is known as the *Diaspora*.

SACRED WRITING

The *Tenakh*, is the collection of holy words held sacred by Jews. As mentioned before, these works are also held sacred by Christians who call them the Old Testament. The first five books are known to Jews as the Torah and contain the writings and teachings of Moses. The Talmud is also held sacred by Jews and contains the writings, thoughts, and discussions of first century Jews.

JEWISH PRACTICES

Jews worship in synagogues where the Torah is read. In the synagogue, worship is led by a *rabbi*, or teacher. The Jewish faith has many types of followers. Some, known as Orthodox, do not allow musical instruments during worship. Progressive Jews allow women rabbis.



Hebrew, the language of Judaism, died as a living language. However, in the 20th century, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, restored the language, known today as Modern

Hebrew. Yiddish is another language spoken by Jews. This language is the mixture of German and Hebrew.

Besides the synagogue, the home is very important to Jews. It is here that the faith is shared, traditions learned, and family is celebrated. Food is very important to Jewish life. Meals are required to be prepared in a *kosher*, or fit manner, in accordance with Jewish law. This often refers to the cleanliness of where the food is prepared or the way meat is rendered.

Throughout the year Jews observe many holy days and festivals. The *Sabbath*, or last day of the week, is celebrated because it commemorates God's day of rest after six days of creation. Starting a sundown on Friday and lasting until sunset on Saturday, this time is one of family and celebration with readings, prayer and a special meal. *Hashanah*, is the Jewish New Year, and occurs during September or October. *Passover*, a celebration of God's sparing the children of Egypt by "passing over" them takes place in March or April.

Hanukkah, or festival of lights, takes place in November or December and is a time of thanksgiving.



PERSECUTION & THE HOLOCAUST

For centuries, the people of the Jewish faith were persecuted for their faith. This persecution came from not only their religious practices, but also for economic reasons. Because Jews do not recognize Jesus as the son of God, throughout history Christians have shunned or oppressed them. Faced with limited resources and occupations Jews often took jobs seen as distasteful or offensive to others; such as moneylenders. Christians, according to their faith, were not allowed to lend money and charge *usury*, interest. Therefore, many Jews made their living this way. However, this work often allowed them to become more wealthy than their Christian neighbors which only added to the hard feelings and persecution Israelites faced. Perhaps the worst persecution faced by Jews took place during World War II when Adolf Hitler, the leader in Germany, killed six million Jews, many in concentration camps. Known as the Holocaust, this horrific event saw more than one third of the world's Jews eliminated.

MODERN ISRAEL



In 1948, following World War II, the Jewish people were given a homeland inside the borders of Palestine. Modern Israel faces many hostilities from its neighbors, many Arab Muslims, who not only reject the Jews ownership of the land but, also the faith they worship. Hostilities throughout the region continue in the 21st century.

UNDERSTANDING ISLAM: THE BEGINNING TO TODAY

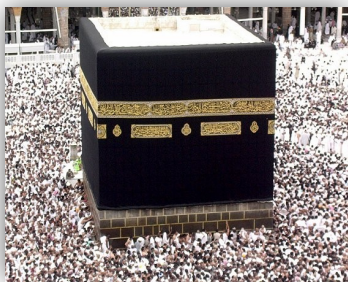
KEY CONCEPT: Religion - A belief system that influences the development and culture of a civilization.

THE ARABIAN PENINSULA BEFORE MUHAMMAD

The majority of Arabs living on the Arabian Peninsula at the beginning of the first century were **nomads**, people who traveled from place to place with no permanent home. These people worshipped many gods and developed into various competing tribes. Many families within these tribes created caravans, traveling across the desert carrying their wares on camels, as well as herding sheep. Scarce resources, such as water and grazing land, developed a warlike culture on the Arabian Peninsula, and caravan raiding became as common as the caravans themselves.

THE HOLY CITY OF MECCA AND MUHAMMAD

In 570 CE the wealthy caravan city of **Mecca** acquired a reputation as sacred because it housed **idols**, statues of many gods in the **Kaaba**, a cube-like black shrine for prayer. Furthermore, the wealthy merchant class sold idols to pilgrims visiting the holy city. **Muhammad**, the founder of the Islamic faith, was born in Mecca. As he grew, the inequity he witnessed between the poor and wealthy merchant class troubled him. At the age of forty Muhammad was meditating in a local cave when his life forever



changed. The angel Gabriel appeared and told him to recite the word of God. The ability to quote the word of God made him a **prophet**, or messenger of God. He believed that by worshipping one god, **Allah**, it would unite his people. Mercy and kindness would be at the center of his new religion that he would call Islam which means "submission." Muhammad would call his followers Muslims which means "followers of Islam."

