

CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is the **world's biggest religion**, with about 2.2 billion followers worldwide. It is based on the teachings of **Jesus Christ** who lived in the Holy Land 2,000 years ago.

Through its missionary activity Christianity has spread to most parts of the globe.

Place of Origin	Israel
Founder	Jesus of Nazareth
Sacred Text	The Bible - Old and New Testaments
Sacred Building	Church , Chapel, Cathedral
Holy Places	Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Lourdes (a popular place of pilgrimage), Rome, Canterbury
Major Festivals	Easter , Christmas ,
Main Branches (Denominations)	Anglican , Roman Catholic , Free Churches, Orthodox, Reformed,

Who is the founder of Christianity?

Jesus Christ, who was crucified around A.D. 30 in Jerusalem, is the founder of Christianity.

Who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He came to earth to teach about love and fellowship. He represents the person that all Christians must strive to be.

Jesus was a Jew who was born about 2000 years ago in Bethlehem. Jesus lived for 33 years before being crucified by the Romans.

What do Christians believe?

Christians believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and that:

- God sent his Son to earth to save humanity from the consequences of its sins
- Jesus was fully human, and experienced this world in the same way as other human beings of his time
- Jesus was tortured and gave his life on the Cross (At the Crucifixion)
- Jesus rose from the dead on the third day after his Crucifixion (the Resurrection)

Christians believe that there is only one God, but that this one God consists of 3 "persons"

- God the Father
- God the Son
- The Holy Spirit

Christians believe that God made the world.

What is the Christian holy book called?

The Bible is the Christian holy book. It is divided into the Old and New Testaments. Parts of the writing contained in the Old Testament are also sacred to [Jewish](#) and [Muslim](#) people.



JUDAISM

Judaism is the oldest of the world's four biggest monotheistic religions (religions with only one god). It's also the smallest, with only about 12 million followers around the world.

Jewish history begins with the covenant established between God and Abraham around 1812 BC (over **3,800** years ago), during the Bronze Age, in the Middle East.

The Torah (Jewish Law), the primary document of Judaism, was given to the Jews by the Prophet Moses (Moshe) about **3,300** years ago.

The Jewish calendar starts with the day when Adam and Eve were created (the Sixth Day of Creation). This year (2010) is **5770** on the Jewish Calendar. It starts with Rosh HaShanah, the two day Jewish New Year. From September 2010, the Jewish Calendar will be 5771.

There are large Jewish populations in Israel and the U.S.

Place of Origin	Israel
Founder	Abraham
Sacred Text	The Tenach (Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim)
Sacred Building	Synagogue
Holy Place	Jerusalem
Major Festivals	Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur , Pesach (Passover) , Shavuot (Pentecost) , Sukkot (Tabernacles)
Main Branches (Denominations)	Orthodox , Reform , Conservative

Where did Judaism originate from?

Judaism originated in Israel around 4000 years ago.

What do Jews believe?

Jews believe that there is a single God who not only created the universe, but with whom every Jew can have an individual and personal relationship.

Who is the founder of Judaism?

Jewish history begins with the covenant established between God and **Abraham** around 1812 BC, during the Bronze Age, in the Middle East. Abraham is considered as the father of the family of Jews.

Moses, is also an important figure as he gave the Jews the Torah around 1250 B.C. The Torah contains the laws of God.

Who is Abraham?

Abraham is the father of the Jewish people. Jews see Abraham as a symbol of trusting and obeying God. Abraham is also important to followers of [Christianity](#) and of [Islam](#).

The story of Abraham is told in the Book of Genesis (the first book of the Hebrew and Christian Bibles) in chapters 12-25.

Who is Moses?

Moses is the leader who freed them from slavery in Egypt. Moses protected the Jews from the wrath of God, and negotiated with God on their behalf.

What is the Jewish Holy Book called?

The most holy Jewish book is the *Torah* (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible). Others include Judaism's oral tradition, the written form of which is known as the Talmud.



ISLAM

Islam is the second largest religion in the world with over 1 billion followers. The 2001 census recorded 1,591,000 Muslims in the UK, around 2.7% of the population.

