

Abrahamic Religions

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

The Axial Age

- The Axial Age is a term to describe the period in human history when the fundamental beliefs and values that define our societies were created.
- In Europe, the Axial Age centers on the philosophy of Socrates/Plato and on the teachings of Jesus.

The Axial Age, cont.

- Others might argue that more recent events, such as the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, or the Enlightenment, provided a new “axis” around which the Western worldview rotates.

The Axial Age, cont.

Outside of Europe, the Axial Age could be defined by some of history's other great teachers:

- Buddha
- Confucius
- Laozi
- Muhammad

Siddhartha Gautama was a spiritual teacher from ancient India who founded Buddhism during the 5th or 6th century BC.

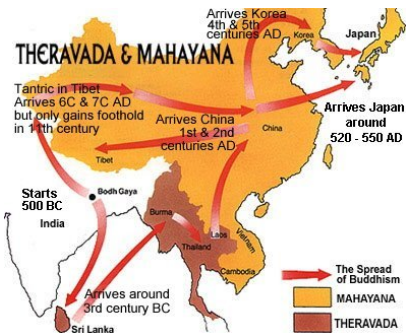
Various collections of teachings attributed to him were passed down by oral tradition, and first committed to writing about 400 years later.



Basic Teachings of Buddhism

- Samsara, karma, rebirth, and release
- The Four Noble Truths
 - Suffering and causes of suffering
 - Cessation and the paths towards liberation from suffering.
- The Eightfold Path
 - The wisdom that purifies the mind
 - The ethics or morality
 - The mental discipline
- The Middle Way
- Interdependent origination
- “Not-self” (*anatta*)

The Spread of Buddhism



Confucius (K'ung-(fu)-tzu, literally "Master Kong", 551-479 BC) was a Chinese philosopher whose ideas and sayings were collected after his death and became the basis of the philosophical doctrine known as Confucianism.



"A young man should serve his parents at home and be respectful to elders outside his home. He should be earnest and truthful, loving all, but become intimate with humaneness. After doing this, if he has energy to spare, he can study literature and the arts."

"If you would govern a state of a thousand chariots, you must pay strict attention to business, be true to your word, be economical in expenditure and love the people. You should use them according to the seasons."

Laozi (Lao-Tzu), is traditionally considered the founder of Daoism and the author of its most important text, *Tao Te Ching*.

Although he is supposedly a contemporary of Confucius, the *Tao Te Ching* doesn't appear until the 3rd century BC.



If I had just a little bit of wisdom
I should walk the Great Path and fear only
straying from it.
Though the Way is quite broad
People love shortcuts.

This Qing Dynasty painting shows the ideal harmony of the three traditions that have had most influence on many Chinese. Confucius is holding an infant Buddha for the admiration of Laozi.

The two native traditions take a paternal interest in the foreign adoption, as they all teach ways to human betterment.



Buddhist Aniconism

- Some scholars have argued that prior to the spread of Greek culture, depictions of Buddha were “aniconic”.
- Aniconic means that the subject is not depicted in art, or is only depicted symbolically.
- Examples in support of this claim include images of an empty chair under the Bodhi tree and Buddha footprints.



Gandhara art



Gandhara art is the artistic manifestation of Greco-Buddhism, a cultural syncretism between the Classical Greek culture and Buddhism.

Greco-Buddhist art is characterized by the strong idealistic realism of Hellenistic art and the first representations of the Buddha in human form, which have helped define the sculptural canon for Buddhist art throughout the Asian continent.

The **Buddhas of Bamiyan** were two 6th century monumental statues of standing Buddhas carved into the side of a cliff in the Bamiyan valley of Afghanistan. The statues were perhaps the most famous example of Gandhara art.



The Buddhas of Bamiyan, before and after the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan.



The Power of an Idea

Worldview

- A collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual, a group, or a society.

Why do we believe what we believe?

Sources of the Western worldview?

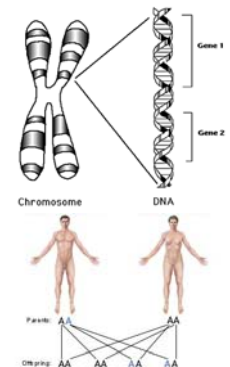
- Greek philosophy, democracy, and aesthetics
- Roman Stoicism
- Judaism and Christianity
- Medieval chivalry
- Renaissance Humanism
- The Protestant Reformation
- The Scientific Revolution
- Principles of the Enlightenment
- and ... ?

Memes

- The theoretical concept that ideas are cultural analogues to genes, in that they self-replicate and evolve by natural selection.
- Richard Dawkins coined the word in *The Selfish Gene* (1976) to discuss evolutionary principles in explaining the spread of ideas and cultural phenomena, especially with regard to religious beliefs.

Genes

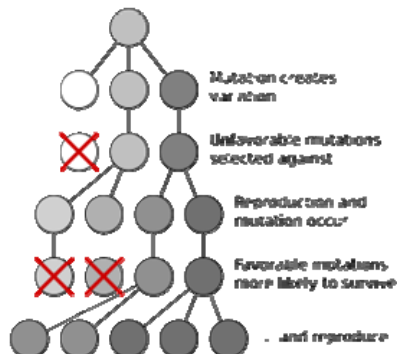
Hereditary units consisting of a sequence of DNA that occupies a specific location on a chromosome and determines a particular characteristic in an organism. Genes undergo mutation when their DNA sequence changes.



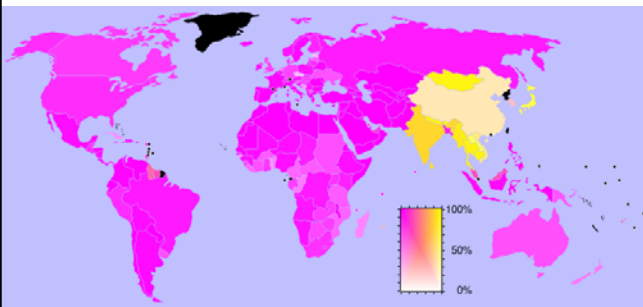
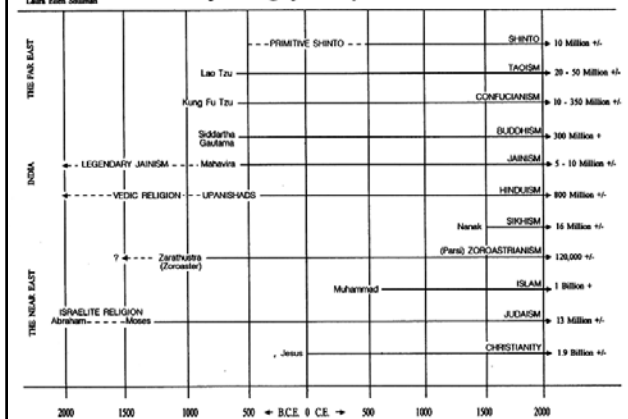
Natural selection



Polytheism-Monolatry-Monotheism



Major Religions of the World



Abrahamic Religions in pink

What is Genesis 1-3?