MUHAMMAD'S TEACHINGS

The word of God, as interpreted by Muhammad was written down in Arabic and recorded in the **Qur'an** or **Koran**, the holy book of Islam. In addition to the Qur'an, the **hadith**, a collection of records of Muhammad's words and daily actions (referred to as **Sunnah**, or habits) also provides Muslims with a guideline from which to live. This critical part of a Muslim's life defines how one should live a life that best follows that of the founder, Muhammad.

THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

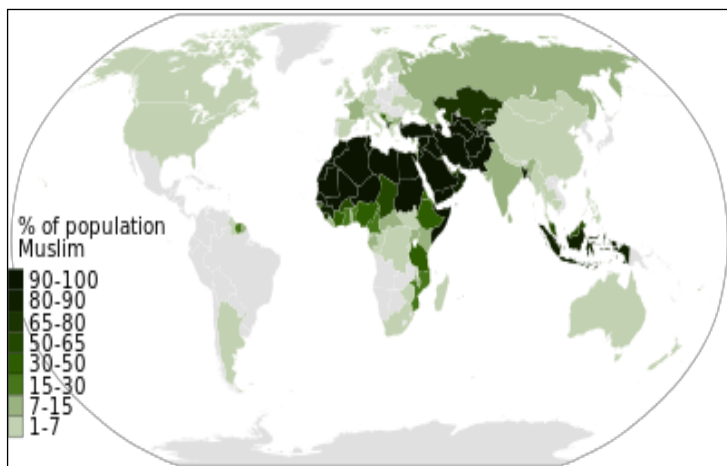
The Islamic faith stands on five principles or pillars, written in the **hadith**. The first, **Shahadah**, states that all believers will only worship one god, Allah. The second, **Salat**, dictates that all Muslims will worship five times a day. At sunrise, noon, midafternoon, twilight and night facing in the



direction of Mecca, Muslims will bow in prayer. The third pillar is **Zakat** or the giving of alms. All Muslims are expected to contribute a portion of their earnings to the helping of others: the poor, the widows, and the orphans. Fasting during the holy month of **Ramadan** is the fourth pillar and is known as **Sawm**. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, and during the entire month Muslims do not eat or drink from dawn to dusk. They may eat only during the night, and at the end of the month, they celebrate with a feast with their family and friends. The fifth and final pillar of the Islamic faith is **Hajj**. At least once in a Muslim's lifetime, they are to visit the city of Mecca and pay respect to the Kaaba.

LEADERSHIP AFTER MUHAMMAD

After the death of Muhammad in 632 CE, there was some controversy as to who should become the new leader of the Islamic people. Some believed that the new leader should be elected from among Muhammad's worthy companions. People who had studied under the great leader. The first elected **caliph** or highest leader was Abu Bakr a close friend and advisor of Muhammad. Today, the people who still support the idea that devout Muslims like Abu Bakr can lead, are known as **Sunnis**. However, there were those who believed that the new leader should be a blood relative, like monarchs. They named



Muhammad's cousin/brother-in-law, Ali bin Abu Talib the new leader. These believers became known as **Shiites** or Shia. These two groups still exist today. Out of the approximately 14 million Muslims globally, 90% of Muslims are Sunni.

ISLAMIC LAW

During the third century, Muslim scholars developed the Shariah or Islamic law. In Arabic, this word means "path" or "way" and is a detailed system of religious law based on Muhammad's teachings and example. Shariah law contains two main sections. The first deals with the different aspects of worship including how to pray and fast. The second section deals with the various types of human interaction. This section includes such topics as food and drink (Muslims are not allowed to eat pork), warfare, marriage, and divorce.



Modern legislation (laws), along with Muslim legal scholars who are attempting to relate the will of Allah to the 20th century, have reopened the door to interpreting the Sharia as Muhammad intended. This happened even in highly traditional Saudi Arabia, where Islam began. While most Muslim countries have adopted Islamic law to relate to modern Western culture, some countries like Iran, adhere to strict classical Shariah. In these cases, Shariah from the time of Muhammad is mandated and often offer harsh punishments to Western standards. As with most early law, early Shariah has a controversial "eye for an eye" penalty for misconduct.

HINDUISM



Written in *Sanskrit*, the language of the Aryans, the Vedas are thought to point to beliefs from both before and after their arrival. Aryan priests collected hymns, epics (long poems), religious rituals, and legends orally passed down for hundreds of years. The four Vedas, or “books of knowledge,” are believed by many to be the work of the *Deity* (non-human, higher being). The Aryans left no artifacts, but the Vedas offer important information about the daily lives, values, and rituals of the Vedic Age. Additionally, later writings, such as the *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas*, and *Upanishads*, include important discussions and interpretations of the Vedas.