- Muslims believe that Islam was **revealed** over 1400 years ago in Mecca, Arabia.
- Followers of Islam are called Muslims.
- Muslims **believe** that there is only One God.
- The Arabic word for God is Allah.
- According to Muslims, God sent a number of prophets to mankind to teach them **how to live** according to His law.
- Jesus, Moses and Abraham are respected as prophets of God.
- They believe that the final Prophet was Muhammad.
- Muslims believe that Islam has always existed, but for practical purposes, date their religion from the time of the migration of Muhammad.
- Muslims base their laws on their holy book the **Qur'an**.

Allah

Allah is **the name** Muslims use for the supreme and unique God, who created and rules everything.

The one and only God

All Muslims believe that God is one alone:

- There is only one God.
- God has no children, no parents, and no partners.
- God was not created by a being.
- There are no equal, superior, or lesser Gods.



The Prophet Muhammad

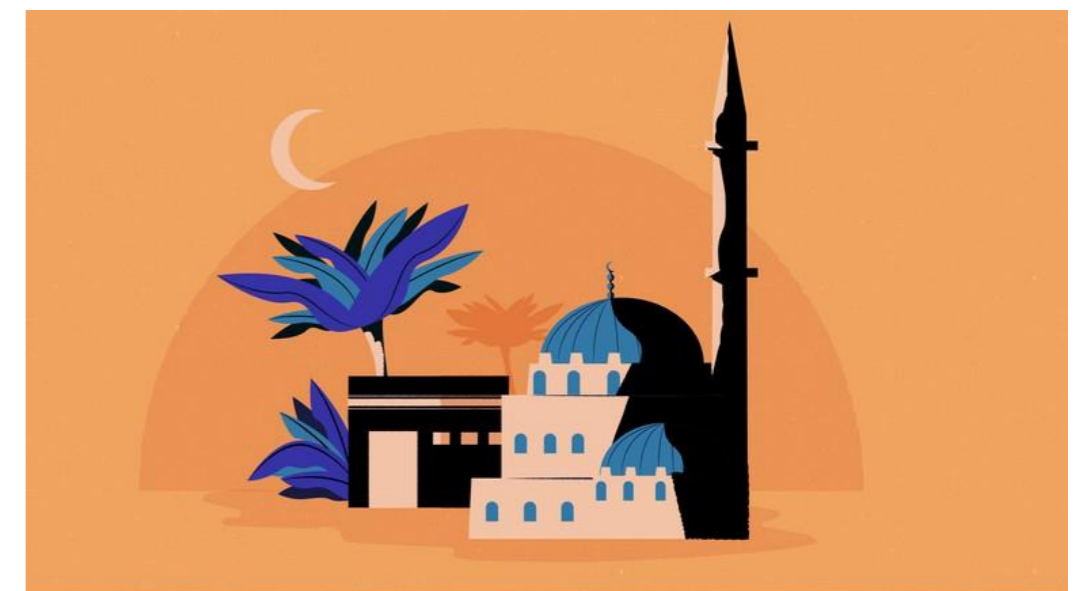
- Muslims believe that Islam is a faith that has always existed and that it was gradually revealed to humanity by a number of prophets, but the final and complete revelation of the faith was made through the Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century CE.
- Muhammad was born in Mecca in Saudi Arabia in 570.
- He was a deeply spiritual man, and often spent time in meditation on Mount Hira.
- The traditional story of the **Qur'an** tells how one night in 610 he was meditating in a cave on the mountain when he was visited by the angel Jibreel who ordered him to **recite**.
- Once Jibreel mentioned the name of Allah, Muhammad began to recite **words** which he came to believe were the words of God.

The Qur'an

- During the rest of his life Muhammad continued to receive these revelations. The words were remembered and recorded, and form the text of the Holy Qur'an, the Muslim scripture.

Mecca

- Mecca is the holiest city in Islam.
- It is the place where the Kaaba is, all Muslims pray in this direction.



SIKHISM

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion, or a religion that believes in one god. The followers are called "Sikhs", and their holy book is the Guru Granth Sahib. 27 million people are followers of Sikhism, which makes it the fifth largest religion in the world. It is most popular in Asia. Sikhs are usually identified by the Turban that they wear, but not all wear turbans.

