

**Overview.** Abrahamic Religions have the largest base of believers in the world. This section looks at the ever evolving history of this family of religions, along with providing a cultural snapshot of the traits and complexes that make each religious experience unique.



## Ch 8 Part 2: God, god, or Gods?

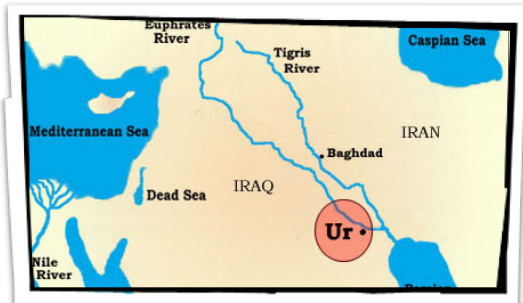
### Abrahamic Faiths

#### A. Abraham: One Man, One God

##### Founding Father

Every religion has an origin story, and the monotheistic religions trace back to one man: Abraham. Much of what is known about Abraham comes from Jewish and Islamic oral tradition. The following stories are summarized from their books of faith and tradition:

*Abraham was born around 1800 BCE near the city-state of Ur, modern day Iraq and Kuwait. Ur was distinctly polytheistic, with the deities being a blend of animist spirits and pantheon-like figures. The chief deity of the region was Baal, a half-man half-bull creature represented as a large bronze statue. Baal demanded the people sacrifice young children on the bronze statue to keep him appeased so that he would not destroy the civilization. Abraham's father was the king's chief idol maker, and the family business revolved around making and selling idols to the citizens. Abraham's father wanted Abraham to follow in the family business, but Abraham refused. Abraham had visions and dreams that there were not several deities but instead just one: Yahweh (also referred to as Jehovah or Elohim). Some academic scholars think Elohim was the chief "father deity" within the Babylonian pantheon, and that Yahweh [god of war], Asherah and Baal [gods of fertility] were the children of Elohim. This is similar to how the Egyptian and Greek pantheons are established. Modern Christians believe Yahweh/Jehovah/Elohim are the names for their One All-Powerful deity, and that Baal and Asherah were regional "false gods.". Abraham's refusal angered his father, so Abraham escaped into the desert in search of a man who could help him discover more about Yahweh - a man named Noah.*



According to the Talmud, a Jewish Traditional Book, Elohim/Yahweh had created the world in six days, including the first man and woman - Adam and Eve. Due to Adam and Eve's lack of obedience, evil had entered the world. As the total population expanded, evil spread. Yahweh believed society had become infused with so much evil that a massive flood was sent to destroy all of the people and thereby the evil lurking in the world. Only one family was considered righteous and faithful to Yahweh, the family of Noah. Noah's grandfather had spent time with Adam and learned all about Yahweh. Noah's grandfather taught Noah and in the 1800s BCE Noah taught Abraham.

Abraham returned to his father's house, more confident than ever in his belief in Yahweh. Abraham's father again pressured Abraham to work in the family business of idol making for the king, but Abraham still refused. One day, while his father was away, Abraham went into the workshop and smashed all of the idols except one. When his father returned, he was outraged. Abraham said, "Father, this one idol grabbed the hammer and began to destroy all of the other idols!" His father responded, "The idol is made of wood! It cannot move!" Abraham said, "If it is only made of wood, why do you worship it, instead of the living God?" Blind with rage, his father complained to the King and had Abraham thrown into a fiery furnace. For three days, Abraham stood in the fire as Yahweh protected him from harm. Abraham was allowed to leave and went into the wilderness to be a shepherd.

