

## **Basic Beliefs of World Religions**

### **Buddhism (Buddhists)**

**The founder of Buddhism was a man called Buddha. He was a rich prince who left his palace and tried to find a way to end all suffering. He decided on eight rules.**

- **These rules the Buddhists follow are called the Noble Eightfold Path. The Eightfold Path says that:**
  - **Buddhists must not harm any living thing.**
  - **Buddhists must be kind.**
  - **Buddhist must live in a right way.**
  - **Buddhist must not think of themselves.**
  - **They must think of others.**
  - **They try to understand suffering.**
  - **They must think deeply while sitting still.**
- **While thinking deeply and sitting still, Buddhists are trying to find their inner selves.**
- **Many young Buddhist men become monks either for life or for short periods of time.**
  - **Monks wear orange robes.**
  - **Monks shave their heads.**
  - **Monks live in poverty and rely on others to supply their needs.**
  - **Buddhists believe if they give to the monks they will become better persons.**
- **Buddhists pray to ancestors who have died. They believe the dead relative can help them.**
- **Buddhists practice their religion individually in their homes or by going to a temple or shrine.**
  - **Many Buddhist homes have a statue of Buddha**
- **Buddhist ideas originally came from the Hindu religion. There are similar beliefs in the two religions.**
  - **Reincarnation – After death, Buddhists believe they can come back again and again as a better person.**

- **Nirvana – Buddhists believe that when a person dies they eventually enter Nirvana. Then that person no longer exists.**

## **Hinduism (Hindus)**

**Hindus follow the Hindu religion. It is the third largest religion in the world. Most Hindus live in India.**

- **Hindus believe in many gods who are all different forms of one supreme god.**
  - **They have 350 million different gods**
- **The Hindu religion has many rituals.**
  - **Hindu homes have altars where they burn incense. Hindus also place flowers, food and money on these altars.**
  - **Hindus also burn incense in their temples.**
  - **Festivals to many different gods are held throughout the year.**
  - **Twice a day Hindus pray and offer gifts to their gods.**
  - **Hindus offer gifts to keep the gods from harming them.**
  - **They ring bells to get the attention of their gods.**
  - **Hindus do not eat any kind of meat because they believe in reincarnation.**
  - **Reincarnation is the belief that when a person dies they will come back in the next life as a better person or as an animal.**
  - **Hindus believe that the better a person lived, the better person they become. If they live bad lives they become an animal after they die.**
  - **Hindus never kill any bug or animal for they fear they may be killing some relative or friend who has died.**

## **Islam**

**People who follow the Religion of Islam are called Muslims. The religious leader they follow was a man called Muhammad. Muslims make up one-fifth of the world's population.**

- **Muslims call God Allah and they believe the prophet Mohammed was the last and final prophet from God.**
- **Muslims believe that first there were Jews, then the Christians and now Muslims. The word Muslim means “one who submits”.**
- **Muslims must follow five rules. They are called the “Five Pillars of the Faith”.**
  - **Reciting the Creed: “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.”**
  - **Prayer: Five set times each day Muslims must bowing towards the city of Mecca and pray. He must touch his forehead to the floor or ground when he prays.**
  - **Almsgiving: Muslims must give to the poor.**
  - **Fasting: Muslims must fast (give up food from dawn to dusk). They must fast during the holy month of Ramadan.**
  - **Pilgrimage: Muslims must make a trip to Mecca (the holy city of Muslims) at least one time during their lives. Mohammed who began this religion was born in the city of Mecca.**
- **A faithful Muslim believes that by keeping all the five rules they will be sure to go to paradise.**
- **The Islam religion is based on works. The Muslims believe that at the end of a person's life, Allah will decide if their deeds were good enough. He will decide if they**

**should be allowed into paradise. If they did bad deeds Allah will send the person to hell.**

- **Muslims worship in buildings called mosques.**
- **The Koran is the holy book the Muslims follow.**
- **Muslims believe Jesus was a prophet like Moses and Daniel.**
- **Muslims do not believe Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead.**
- **Muslims believe that all true worshippers of God are Muslims.**