Beliefs

- The holy book of Sikhism is the Guru Granth Sahib. Granth is a Hindi word, which means "book". It contains the writings of each of the ten gurus.
- There is only one God. Implying that there is nothing that is beyond or outside the one God. So, therefore there is nothing being created, destroyed, as the creation and destruction are still only part of the one.
- The goal of life is to focus on being at one with God. This is attainable by meditation, prayer, and being in the company of others who share a similar goal.

God

- Sikhism teaches that God lasts forever, cannot be seen, and has no body. It is taught that he created the universe, can destroy it, and keeps it running. He is considered to be infinite, or he always existed and always will. Sikhs worship him, and meditate on his name through intense (passionate) repetition.
- They believe everything is a part of God and God is a part of everything. Good, bad, neutral are not applicable to God and for human beings, as Sikh philosophy indicates that human beings are born innately good.

Temples

- A Sikh temple is called a Gurdwara (meaning "the house of Guru"). It is the place of worship in the Sikh religion. Birth, death, baptism and marriage ceremonies are held in the temple. There are four doors which are called the door of peace, the door of livelihood, the door of learning and the door of grace. When a person enters the temple, their head must be covered. There are no chairs in the temple so people sit on the floor.
- The temple is also a communal kitchen. The kitchen is where festival food is donated, prepared and cooked by two Sikh families. All the food that has been made there is shared with all the community who visit the temple on that day. The meal is vegetarian and is called the Langar.

Vaisakhi

Vaisakhi is an important festival celebrated by Sikhs and Hindus. Vaisakhi is also known as Basaki. It is the harvest festival in the Punjab region. Vaisakhi is celebrated on the first day of the Basak month, in the Sikh calendar.

Gurus and religious authority

There have been 10 Guru's, all have added their own religious teachings and have been highly respected.

The Sikh holy book is called the Guru Granth Sahib – this is the word of the Guru's and is the final one. There will be no other 'living' Guru's. The Guru Granth Sahib is treated as a person and therefore is highly respected, they even keep it on a bed at night!



Buddhism

Buddhism began in northeastern [India](#) and is based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama. The religion is 2,500 years old and is followed by 350 million Buddhists worldwide.

Buddhism is the main religion in many Asian countries. It is a religion about suffering and the need to get rid of it. A key concept of Buddhism is Nirvana, the most enlightened, and blissful state that one can achieve. A state without suffering.

Place of Origin	North East India
Founder	Siddhartha Gautama (The Buddha)
Sacred Text	Tripitaka
Sacred Building	Stupa
Major Festivals	Wesak
Main Branches (Denominations)	Theravada, Mahayana, Tibetan, Chinese and Japanese groups including Soto and Zen

Who is the founder of Buddhism?

The Buddhist tradition is founded on and inspired by the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama. He was called the Buddha and lived in the 4th or 5th century B.C. in India.

Why is Siddhartha Gautama so important to Buddhists?

Siddhartha Gautama found the path to Enlightenment. By doing so he was led from the pain of suffering and rebirth towards the path of Enlightenment and became known as **the Buddha** or "awakened one".

Why did Siddhartha Gautama stop being a prince and become a Holy Man?

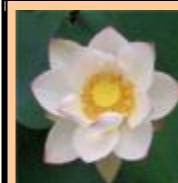
Siddhartha had also seen a monk, and he decided this was a sign that he should leave his protected royal life and live as a homeless Holy Man.

Siddhartha's travels showed him much more of the the suffering of the world. He searched for a way to escape the inevitability of death, old age and pain first by studying with religious men. This didn't provide him with an answer.

What are the symbols of Buddhism?



The wheel of life which symbolises the cycle of life, death and rebirth. The eight spokes remind people that the Buddha taught about eight ways of life.



The lotus flower symbolises purity and divine birth. The lotus flower grows in mud at the bottom of a pool, but rises above the surface to become a beautiful flower. Buddhist say this is how people should rise above everything which is dukkha. A flower may be very beautiful and have a wonderful scent, but it soon withers and dies. This shows that nothing in life is perfect.