## Abraham's Covenant

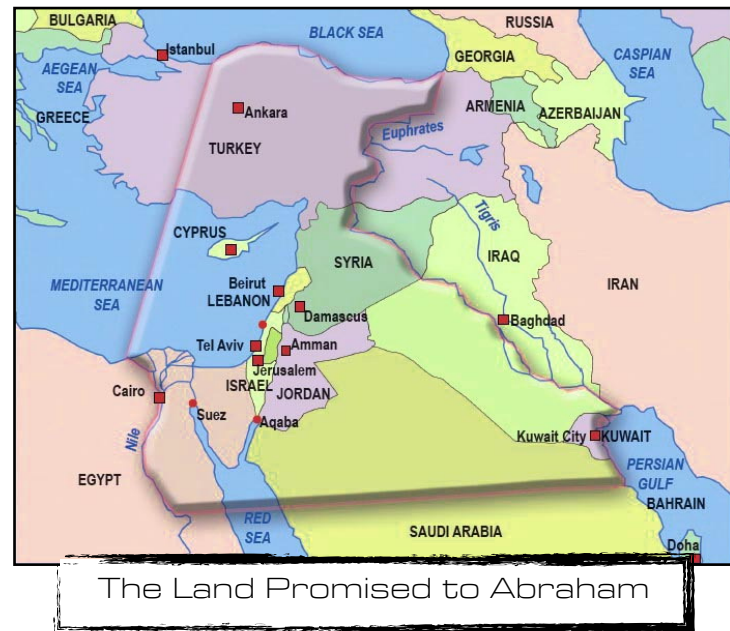
As Abraham began his life as a shepherd, Yahweh met with him and made with a covenant, or set of promises:

- Abraham's children will grow into a great nation, more than the stars in the sky.
- This nation of people will receive a promised land, flowing with milk and honey. It would be the ever-lasting possession of Abraham's nation.
- From Abraham will come a line of kings.
- This nation will be Yahweh's chosen people, being his priests or spiritual leaders to the rest of the world.
- Male circumcision would serve as the physical sign of agreement between Yahweh and the people. Any male that does not get circumcised will be cut off from Abraham's blessings.

While Abraham was overjoyed to be chosen by Yahweh, there were two problems: Abraham and his wife Sarah did not have any children. The second problem was they were both 90 years old - well beyond childbearing years. Sarah's solution was for Abraham to sleep with her servant Hagar, in the hopes that she could bear him a son. Abraham obliged and Hagar conceived, giving birth to a son named Ishmael. When Ishmael was 9 years old, Yahweh reappeared to Abraham and said that Ishmael was not the promised child, that Sarah would conceive and in one year's time, she would have a son. Miraculously, the elderly Sarah conceived and gave birth to a son named Isaac.

The tension and turmoil was just beginning. Sarah became suspicious of Hagar and Ishmael, believing them to be a threat to her son Isaac. Sarah persuaded Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away from the camp. In the wilderness, Hagar was sure she and Ishmael would die from hunger and thirst, but Yahweh appeared to Hagar, promising her that they would not die. Yahweh appeared to Abraham telling him to go up onto a specific mountain and sacrifice a son to him as a means of testing his obedience. Abraham obeyed. What happens next is up for debate: The Jews and Christians believe it was Isaac that was taken to the mountain, while the Muslims believe it was Ishmael. Either way, just before Abraham plunged the knife into his son, Yahweh told him to stop, to not harm the boy. Instead, Yahweh provided a ram to be sacrificed in the son's place.

Both Isaac and Ishmael's families grew very large. Isaac had a son, Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. Israel had 12 sons, who each became heads of the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel. From Ishmael came the Arab peoples. As time passed and as the nations grew, a question arose: to whom did Abraham's blessing belong, Isaac or Ishmael? Which nation received the right to the promised land - the Israelites or the Arabs?





## B. The Journey of Judaism

### Mosaic Law and the Promised Land

The nation of Israel continued to grow in size. Ethnic religions promote a high fertility rate, as the primary way to add more members to the religion/society. Due to a series of natural disasters, the nation of Israel migrated to Egypt because of the availability of food. As centuries passed, the Israelites became the slaves of the Egyptians. Around 1300 BCE, a man named Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt into the desert. During this period, Yahweh spoke to Moses and gave him a series of laws, rules, and regulations for the people:

- No other gods or idols except Yahweh.
- How to interact with each other (don't steal, don't murder, don't commit adultery, no homosexuality, divorce rights, slavery, social services etc.)
- What to eat or not to eat (No pork, no scavenged animals, etc.)
- How to dress (don't mix fabrics, no cross-dressing, men don't shave sideburns/beard edge)
- Religious practices (animal sacrifice at the Tabernacle/Temple, only priests could communicate with Yahweh, food sacrifice, prayers, rituals, no idolatry, how to tell a true prophet or messenger from Yahweh, how to kill a false prophet)
- Government and social structures (Who can be leaders/judges, who can be priests, etc.)
- Importance of family lineage and to which of the 12 tribes a person belonged. Outsiders, or Gentiles, not welcome.