- The first three chapters of the first book of the Hebrew Bible.
- and ...
- The first three chapters of the first book of the Christian Bible.

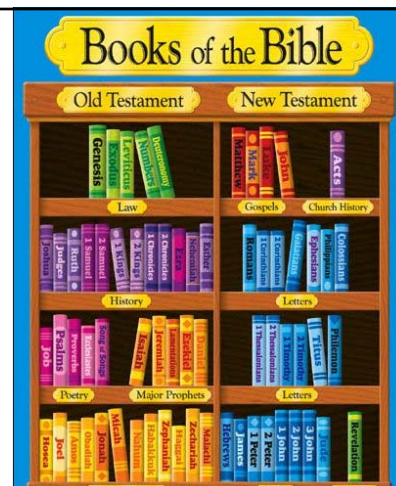


Hebrew Bible

The Tanakh

- Torah (teaching)
 - 5 books of Moses
- Nevi'im (prophets)
- Ketuvim (writings)

Hebrew Bible = Old Testament

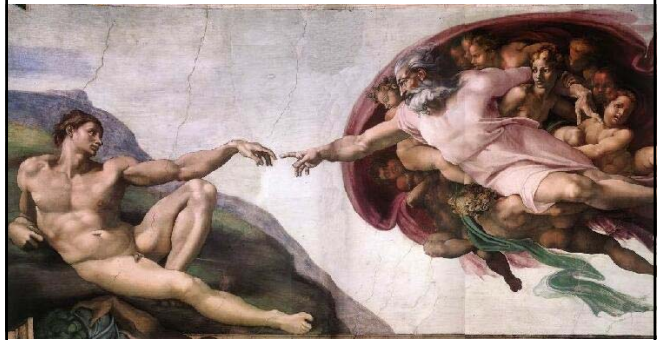


Christian Bible = Old Testament + New Testament

Genesis



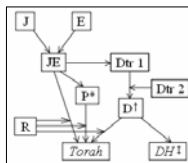
The Creation of Man (and Woman)



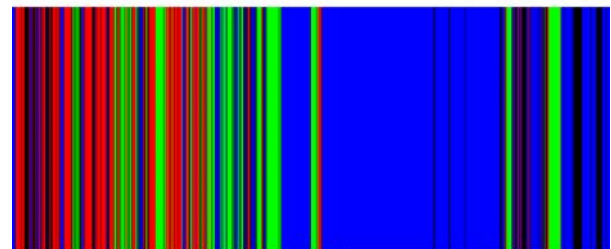
Documentary Hypothesis

The documentary hypothesis holds that the five Books of Moses were derived from originally independent, parallel and complete narratives, which were subsequently combined into the current form by a series of editors.

- The **Yahwist** source (**J**): written c. 950 BCE in the southern kingdom of Judah.
- The **Elohist** source (**E**): written c. 850 BCE in the northern kingdom of Israel.
- The **Deuteronomist**: written c. 600 BCE in Jerusalem during a period of religious reform.
- The **Priestly** source (**P**): written c. 500 BCE by Aaronid priests in exile in Babylon.
- The **Editors/Redactors**: first JE, then JED, and finally JEDP, producing the final form of the Torah c.450 BCE.

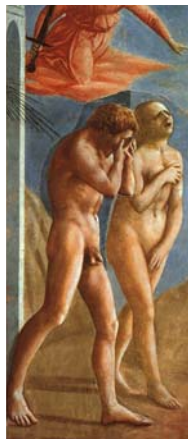


Yahwist (J) ■ Priestly (P) ■
Elohist (E) ■ Redactor (R) ■



Genesis | Exodus | Leviticus | Numbers

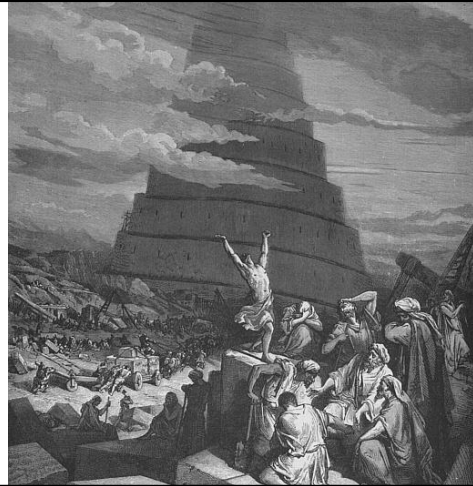
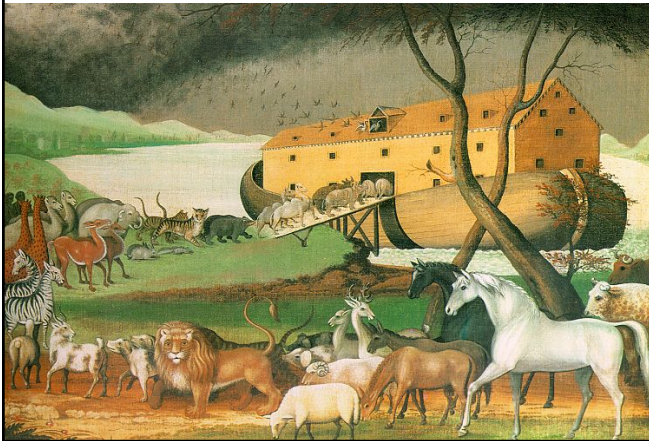
The Fall – Adam and Eve expelled from Eden



How to interpret the Bible?

- Literally
 - Everything in the Bible is actually true.
- Allegorically
 - The stories in the Bible are symbolically true.

