

Quick Reference Chart for Selected Religions

(courtesy of religionfacts.com)

ATHEISM

Origins & History

Appears in history, but especially after the Enlightenment (19th cent).

Adherents Worldwide

1.1 billion (this figure includes agnostic and non-religious, which tend to be grouped on surveys)

God(s) and Universe

There is no God or divine being. Beliefs about the universe generally based on latest scientific findings.

Human Situation and Life's Purpose

Only humans can help themselves and each other solve the world's problems.

Afterlife

none

Practices

none

Texts

Influential works include those by Marx, Freud, Feuerbach, and Voltaire.

CHRISTIANITY

Origins & History

Founded by Jesus Christ in c. 30 AD, Israel.

Adherents Worldwide

2 billion

God(s) and Universe

One God who is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Human Situation and Life's Purpose

All have sinned and are thereby separated from God. Salvation is through faith in Christ and, for some, sacraments and good works.

Afterlife

Eternal heaven or hell.

Practices

Prayer, Bible study, baptism, Eucharist, church on Sundays, numerous holidays.

Texts

The Holy Bible (Old and New Testaments)

BUDDHISM

Origins & History

Founded by Siddharta Gautama (the Buddha) in c. 520 BC, NE India

Adherents Worldwide

360 million

God(s) and Universe

Theravada atheistic; Mahayana more polytheistic.

Human Situation and Life's Purpose

Buddha taught nothing is permanent.

Afterlife

Purpose is to avoid suffering and gain enlightenment and release from cycle of rebirth, or at least attain a better rebirth by gaining merit. Reincarnation (understood differently than in Hinduism, with no surviving soul) until gain enlightenment

Practices

Meditation, mantras, devotion to deities (in some sects), mandalas (Tibetan) Tripitaka (Pali Canon)

Texts

Mahayana sutras like the Lotus Sutra; others.

ISLAM

Origins & History

Muhammad, 622 AD, Saudi Arabia

Adherents Worldwide

1.3 billion

God(s) and Universe

One God (Allah in Arabic)

Human Situation and Life's Purpose

Humans must submit (*islam*) to the will of God to gain Paradise after death.

Afterlife

Paradise or Hell.

Practices

Five Pillars: Faith, Prayer, Alms, Pilgrimage, Fasting. Mosque services on Fridays. Ablutions before prayer. No alcohol or pork. Holidays related to the pilgrimage and fast of Ramadan.

Texts

Qur'an (Scripture); *Hadith* (tradition)

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Origins & History

Charles Taze Russell, 1879, Pittsburgh

Adherents Worldwide

6.5 million

God(s) and Universe

One God, Jehovah. No Trinity - Christ is the first creation of God; the Holy Spirit is a force.

Human Situation and Life's Purpose

Salvation is through faith in Christ and obeying Jehovah's laws. The End of the World is soon.

Afterlife

Heaven for 144,000 chosen Witnesses, eternity on new earth for other Witnesses. All others annihilated. No hell.

Practices

No blood transfusions, no celebration of holidays, no use of crosses or religious images. Baptism, Sunday service at Kingdom Hall, strong emphasis on evangelism.

Texts

New World Translation of the Scriptures

MORMONISM (LDS)

Origins & History

Joseph Smith, 1830, New York

Adherents Worldwide

12.2 million

God(s) and Universe

God the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost are three separate individual beings.

Human Situation and Life's Purpose

Humans existed as spirits before this life, salvation is returning to God. Salvation by faith in Christ, good works, ordinances, and evangelism.

Afterlife

All return to spirit world for period of instruction before resurrection. Mormons to heaven with God and families; others rewarded but not with God; hell for those who reject God after death.

Practices

Abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, coffee and tea; baptism for the dead; eternal marriage; temple garments under daily clothes; active evangelism.

Texts

Christian Bible, *Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, and *Pearl of Great Price*

JUDAISM

Origins & History

The religion of the Hebrews (c. 1300 BC), especially after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD.

Adherents Worldwide

14 million

God(s) and Universe

One God, Yahweh.

Human Situation and Life's Purpose

Obey God's commandments, live ethically.

Afterlife

Focus is more on this life than the next. Not historically emphasized. Beliefs vary from no afterlife to shadowy existence to the World to Come (similar to heaven).

Practices

Circumcision at birth, bar/bat mitzvah at adulthood. Synagogue services on Saturdays. No pork or other non-kosher foods. Holidays related to historical events.

Texts

Bible (Tanakh), Talmud

SCIENTOLOGY

Origins & History

Scientology: L. Ron Hubbard, 1954, California

Adherents Worldwide

70,000 or several million, depending on the source

God(s) and Universe

God(s) not specified; reality explained in the Eight Dynamics Human consists of body, mind and thetan; capable of great things.

Human Situation and Life's Purpose

Gain spiritual freedom by ridding mind of engrams.

Afterlife

Reincarnation Auditing, progressing up various levels until "clear".

Practices

Focus on education and drug recovery programs.

Texts

Writings of Hubbard, such as *Dianetics* and *Scientology*