Around 1250 BCE, Israel organized an attack to take over the land that had been promised to them. On this land, they setup a kingdom of lands divided between the twelve tribes. Soon, Israel had selected a king. The most famous of the Israelite kings were King David and King Solomon, who brought Israel to the height of its power. After King Solomon, the people of Israel began to worship other deities in the region, turning from Yahweh. According to Jewish accounts, he let Israel be conquered and let the people be force-migrated across the region. 722 BCE began the period of captivity, where the "Promised Land" was successively controlled by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, and then the Romans.

### Messianic Prophecies

During the period of time when Israel was being conquered, prophets, or messengers from Yahweh, appeared and began to share prophecies. Prophecies are promises from Yahweh about what will happen in the future. According to modern Christian theologians, over 350 prophecies were made about a coming Messiah, or redeemer, who was going to rebuild the kingdom and make everything "good" again for Israel. A few of the prophecies included:

- Born of a virgin woman, from the family lineage of King David
- He would be the son of Yahweh
- He would be a conquering king that would restore the kingdom; A king greater than King David
- He would heal the sick and help those in need
- He would restore the relationship between Yahweh, creating a new covenant
- He would suffer, be pierced, and resurrected
- A new temple would come down from heaven

After 500 BCE, the prophecies stopped, and the Jewish people waited. And waited... and waited.



### Egyptian Afterlife

Egypt's Book of the Dead is the first historical text promoting that people are born, live, and die once, and that during life, there is a battle between good and evil, light and darkness. Everyday people made choices that aligned with what was right or wrong and a record of their actions was kept by the gods. Upon death, their spirit was taken to the afterlife and judged. Those whose spirits were found blameless could enter paradise. If fault was found, they would face eternal torment. In Egyptian beliefs, the poor were doomed to suffer while the rich had the greatest chance of getting to paradise. Many historians have drawn the conclusion that the Abrahamic faiths' views of the afterlife is an amalgamation, or blending, of beliefs from their interactions with Egypt. Similar themes are found in Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Zoroastrian, and some Buddhist denominations.



## C. Crosses and Kings: Birth and Diffusion of Christianity

### Life and Religion in Rome

Rome was the most advanced society in its day. Latin was a diverse language, allowing for the writing of law, literature, and poetry. Latin became an important lingua franca internationally. Romans developed cement, mastered the arch, and built magnificent domes; their architectural ingenuity is still used to this day. The Romans also built 55,000 miles of road throughout Europe. This allowed for the rapid diffusion of trade, a gospel (or good news of Roman victories), and soldiers throughout the empire. The Roman roads laid the foundation for what would become the major urban centers of today.

There were also difficulties while living under Roman rule. The Romans were ruthless warriors and, upon conquering an urban area, would randomly choose people, crucify them, and leave the crosses along on the main street(s) entering the area. This would serve as a reminder of who was in charge. Taxes were extremely high, with farmers having to provide 50-60% of their harvest. Anything short of absolute obedience was met with swift and brutal reprisal.

Roman religion was versatile and extremely absorbent. The Roman view on religion and encountering new deities was simple: just add them. The most important deities were borrowed from Greece, but given new names. As Rome expanded their empire, they syncretized beliefs from Egypt, Persia, Zoroastrianism, Germanic and Nordic pantheons, and various ethnic traditions, ancestor worship and animism. These faiths were concerned with mainly survival. The deities controlled everything in life and were unpredictable in their actions. Humans were to offer the appropriate sacrifices to persuade the deities to "be nice" and "act in their favor." The ancient religions did not care about the moral character of its people, just obedience and sacrifice to appease the deities. At the height of the Roman Empire, there were over 2,000 deities, governing everything imaginable. In Rome was the Pantheon, a temple for all of the gods, where anyone could come and worship whomever they liked. The one Roman requirement was the universal worship of Caesar. Caesars were considered to be the Son of the Gods, God in the Flesh, the Victorious King, the High Priest, the Deliverer and Savior of the World.



**Roman Innovation: Cement Dome**

**Greek Columns and Facade**



Pantheon in Rome





## Jesus

Under Roman rule, the Jews were getting anxious and restless. Yahweh had promised a Messiah, but after 500 years of silence and being oppressed, the nation had had enough. Over two dozen leaders arose, claiming to be the long awaited Messiah, with each “messiah” organizing an armed rebellion against Rome. Each of these “messiahs” were arrested and killed by the Romans, bringing their rebellion to an end.