The Flood and Noah's Ark



The Tower of Babel

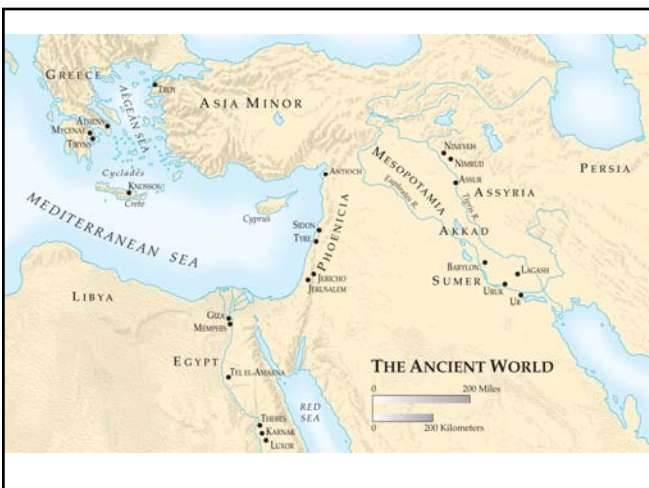
Judaism



Abraham

The LORD said to [Abraham], "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you."

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you . . . I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."



The Covenant between Abraham and God

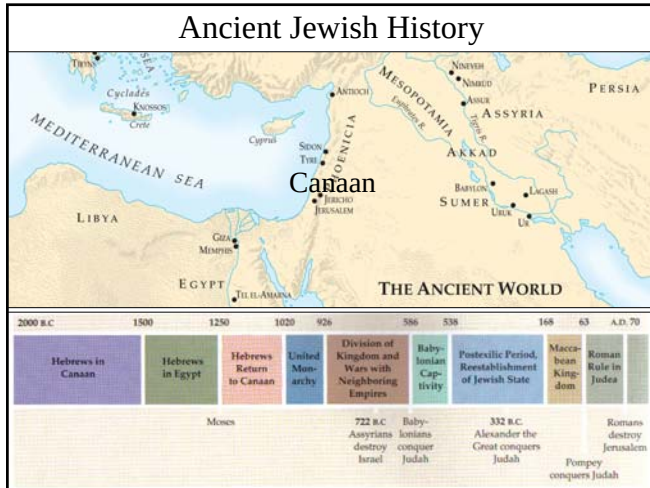
Abraham promised:

- Worship God
- Obey God
- Circumcision

God promised:

- Great nation
- Promised land
- Blessing and cursing
- All people will be blessed "through" Abraham

Ex: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"



Moses

- Renewed the covenant between God and the Hebrews.
- Lead led the Hebrews on the Exodus from Egypt to Canaan, the "Promised Land".
- Gave the Hebrews the Torah, a.k.a. the "law" or the "teaching".
 - Including the Ten Commandments

Ramses II

Yul Brynner

The Exodus

The first five books of the Bible are attributed to Moses and are known as the Books of Moses.

Book	Chapters
Genesis	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50
Exodus	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40
Leviticus	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27
Numbers	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36
Deuteronomy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34
Joshua	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24
Judges	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21
Ruth	1 2 3 4
1 Samuel	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
2 Samuel	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24
1 Kings	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22
2 Kings	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25
1 Chronicles	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29
2 Chronicles	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36
Ezra	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Nehemiah	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
Esther	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Job	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42
Psalms	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150
Proverbs	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
Ecclesiastes	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

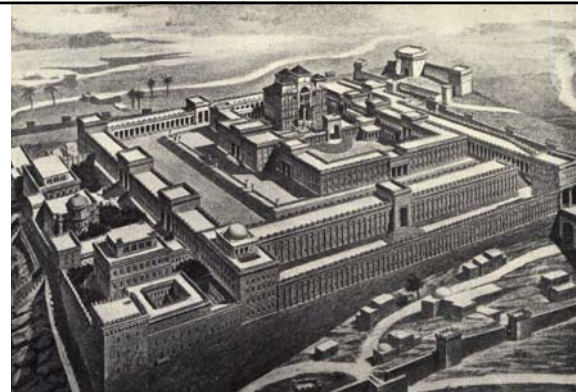
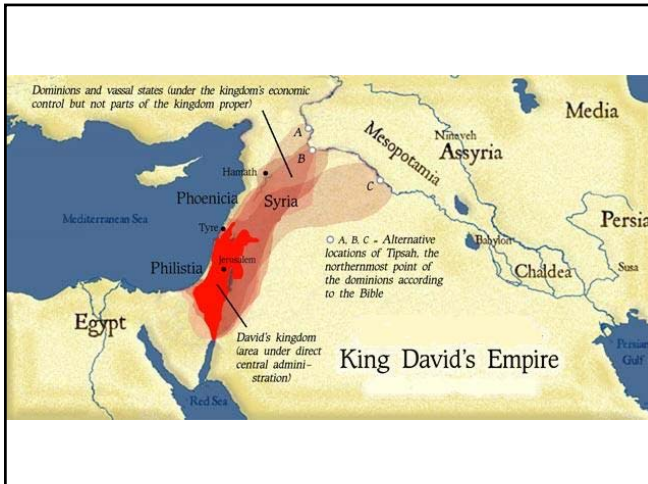
The Ten Commandments

I am the Lord your God
You shall have no other gods before me
You shall not make for yourself an idol
You shall not make wrongful use of the name of your God
Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy
Honor your father and mother
You shall not murder*
You shall not commit adultery
You shall not steal***
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor
You shall not covet your neighbor's house
You shall not covet your neighbor's wife