Hinduism today is the third largest world religion behind Christianity and Islam. It is practiced by an estimated 15% of the world population; which amounts to over 1 billion Hindus across the globe. In south Asian countries like India and Nepal, 80% of citizens follow Hinduism. However, in most western countries, populations are smaller. For example, .5% of Americans and 1.5% of Canadians are Hindu. Hinduism is a religion with a rich history closely tied to the story and people of modern-day India.

ROOTS OF HINDUISM

Hinduism traces to the ancient civilization of the Indus River Valley, where archeologists have discovered nearly 4,000 year-old evidence of Hindu religious practice. Around 1500 B.C.E., a warrior culture from the west, the *Aryans*, conquered this ancient civilization, which began the area’s *Vedic Age*. During this time, the Aryan and Indus cultures began to combine, as evidenced in the Hindu holy books known as the *Vedas*.



RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

At the foundation of Hinduism is the divinity (holiness) of the Vedas. Eventually, multiple deities were also introduced. The three most important include *Brahma* the Creator, *Vishnu* the Preserver, and *Shiva* the Destroyer. Although there are three, all are considered part of a single, universal spirit or supreme being. These three deities also illustrate the belief that the universe is in a constant cycle of beginning, continuing, and ending. *Karma* is a law of

cause and effect central to Hinduism. Through karma, people create their own destiny through everyday actions, words, and thoughts that help or hurt them in the future. *Reincarnation* is the idea that after death, the souls of humans and animals alike can be re-born into a lower *caste*, or social class. The cycle of death and rebirth can be broken when all of a person's karmas have been purified or resolved through conduct, meditation,



and other *Dharma* (religious duties). Lastly, Hindus do not believe that any single world religion is the true and single path above the others. All are seen as valid paths to salvation from our higher power.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

Hindus have many practices in common with other faiths, but also some that are unique. *Upana*, or worship, includes rituals, chants, and other study performed most often at a shrine within their home. Hindus participate in holy festivals or days known as *utsava*. Often involving a community temple, followers may celebrate, fast, or worship. In addition to celebrating holy days, Hindus also observe *samskara*, or rites of passage, which include events like birth, naming, marriage, and death. As indicated earlier, *dharma* is the act of living a life of selflessness, respect, and good conduct. Clearing karmas is achieved through these actions and a commitment to never injuring

other beings physically or mentally. In addition, Hindus are encouraged to perform a yearly pilgrimage, *tirthayatra*, to places, temples, or holy people. Pilgrims disconnect from the world and focus on God and important religious teachings.

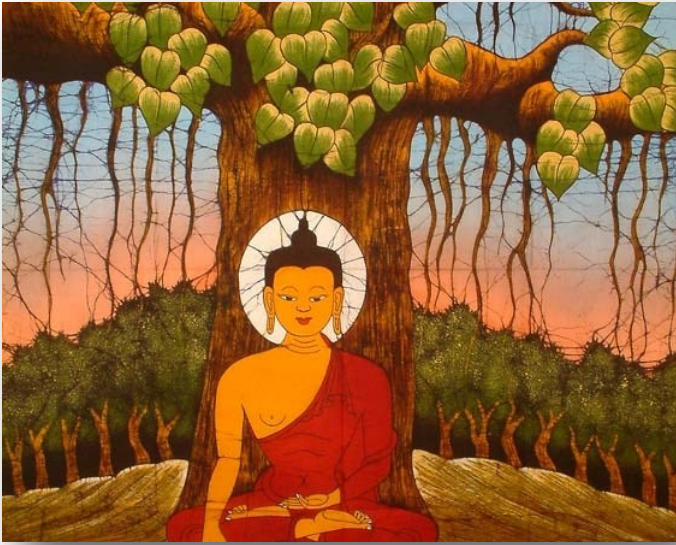
INFLUENCE ON WESTERN CULTURE

Hinduism continues to spread throughout the world. The 1870s mark the modern resurgence (return) of its popularity in India. *Ramakrishna's* teachings helped followers see that Hinduism and western culture/religions could compliment each other. Numerous political movements used the Hindu nonviolent protest teachings of *Mohandas Gandhi* to effect societal change, including the Civil Rights campaigns of Martin Luther King, Jr. Hinduism later was planted firmly in global popular culture when the *transcendental meditation* movement of *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi* found a well-known group of followers; the British pop band known as The Beatles. Today, elements of Hinduism ranging from meditation to yoga permeate culture and religion outside of traditional Hinduism.



THE STORY OF BUDDHA

Buddha, Born c. 563 B.C., Died c. 483 B.C.