According to Christian theologians, around 30 CE, a man named Jesus, who was from the blood line of David, was traveling around Israel making claims about the kingdom of Yahweh being at hand. Sick people were becoming healed, the poor were being fed. Everywhere Jesus went, crowds of 10,000 or more gathered to hear him speak and to see him perform miraculous deeds. Then, Jesus started to make claims the Jewish leaders did not agree with:

- The kingdom of Yahweh was a SPIRITUAL kingdom not a PHYSICAL kingdom. The Temple was a SPIRITUAL temple not a PHYSICAL temple, and it would exist in the hearts of those who believed.
- Yahweh loved EVERYONE (Jew and Gentile) and wanted to extend blessing and access to Yahweh in the afterlife to EVERYONE.
- People were to love their enemies and do good deeds for them, not conquer them in war.
- Jesus claimed he was the Son of Yahweh, and that he, Jesus, needed to die as a final sacrifice. Humans could not get it right on their own, so the Son of Yahweh would die to pay the price for all mankind (God sacrificing for humanity as opposed to humans having to sacrifice for the gods).



There were many Jews who believed and became Jesus's followers. His 12 closest disciples, or students, later became known as the apostles. However, to the Jewish spiritual leaders, this was blasphemy - statements that were sacrilegious and profane against Yahweh. The Jewish leaders worked with the Roman government and arranged for Jesus to be crucified. Like the ones who came before, the false-Messiah was dead, the movement was over.

## Expansion

The following story comes from biblical texts:

*Jesus had been buried in a rich man's tomb. Three days later, there was a problem: the soldier-guarded tomb was empty. Jesus' closest followers, who had runaway and fled at the crucifixion, began to claim they had seen Jesus risen from the dead. Over the next two months, over 500 people across Jerusalem and the surrounding areas claimed to have been visited by and to have spoken with Jesus. Some sects of Christianity believe he even travelled supernaturally and visited societies on all continents, as evidenced by Jesus (or similar Messianic figures) appearance in other regions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Japanese, and Aztec faith systems. After 40 days, Jesus's follower claim he rose to heaven, with a promise he would someday return. They began to evangelize the people in major cities with a high density (especially the poor and enslaved) across the Roman empire. Christianity contagiously diffused from Jerusalem to England utilizing the Roman roads and trade routes. Within 100 years, Christianity had diffused to the farthest reaches of the empire.*

The new believers had questions. Specifically: what did it mean to be a Christian? Judaism had been aimed specifically for the nation of Israel, a very specific ethnic group of people. A man named Paul was a Jewish lawyer and an early convert to Christianity. Paul's writings and letters were sent around the Mediterranean, and were integral in shaping what it meant to be a Christian:



- Anyone could become a Christian, it was universally open to everyone. Anyone who chose to repent (turn away from the sin/wrong they were doing) and become a believer was to be baptized (briefly submerged) in water as a public sign of following Jesus.
- Worship no other gods except Yahweh. Try to model life after Jesus, who lived the perfect life
- All believers were equal: men and women; rich and poor; master and slave. All were equal in the eyes of Yahweh and should treat each other with respect and dignity.
- Believers could speak directly to Jesus and Yahweh, not needing to make animal or human sacrifices or go to a priest
- This new covenant had no dress code or food restrictions. What mattered was the purity of heart and the CAUSE of the actions.
- Love. Unity. Prayer. Charity. Forgiveness.
- Sharing communion: a ceremony consuming bread and wine/grape juice to symbolize Jesus's body and blood as a reminder of his sacrifices.

The early church had conflicts between the different branches of Christianity, as well as conflicts with Rome. There was not "one" early church, but many divisions that had stark disagreements about who Jesus was and how to worship him. One commonality amongst Christians was the refusal to sacrifice to Caesar. Roman citizens were concerned this would anger the gods, who would punish the citizens of Rome with plagues and famine. As a result, outbreaks of violence against Christians occurred across the empire. Despite the persecution, Christianity steadily spread. By 330 CE, Emperor Constantine gave Christianity legal status by bringing together all of the leaders of the Christian movements to sort out their differences and create one "true faith doctrine." In 380 CE, Christianity became the official religion of Rome. The God-in-Flesh Caesars gave up their divinity to worship Christianity... and now forced everyone to worship Christianity as well, or die.