The Walls of Jericho



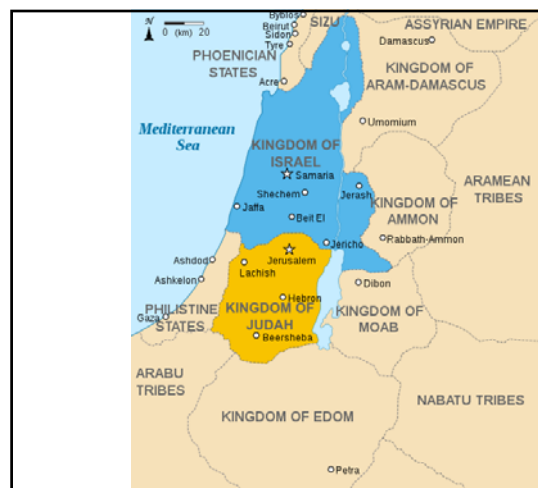
David and Goliath

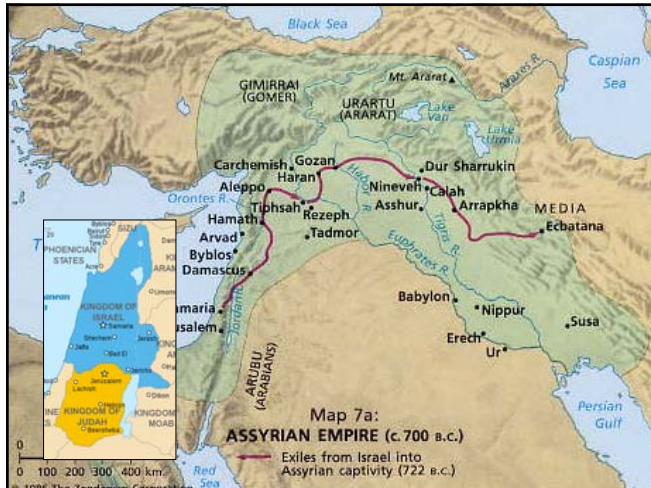


According to the Hebrew Bible, Solomon's Temple, also known as the First Temple, was constructed by Solomon, king of the ancient Israelites, in Jerusalem. It housed the Ark of the Covenant and functioned as a religious focal point in ancient Judaism.



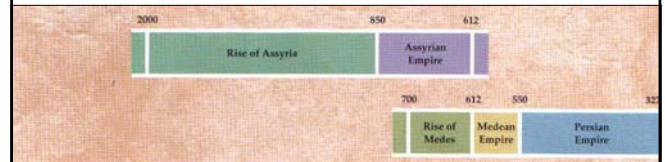
The Foundation Stone, the holiest site in Judaism.





Heirs to the Mesopotamian and Egyptian Cultures

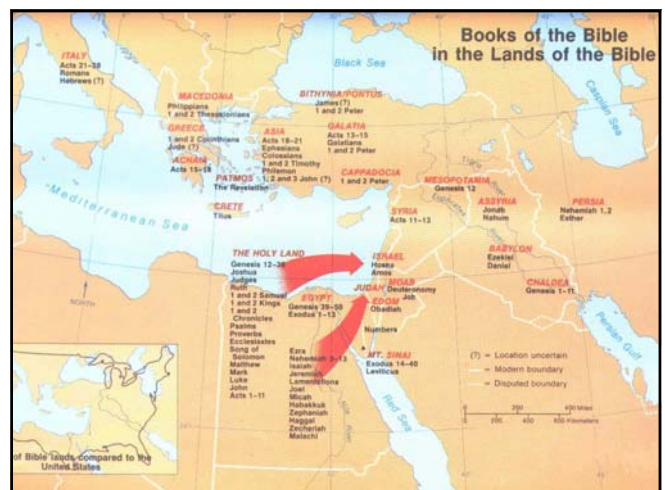
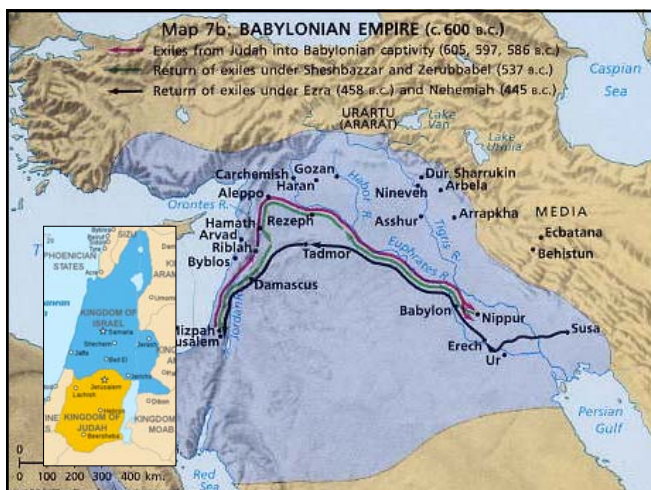
After the first Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations fell, a series of other civilizations in the region battled for supremacy, most notably the Assyrians, Neo-Babylonians, and Persians.



Ashurbanipal was the last great king of ancient Assyria. He is most famous for the library at Nineveh where he attempted to gather all cuneiform literature available by that time.



Ashurbanipal slaying a lion.



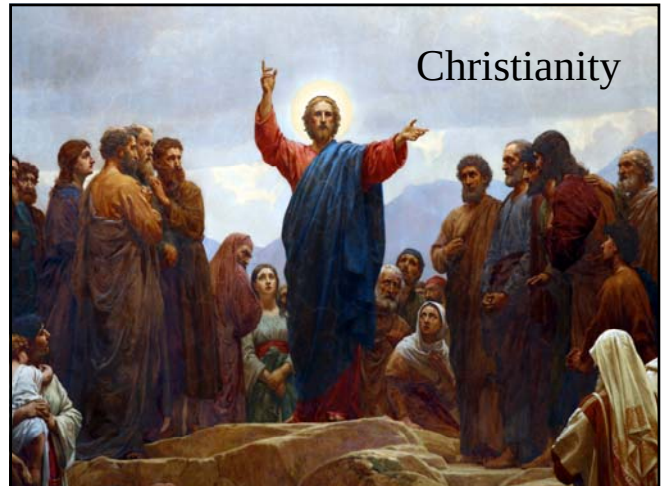
Judaism

- Monotheistic
- History lays out a path for the future.
- Relationship with God is an agreement in which both parties have rights and responsibilities.
- Is the covenant with God exclusively for Jews?
 - What does “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” imply?
 - What does the story of Jonah tell us about these ideas?

The Story of Jonah and the Whale



Christianity

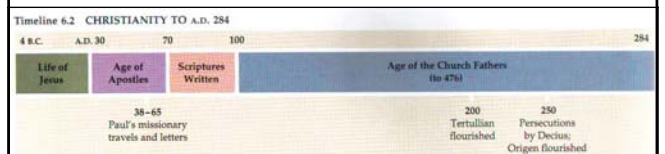


What we know about Jesus of Nazareth

- He was born c. 4 BC in Bethlehem.
- He was raised in Galilee.
- He was circumcised.
- He appeared in the temple at the age of 12.
- He was baptized by John the Baptist.
- He preached publicly for perhaps three years.
- His teachings in Jerusalem eventually led to his public execution on a Friday, c. 30 AD.