EARLY LIFE

In the 500s, the Gautama family reigned over a kingdom in Northern India, which is present-day Nepal. The king and queen at that time had a son named Siddhartha. According to Buddhist history, Siddhartha was conceived under extraordinary means. In a dream, a white elephant visited his mother and touched her side with a lotus tree blossom. Soon after, she became pregnant. Siddhartha was born out of his mother's side. His mother felt no pain during the delivery. According to legend, Siddhartha told his mother after his birth, "This is my last rebirth -- henceforth there is no more birth for me." Everywhere he walked, lotus blossoms grew beneath his feet.

Shortly after Siddhartha's birth, his mother died. His father, Suddhodana, went to a fortune-teller to find out Siddhartha's future. The fortune-teller presented two futures for his son. The first prediction was that Siddhartha would be a world conqueror if he chose to be a ruler. If he chose a life of wisdom, rather than power, he would bring religious salvation to the world. The father chose the path of power for his son.

During Siddhartha's lifetime, as today, Hinduism was the prominent religion of India. Hinduism teaches

about the cycle of reincarnation. Although it is believed that a person's future is largely predetermined, people have some control over their future lives. In addition, people believed in a strict caste system, which is a social order. The people at the highest levels of the system were said to be the most spiritual. Their place in the caste system was a reward for their spiritual enlightenment. Siddhartha's family was part of the high caste. As a child, Siddhartha was sheltered from poverty and sickness of others. As a curious young man, he explored the city around his home. The suffering that he saw during this time led him to give up his marriage and son in order to pursue spiritual wisdom.



ENLIGHTENMENT

As a 30 year-old single man, Siddhartha practiced meditation as part of the Jains sect. He agreed to live without such basic necessities as food and shelter in order to pursue his spiritual path. After five years of struggle, Siddhartha left the sect to recover and meditate on his own. One night he sat under a fig tree in northwest India. Meditating under this tree opened his awareness, leading him to an enlightened, peaceful state of being. At this point, he became Buddha.

Buddha and Buddhist's around the world believe that people are *reincarnated* (re-born on earth) back to earth until they have reached inner peace. The *Four Noble Truths* are central to Buddhism: that life is painful

and full of suffering; that desire is the cause of pain; that a person can overcome desire; and that following the *Eightfold Path* will end suffering caused by desire. According to Buddha, following an Eightfold Path by conducting a life of discipline, mindfulness and meditation will lead a person to a state void of desire. This path is a process of facing reality and leads to **enlightenment**, a state of inner peace. Buddhist's believe that **nirvana** is the highest state that someone can attain, meaning a person's individual desires and suffering go away. At this point, they will no longer be reincarnated to earthly suffering.

8 FOLD PATH



1. Right View
2. Right Intention
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration

RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS

Buddha spent most of his time traveling after his enlightenment. His travels were in Magadha, which later became the largest Buddhist Empire. For the

“Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.” Buddha

next 45 years, Buddha established monasteries, which are places for monks, nuns, and others to have peace and focus on their spiritual growth.

Buddha spread the belief that faith should fulfill one's needs. Therefore, there was no need for the caste system. Once he renounces the social order, he became increasingly more popular with the citizens. He remained a preacher up until his death, when he told his followers to continue to seek salvation.

Although India would later reject Buddhism, many holy sites of Buddhism are located in India. These holy sites include the places where Buddha presented his sermons, where he meditated, and where his ashes were spread after his death. The special sites where Buddha's ashes were divided were called the eight stupas, or temples.

BUDDHA AND JESUS

Many comparisons have been made between Buddha and Jesus. Both men were believed to have had miraculous births. They both set out on their life's work as spiritual leaders in around the age of thirty, which led to the establishment of new faiths. For Buddha it was Buddhism, and for Jesus it was Christianity, which is the belief in one God.

Just as they had several parallels in their lives, they were also different. As a child and young man, Buddha lived a life of wealth and privilege, while Jesus lived a life of poverty. As adults, their lives differed as well. Buddha was a seeker of spiritual wisdom and enlightenment. Jesus was a teacher. According to Christian faith, Jesus was murdered and rose from the dead. According to Buddhism, Buddha attained enlightenment, which led to his life-long ministry.

CONNECTIONS TO TODAY

Today there are approximately 360 million Buddhists in the world. This makes Buddhism the fourth largest religion in globally (in terms of number of adherents). China holds the largest Buddhist population at 108 million, followed by Thailand at 55 million.

Country	Number of Buddhists
China	102 000 000
Japan	8 965 000
Thailand	55 480 000
Vietnam	49 690 000
Myanmar	41 610 000
Sri Lanka	12 540 000
South Korea	10 920 000
Taiwan	9 150 000
Cambodia	9 130 000
India	7 000 000