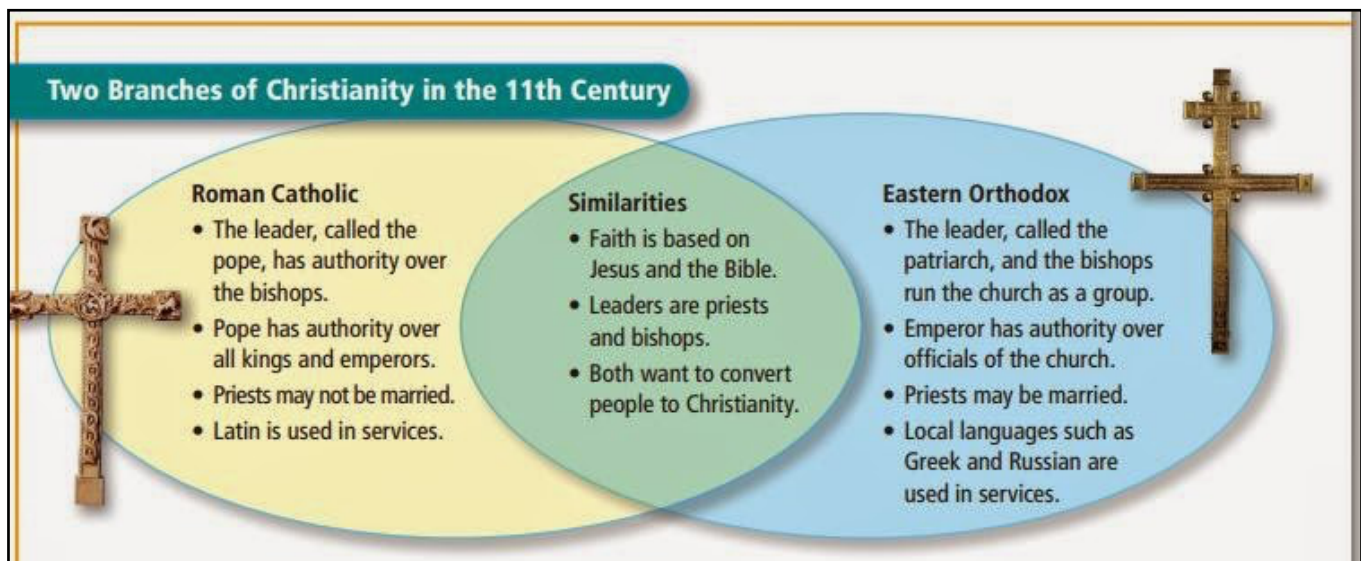


## A Religion Divided

When the Roman empire collapsed, the Christian church became the sole source of knowledge and learning in western European societies. Despite Constantine's efforts to create unity, divisions arose between the western European and eastern European leaders over power and authority: with the Caesar gone, who gets to make the rules? Who gets to say what are spiritually acceptable actions and what is forbidden? Can priests marry? Can people sit down in a church service? Which letters and writings are officially scripture? Who gets to say which scripture is interpreted correctly? When the two sides could not agree, there was a schism, or a split into two different denominations:

**Roman Catholic.** Catholic means universal and believes all true Christians should obey the Roman Catholic leaders in Rome. In particular, this meant the Pope - who is considered the Holiest man on the planet, with direct connection with Yahweh, and who has the authority to make changes to the church. The Pope was also in charge of all political leaders; even kings had to obey him. There is a very clear hierarchy beneath the Pope that must also be obeyed. Priests cannot marry. The 73 books of the Catholic bible, as well as Catholic mass (church services), should only be in Latin. Pictures of Jesus, the use of musical instruments while singing, as well as sitting were acceptable at Mass.

**Eastern Orthodox.** There is church leadership and it exists in Greece, but no one person in charge. The church has no control over government. Priests can marry. Everything should be written and spoken in Greek. No images of Jesus. No sitting is allowed. No musical instruments are allowed.