Jesus Christ

- Christ, from Greek for “the anointed one.”
- Universalized the “old” covenant (testament).
- While performing miracles and healing the sick, he urged his followers to practice a demanding and loving ethic (love God, love your neighbor)



The Sermon on the Mount

"If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."



The Last Supper



The Kiss of Judas



The Crucifixion



The Resurrection of Jesus



Christianity Spreads

- The resurrected Jesus' final instruction to his followers (the Twelve Apostles) was to go and spread his teachings to all nations.
- Peter (St. Peter) went to Rome.
- Saul of Tarsus (St. Paul) went everywhere else.
 - Tireless missionary
 - Non-Jewish converts
 - Theological letters
- Social, religious factors for growth
 - Peace (*Pax Romana*), ease of travel, Koine Greek
 - Receptive audience, no class distinction
 - Emphasis on salvation, freedom



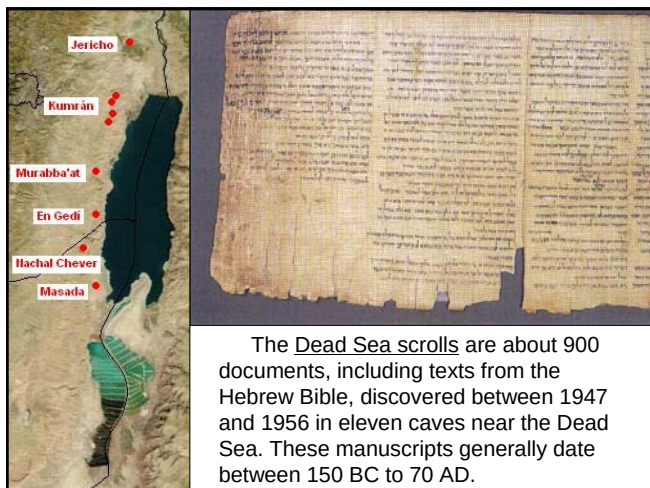
The Christian Bible is a combination of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

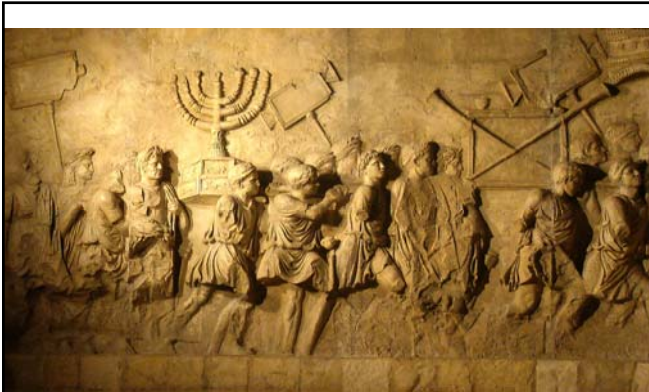
- The Old Testament is based on the Hebrew Bible.
- The New Testament comes from Christian texts written between 45 and 140 AD and includes (in part):
 - Four Gospels: “first-hand” accounts of Jesus’ life.
 - Acts of the Apostles (what they did).
 - Letters from Paul to new Christian communities.
 - The Book of Revelation which describes the final confrontation between the forces of good and evil.

Books of the Bible

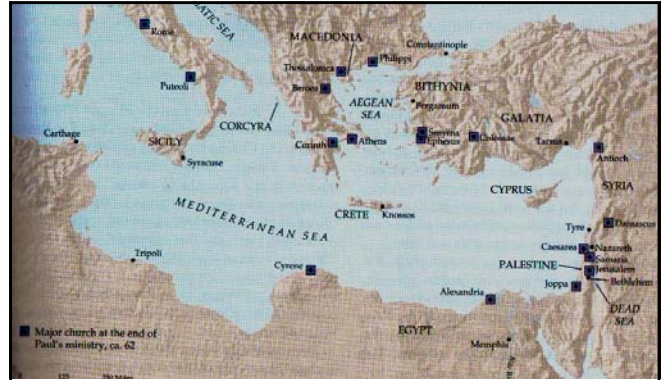
- The “books” of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament were selected over time from many writings.
- *Canon* is Greek for “list”. The Biblical canon refers to the books that were selected for inclusion in the New Testament.

Genesis	Matthew
Exodus	Mark
Leviticus	Luke
Numbers	John
Deuteronomy	Acts
Joshua	Romans
Judges	1 Corinthians
Ruth	2 Corinthians
1 Samuel	Galatians
2 Samuel	Ephesians
1 Kings	Philippians
2 Kings	Colossians
1 Chronicles	1 Thessalonians
2 Chronicles	2 Thessalonians
Ezra	1 Timothy
Nehemiah	2 Timothy
Esther	Titus
Job	Philemon
Psalms	Hebrews
Proverbs	James
Ecclesiastes	1 Peter
Song of Solomon	2 Peter
Isaiah	1 John
Jeremiah	2 John
Lamentations	3 John
Ezekiel	Jude
Daniel	Revelation
Hosea	
Joel	
Amos	
Obadiah	
Jonah	
Micah	
Zechariah	
Malachi	
Haggai	
Zechariah	
Revelation	





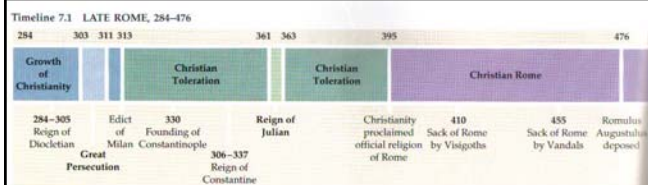
The Sack of Jerusalem, 70 AD. Relief sculpture from the Arch of Titus in the Roman Forum.



A consequence of the Roman conquest of Judea was the end of the debate over whether Jesus' message was for everybody or just for Jews. The group that thought Jesus' message was just for Jews had been destroyed forever.