Images of Buddha
Statues of Buddha include lots of symbols. There are 32 symbols in Buddhism which show that the Buddha was a special person. Any of these symbols can be used on statues. For example the Buddha is often shown with:

Where do Buddhists Worship?

Buddhist worship at home or at a temple. Worshippers may sit on the floor barefoot facing an image of Buddha and chanting. It is very important that their feet face away from the image of Buddha. They listen to monks chanting from religious texts and take part in prayers.

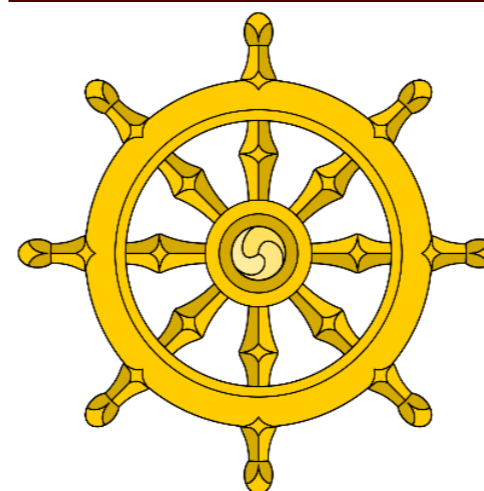
What is the sacred text (Holy Book) of Buddhists?

The sacred book of Buddhism is called the Tripitaka (called Tipitaka in Pali). It is also called the Pali Canon, after the language in which it was first written.



It is written in an ancient Indian language called Pali which is very close to the language that the Buddha himself spoke. The Tripitaka is a very large book. The English translation of it takes up nearly forty volumes.

Parts of the Tripitaka such as the Dhamma-pada and the Sutta-Nipata are among the most expressive religious books in the world. Some of Buddha's parables are very similar to those used by Jesus.



Hinduism

Hinduism is the world's third most popular religion, with around 750 million followers. The religion of Hinduism originated in Northern India, near the river Indus, about 4000 years ago and is the world's oldest existing religion.

Hinduism is practised by more than 80% of India's population.

Place of Origin	India
Founder	Developed out of Brahminism (another religion)
Sacred Text	Vedas, Upanishads
Sacred Building	Mandir
Major Festivals	Diwali
Holy Place	River Ganges is one of many holy places

Who is the founder of Hinduism?

Hinduism has no founder, it developed out of Brahminism.

Hinduism is the oldest religion, it may date to prehistoric times.

What is the symbol of Hinduism?

Aum is the main symbol of Hinduism. It is the sound heard in deepest meditation and is said to be the name most suited for God.



How is Hinduism different from other faiths?

Hinduism has no founder, single teacher nor any prophets.

Hinduism is not a Single Religion. Hinduism is the practices of a variety of different religious groups which come out of India.

Why are there so many Hindu Gods?

Hindus actually only believe in one God, Brahman, the eternal origin who is the cause and foundation of all existence. The gods of the Hindu faith represent different forms of Brahman. These gods are sent to help people find the universal God (Brahman).

Most Hindus have a personal god or goddess such as Shiva, Krishna or Lakshmi to whom they pray regularly.

The three most important Hindu gods (forms of Brahman) are:



Brahma - known as the Creator.



Vishnu - Known as the Preserver



Shiva (Siva)- known as the Destroyer.

What is the Hindu place of Worship?

Most Hindus worship (puja) every day at home and have a **shrine** there. A shrine can be anything from a room, a small altar or simply pictures or statues. Family members often worship together. At the shrine, Hindus make offerings to a murti. A murti is a sacred statue of God, or a god or goddess.



The Hindu building for communal worship is called **Mandir (Hindu Temple)**. The temples are dedicated to different gods and are the focus of religious life. Outside India, people mainly gather at the mandir at the weekend.

What is Hinduism's Holy book?

The most ancient sacred texts of the Hindu religion are written in **Sanskrit** and called the [Vedas](#).

Hinduism does not just have one sacred book but several scriptures. The Vedas scriptures guide Hindus in their daily life. They also help to preserve the religious dimensions of family and society. Hindus have developed their system of worship and beliefs from the scriptures.