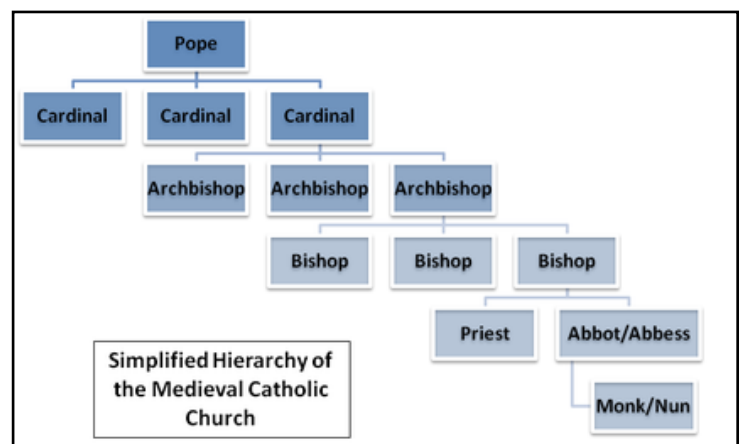
## A Religion in Change

As Christianity diffused around the Ancient world, the traditional religions of Europe interacted and amalgamated with Christianity. Some folk religions completely assimilated into Christian beliefs, forever abandoning their old ways. Others acculturated, keeping a mixture of their old traditions along with the new Christian norms and practices. As a result of these interactions, Christianity itself was influenced and altered by these traditional religions. Some traditional beliefs transculturated into the doctrines of what it meant to be Christian. A few examples include:

**Language.** Jesus and the original disciples (who were illiterate) spoke Hebrew and Aramaic, all within the Semitic language family. Paul wrote his letters in Greek, which was an important lingua franca in the region. However, the Romans translated the entire Bible into Latin. The Catholic church mandated Latin while the Eastern Orthodox used Greek (and now Russian).

**Tradition over Scripture.** In the early church, the letters of the Apostles and early church leaders were considered to be holy, along with ~80 other traditional Jewish texts (different groups accepted different texts; the Ethiopian Orthodox Bible has 81 canonized books). In 380 CE, the Bible was assembled with 72 books that were considered to be acceptable texts by leaders in attendance. As time progressed, the changing social and political times led to the Pope to make changes in church policies and practices. By 600 CE, many regions said that the policies and traditions established by the Pope (& the Catholic Church) held greater importance than the texts of the bible. Only the Pope had the final say in setting Christian beliefs.

**Church Hierarchy.** In the early church, the 12 Apostles held importance because they had lived with Jesus, but no one was viewed as being in charge. Everyone was considered to have a role to play in the church and in fulfilling the mission. Once merged with the Roman Government, the church took on a more political structure. Within the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, there became an elaborate hierarchy, with each level having a greater degree of power and authority. In the Catholic Church, the Pope is the most powerful person on the planet who all Catholics should obey.



**Saint Worship.** Before the Caesars forced the Romans to convert to Christianity across the empire, the people had been used to having 2000+ deities to worship. To help people adjust to only having one deity, the church invented saints to pray to - important religious people in church history, like the Apostles. Some estimates claim there were 10,000 saints a person could call upon for help and assistance.



**Mary Worship.** Many branches of Christianity did not know what to do with Mary, the mother of Jesus. In the Bible, she makes seven appearances: three where she is pregnant with Jesus, four where she is a bystander to events Jesus was taking part in. Religions in Egypt, Germany, and the Middle East had female deities to pray to and worship who were mothers or queens with influence. Over time, Mary gained influence as a person that was "the Queen Mom" in Heaven at the right hand of Jesus that people could pray to for help. Being Jesus's mother, she could help intervene and persuade him to act in the people's favor. The images of Mary also changed with time and location.



A Galatia Peasant Girl  
(Like Mary)



Isis Statue



Italian Painting of Mary

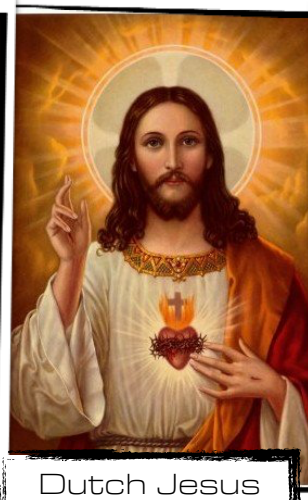
**The Image of Jesus.** Similarly with Mary, the image of Jesus changed over time and space as European artists drew his image in now-famous paintings.



Jewish-Galician  
Jesus



Italian Jesus



Dutch Jesus



German Jesus



### APPLICATION:

Could a person's view of Jesus change based on how he was visually displayed? Why or why not?





### APPLICATION:

Which style does the Catholic architecture most represent: Jerusalem Or Roman?

**Holidays.** Traditional societies had many holy days (holidays) that their families had celebrated for centuries, and they did not want to lose them. While some holidays were completely abandoned, many traditions transculturated into Christianity.