Roman Persecution of Christians

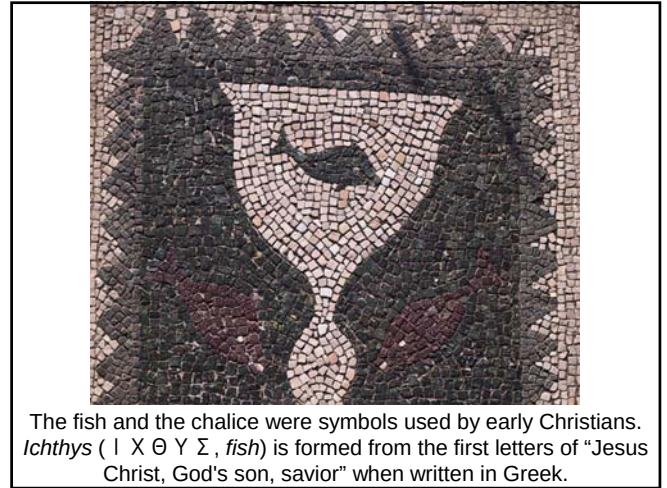
- Christians as traitors to the state
 - Christians refused to express *pietas* (love and reverential fear) to the Roman gods.
- Christians as martyrs
 - *Apologists*: Justin Martyr (100-165)



Early Christian Art

- To avoid persecution, Christians met in secret and hid their art in catacombs, underground cemeteries.
- Frescoes, Statues, Mosaics
 - Jesus and the Apostles
 - Martyrs being burned
 - Christ as the Good Shepherd
 - Carved sarcophagi (Jonas)
 - *Ichthys*





Constantine

- First Christian Roman emperor (ruled 306-337 CE)
- Converted to Christianity in 312 CE.
- The *Edict of Milan* (313 CE) was a letter signed by Constantine that proclaimed religious toleration in the Roman Empire.

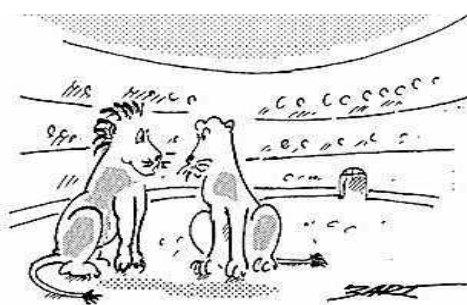
Battle of the Milvian Bridge, 312
In hoc signo vinces:
 "in this sign you will conquer"



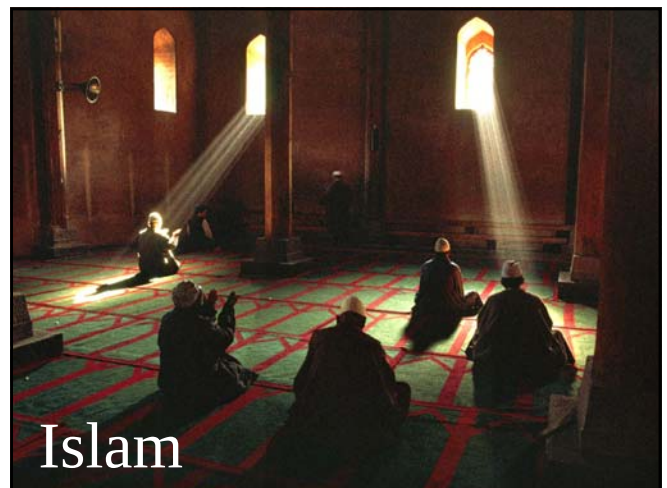
Christianity

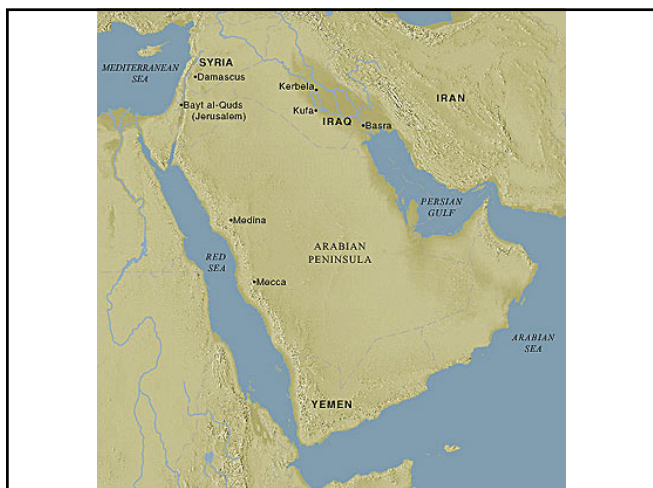
- Evolved from Judaism: Jesus universalized the covenant with God so that all people could join.
- Evangelical: The largest group of Jesus' followers to survive Rome's conquest of Jerusalem was the one intent on spreading his message.
- Christian theology evolved over time.
- The Christian Church eventually emerged and organized all (European) Christians.
- Belief in doctrine eventually became the standard by which Christians were measured.

Homework: Explain this cartoon.



"I can't eat another Christian - they're full of dogma!"





Muhammad

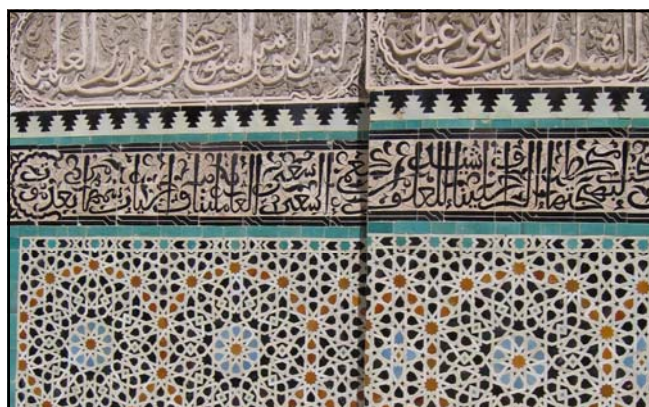
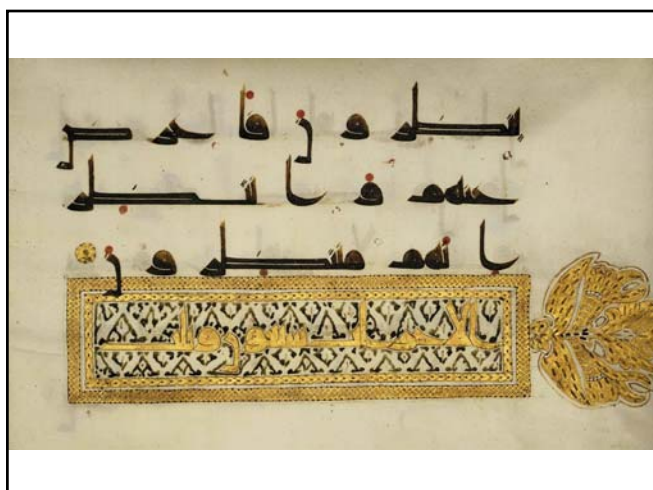
- Born in Mecca, 570 CE.
- In 610, he experienced a spiritual transformation that convinced him that Allah had called him to be His prophet to the Arab people.
- By the time of his death in 632, he had united Arabia and brought peace to the region under the banner of Islam.



