

MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS

HINDUISM

- Described by many as a **polytheistic** religion - but many modern day Hindus describe Hinduism as a religion with only one god in many forms
- Originated approximately 1500 B.C. in India (the oldest of the major religions)
- Beliefs are traced back to the Indus Valley civilization
- Holy texts: Vedas, Bhagavad-Gita, Upanishads
- Belief in the caste system (a society based on five classes) existed strongly in Hinduism
- Belief in reincarnation (cycle of rebirth)
- Ganges River is considered sacred
- The deceased are cremated after death and the ashes spread in a holy river such as the Ganges if possible
- Primarily practiced in India and Nepal
- *Believe in Karma*

BUDDHISM

- Originated in approximately 525 B.C. by Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) in India
- Gautama was known as the Enlightened One
- Holy text: Tripitaka
- Belief in reincarnation (cycle of rebirth)
- Buddha taught that we should break our dependence on worldly desires in order to reach peace
- Inner peace is called Nirvana.
- Practiced mainly throughout Asia
- *Asoka - a buddhist leader helped to spread it throughout Asia*

ISLAM

- **Monotheistic** - belief in one God
- Began approximately A.D. 600 by Muhammad in the Middle East
- Holy Text: Qu'ran
- Place of worship is a mosque
- Sabbath is on Friday
- Pray five times daily, facing Mecca in Saudi Arabia
- Jesus is accepted as a prophet only
- Muhammad is considered the great prophet
- Followers do not eat pork
- Holy sites include: Kaaba in Mecca, Medina (Saudi Arabia), Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem

JUDAISM

- **Monotheistic** - belief in one God
- Originated approximately 1300 B.C.
- View Jesus as merely a man, not the Messiah
- Beliefs are traced back to Abraham
- Sabbath is from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday
- Some Jews follow dietary food laws (Kosher Laws)—and do not eat pork
- Place of worship is a synagogue
- Holy texts: Torah, Talmud
- Holocaust: attempt by Hitler and the Nazis in Germany to exterminate the Jewish race in the 1930s and 1940s. The result was the destruction of 6 million Jews.
- Most of the world's Jewish people are in Israel (the only Jewish country), Europe, and the U.S.
- Holy site: Western Wall in Jerusalem

CHRISTIANITY

- **Monotheistic** - belief in one God
- Originated approximately A.D. 30 in the Middle East
- Accept Jesus as the Messiah
- Holy Texts: New and Old Testament of the Bible
- Place of worship is church or cathedral
- Sabbath is on Sunday
- Three main divisions: Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox
- Most practiced religion in the world
- Followers are found in North America, Europe, South America, Africa, Australia, and in pockets of Asia
- Holy site: Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem

SHINTO

- **Polytheistic** - belief in numerous gods or goddesses
- Practiced mainly in Japan

TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS (ANIMISM)

- Usually **polytheistic** - belief in numerous gods or goddesses
- Found world-wide
- Belief that all objects, including inanimate objects, have a soul or spirit.