- ▶ **Winter Solstice (shortest day of the year) >>> Christmas.** The Germanic Druids in modern day Germany, France, and Britain held a 12 day celebration of the Sun God and his competition with the Ice Giants. They decorated large evergreen trees and other shrubbery to encourage the coming of spring. Missionaries converted the ritual into a celebration of the birth of Jesus. The Christmas tree tradition diffused to the USA with German migrants in the mid-1800s.
- ▶ **Spring (Vernal) Equinox (when the hours of day and night are equal after winter) >>> Easter.** In the Middle East there were celebrations to the goddess Ishtar (pronounced Eesh-Tar). It was a fertility holiday, promoting the growth of spring, animals, and general reproduction. Her symbols were eggs and rabbits. This holiday was rebranded as a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus, amalgamating the indigenous and Christian themes.

In conclusion, during its first thousand years, Christianity's universal appeal, acceptance of everyone, and adaptability allowed it to diffuse across two continents. However, that same adaptability caused it to be altered by outside traditions it forced to assimilate.



## D. Ishmael in the Desert: Birth and Diffusion of Islam

### Muhammad

In Saudi Arabia around 600 AD, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism were the predominant religions, with Christianity having the largest following. Being mainly desert along a well worn trade route, the region had many travelers, goods, and ideas passing through. Recall from the previous section, the Arabian people, it is believed, trace their lineage back to Ishmael - the older brother of Isaac, born of the servant girl. When Abraham drove Ishmael into the desert, the angels guided Ishmael to a watering hole, and there he founded the city of Mecca.

In the year 610 AD, Muhammad (pbuh) was a 40 year old trade merchant when he had his first vision in a cave near Mecca. It is recorded in the Qur'an (which means "The Recitation") and the Hadiths (the narratives or recollections) that the Angel Gabriel visited Muhammad to give him messages to share from Allah (the Arabic name for Abraham's one god). The messages promoted honesty, kindness, as well as generosity to the poor and weak. Religiously, they called people back to worship the Allah and to forsake all other gods.

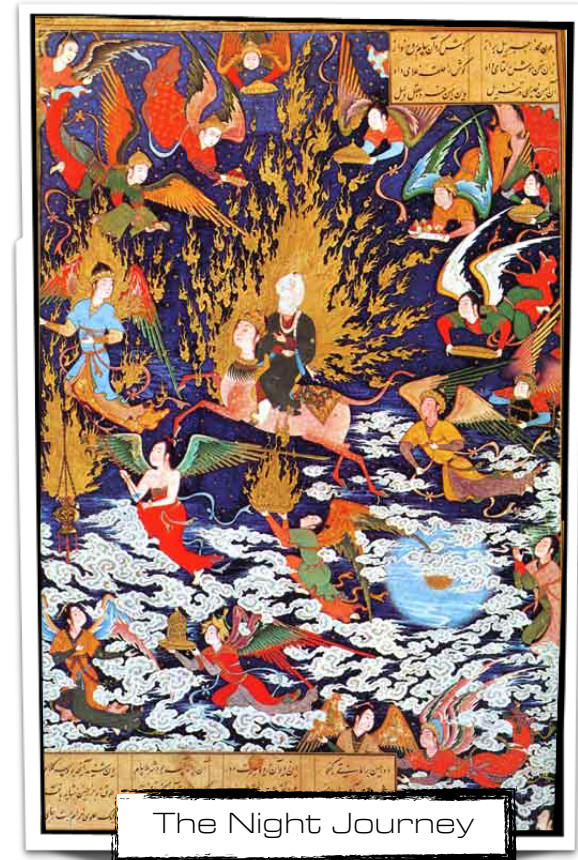
This was a problem, because Mecca was home to the Kabbah, a meteorite rock with a black cube built around it. Many idol makers made their living from people coming to worship at the Kabbah. In 620 AD, Muhammad had a miraculous experience known now as the Night Journey or the Night of Ascent. Muhammad was taken from Mecca to Jerusalem on the mystical horse creature Baruq, and from there ascended into heaven. When in heaven, Muhammad encountered Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus (who was also a Prophet - not the son of God), and Allah. After this journey, it was confirmed to Muhammad that he was the final prophet for Allah. The way Allah was being worshipped was corrupted and his followers were being lead astray, and Allah's new purpose was to correct the errors and lead people back to the one true faith in one god.