Central tenets of Islam include the beliefs that there is only one God, Allah, and that Muhammad was his messenger.

The Qur'an

- The Qur'an is considered by Muslims to be the literal, undistorted word of God, and is the central religious text of Islam.
- Muslims believe that the Qur'an was repeatedly revealed from Allah to Muhammad verbally through the angel Gabriel over a period of approximately twenty-three years, beginning in 610 CE, when he was forty, and concluding in 632 CE, the year of his death.
- Other sacred texts of Islam include the *Sunnah* and the *Hadith*, which record the deeds, sayings, and habits of the prophet.



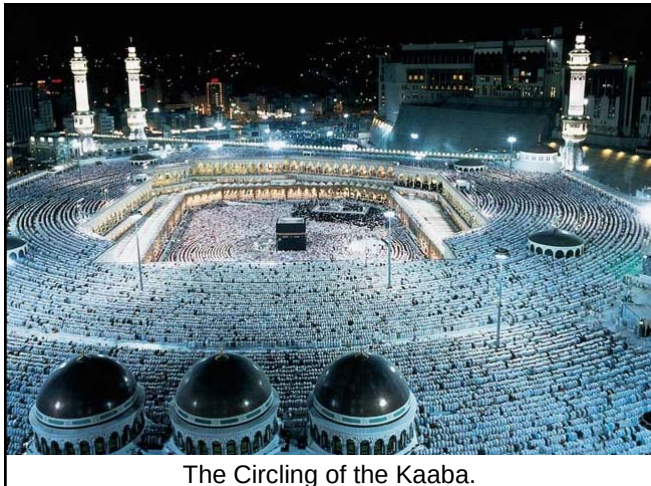
Aniconism in Islam is a proscription against the creation of images of God. Other common forms of aniconism in Islam prohibit the depiction of Muhammad or even any living creatures.

Five Pillars of Islam

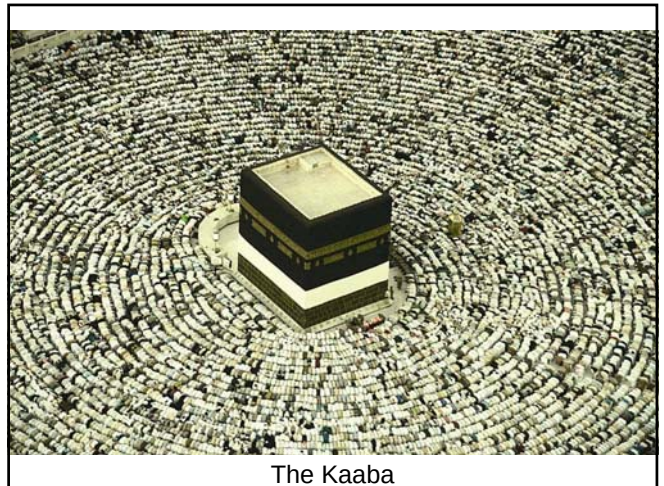
- Profession of faith (Muslim: one who submits to God)
- Prayers (Five times daily, oriented towards Mecca, on Fridays in a mosque)
- Almsgiving (giving to the poor)
- Fasting and prayer, especially during Ramadan
- Pilgrimage to Mecca



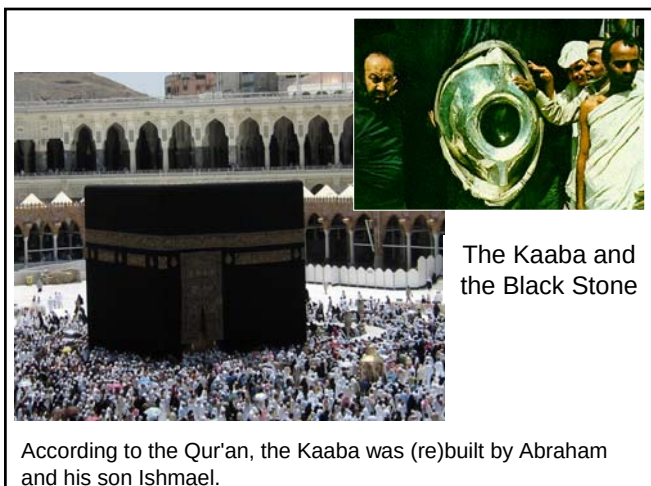
The Pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca.



The Circling of the Kaaba.

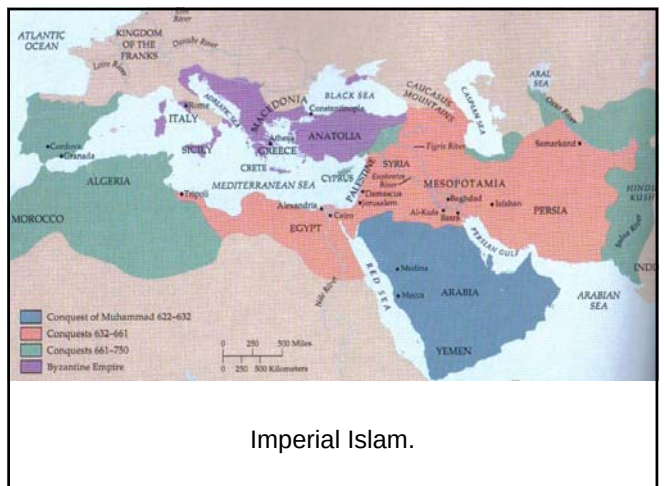


The Kaaba



The Kaaba and the Black Stone

According to the Qur'an, the Kaaba was (re)built by Abraham and his son Ishmael.