## **Tribals or Animists**

**Tribal people around the world have different beliefs depending upon where they are located.**

- **Tribal people live in small groups and have adopted practices from other religions along with their own tribal beliefs.**
- **The lives of tribal people are often controlled by fear.**
  - **Tribal people want to have a good relationship with the many spirits they believe in.**
  - **Tribal people think that disasters such as drought, famine, sickness, earthquakes and floods are the work of evil spirits.**
- **Tribal people worship the spirit of things in nature like rocks, trees or the sun.**
  - **Tribal people make special offerings and sacrifices to these natural things.**
  - **Worship of the many spirits is done in private by each person or by families.**
- **Tribal people often have faith in witch doctors or a medicine man for healing.**
- **Tribal people believe in lotions, potions, magic stones and evil and good spirits.**
  - **Tribal people might wear amulets or charms they believe protect them from these evil spirits.**
  - **Often tribal groups believe that when a person dies, he or she comes back as a spirit.**
  - **Tribal people often think this ancestor spirit can protect them from bad things.**

## **Judaism (Jews)**

**The Jewish religion (Judaism) teaches that the world was created by a single, all-knowing God. It teaches that all things within our world were designed by God to have meaning and purpose.**

- **Judaism teaches that God's plan for human behavior was revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai. These commandments (The Torah) tell how humans are to live their lives.**
- **The commandments were a gift from God.**
- **The Jewish religion believes God sent many prophets to help them follow the commandments.**
- **The Jewish religion (Jews) believe God knows every deed of all people and also all their thoughts. Jews believe that God made human hearts to want to obey him.**
- **Jews also believe that God rewards those who keep his commandments. They believe God punishes those who disobey his commandments.**
- **Jews believe that God will send a Messiah (someone to save them from their sin. They don't believe that Jesus is the Messiah.**
- **The Jewish religion does not try to make new converts. People are born as Jews. If a person not born a Jew, wants to become a Jew, they must follow all the Jewish laws. A man who wants to convert to being a Jew must be circumcised.**

## **Christianity (Christians)**

**Christians believe the teachings of the Jewish faith that are found in the Old Testament. The central person in the Christian religion is Jesus. Christians believe Jesus is the Messiah. The Messiah is the person God promised to send his chosen people, the Jews. Jesus was born of a virgin named Mary. His birth is celebrated at Christmas with hymns, special worship services, and gift giving. Jesus was not only a man. He was also the son of the one true God. Jesus lived his life without sin.**

- **Christians learn about the life of Jesus and the lives of his ancestors in the Christian Bible which is God's message to all people.**
- **The Bible contains the Old Testament which is also sacred to Judaism and Islam. It tells the history of the Jews and others who lived before Jesus. It also promises that God will send someone to save all people from sin.**
- **The Bible also contains the New Testament. It centers on the life of Jesus and his effect on the world.**
- **Christians believe that Jesus is the one mentioned in the Old Testament. He is the one God sent to save all kinds of people from sin.**
- **During his life on earth Jesus performed many miracles.**
- **Jesus spoke to many people about God who was his father.**
- **Jesus was arrested for claiming to be God's son.**
- **Jesus was beaten and hung on a cross to die when he was only 33 years old.**
- **Three days later Jesus rose from the dead.**
- **He spent the next 40 days teaching about God's kingdom.**
- **Then Jesus was taken up to heaven to live with God**

- **Christians believe that the sufferings and death of Jesus paid for the sins of all kinds of people no matter where they live.**
- **Because of the death of Jesus, all kinds of people will be saved when they believe in Jesus.**
- **Christians also believe that Jesus will return to earth and take all who believe in him to his kingdom (Heaven).**
- **Christians believe Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to help all people who trust and believe in Jesus until Jesus returns.**