Imperial Islam.



Europe, AD 750

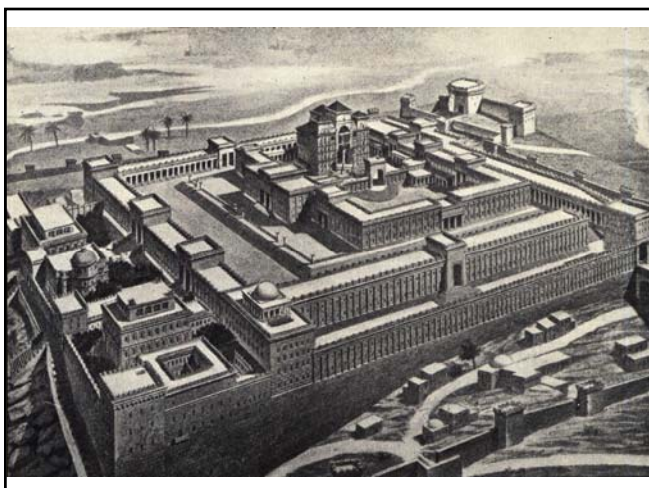
Jihad is a religious duty of Muslims. In Arabic, the word means *struggle*. Muslims use jihad to refer to three types of struggles:

- An internal struggle to maintain faith
- The struggle to improve the Muslim society
- The struggle in a holy war
- In western societies the term jihad is often translated as “holy war”. Muslim authors tend to reject such an approach, stressing non-militant connotations of the word.

“One of the collective duties of the community as a whole is to lodge a valid protest, to solve problems of religion, to have knowledge of Divine Law, to command what is right and forbid wrong conduct.”



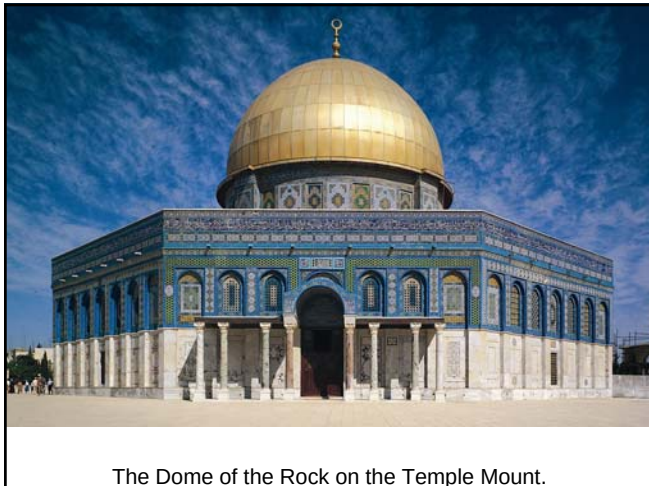
Temple Mount in Jerusalem.



Praying at the West Wall.



The West Wall of the Temple Mount.



The Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount.



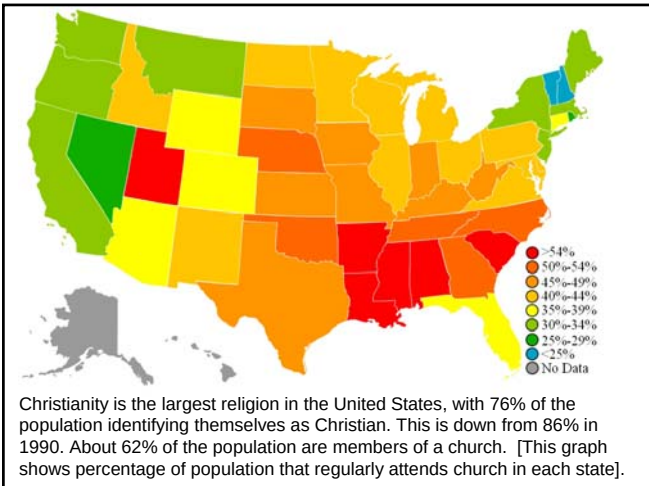
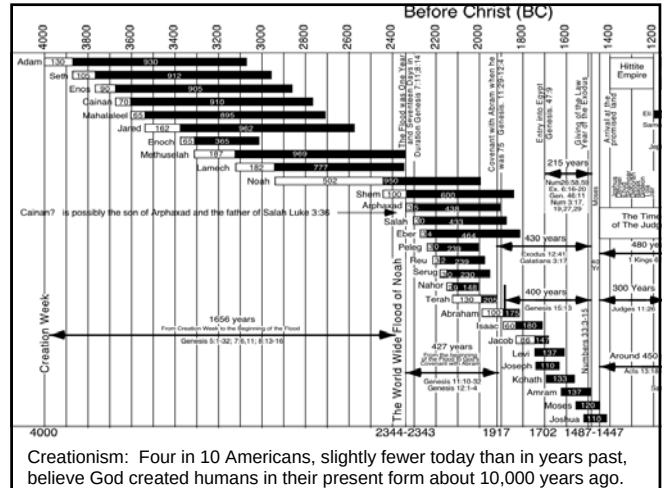
Practice Questions

- What is the Axial Age? Which time period should define the Axial Age? Which region?
- What are memes? How does the theory of memes relate to syncretism?
- What are the Abrahamic religions? Why are they called that?
 - What do the Abrahamic religions have in common?
 - How are the Abrahamic religions different?
- Why do Westerners tend to think of Buddhism as a philosophy rather than a religion?

Comparison of Statistics and Basics

	Islam	Judaism	Christianity
adherents called	Muslims	Jews	Christians
current adherents	1.3 billion	14 million	2 billion
current size rank	2nd largest	12th largest	largest
major concentration	Middle East, Southeast Asia	Israel, Europe, USA	Europe, North and South America, rapid growth in Africa
sacred text	Qur'an (Koran)	Bible	Bible (Jewish Bible + New Testament)
other written authority	Hadith	Talmud, Midrash, Responsa	church fathers, church councils, papal decrees (Catholic only)
religious law	Sharia	Halakhah	Canon Law
clergy	imams	rabbis	priests, ministers, pastors, bishops
house of worship	mosque	synagogue	church, chapel, cathedral
main day of worship	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
church and state	integrated	separate	separate

How Christian is America?



Religious Groups in the United States