Muhammad's teachings eventually grew into a mighty following, known as Muslims, meaning the People Who Submit to Allah. Muhammad's revelations were recorded in the Qur'an and are the foundation of Muslim beliefs:

- Allah is God, Allah is one. He is all powerful, omnipresent, controlling all life.
- The Qur'an is the last, divine inspired word of Allah. The teachings of Moses were misinterpreted by the Jews. The teachings of Jesus were altered by Paul, the Great Corrupter, and the Romans. While Muslim's hold the Torah and Jesus' teachings as "Scripture," they place the greatest focus and value on the Qur'an.



Ancient Mecca



The Night Journey



Muslim Prayer Position



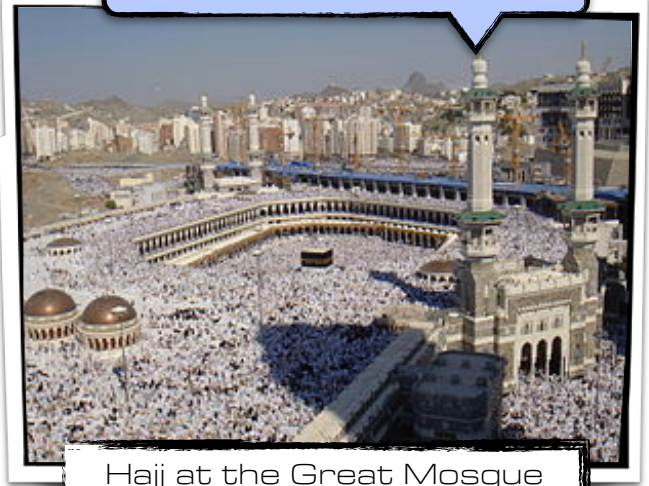
- There are **Five Pillars of Islam**:

1. **The Creed (Shahadah).** “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger.” It is the first thing said to new babies, written inside and around every building, and said as a part of every prayer. It also serves to reject that Jesus was the son of Allah, because belief in a divine Jesus would create multiple gods.
2. **Prayer (Salat).** Muslims must pray five times a day (Muhammad negotiated with Allah from 50 down to 5). They must pray in a prostrate (lying face-down) position, towards Mecca. The Muezzin bells from the Minaret (bell towers) call Muslims to prayer. Friday is the day of public prayer and religious gathering.
3. **Charity to the Poor (Zakat).** Forms of wealth (food/animals/money) must be given to help the poor and sick. The amount is 2.5% of wages. Other daily or weekly actions of charity to those in need are required.
4. **Fasting during Ramadan (Sawn).** This is a discipline meant to instill empathy for the poor and needy, while creating spiritual growth. Exceptions are allowed for the sick, elderly, and pregnant.
5. **Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj).** Once in a Muslim’s life, they are to visit Mecca and perform the ceremony at the Kabah. The black stone and the box surrounding it are believed to have been setup by Adam and visited/maintained by Abraham. There are various events and ceremonies to remember/re-enact Hagar’s desperate search for water, Abraham’s obedience to Allah by sacrificing his son ISHMAEL (a point of contention with the Jews), and Muhammad’s journey to Medina.

- Other regulations/rules include: being forbidden to eat pigs or scavenged animals. No drinking wine. No gambling. No outrageous interest rates on loans. Male’s must go through circumcision. Women wearing veils in public. Polygamy is the duty of men who can afford multiple wives.

Muhammad’s message was not well received at first, but his numbers continued to grow. In 622 AD, the Muslims left Mecca for Medina; an event known as the Hijra. The Hijra marks year 1 of the Muslim calendar. In Medina, Muhammad established the first mosque, or place of worship, and provided the foundation for the Sharia Law that guides Muslim governments and societies. From Medina, the Muslims launched a military campaign to setup Dar’al Islam: The Kingdom of Islam. The Muslims conquered Mecca and the surrounding Arabian Peninsula; clearing out all idols, images, and instituting Muslim ideals. Muhammad died in 632 AD, and although he had multiple wives, none of his sons survived past infancy. There was no clear successor to his kingdom.

**Minarets: Prayer Bell Towers**



Hajj at the Great Mosque



## APPLICATION:

Compare Muhammad’s story to Abraham, Moses, and Jesus’ stories. How are they similar/different? Do their messages have more in common or greater differences?



## Division

After Muhammad's death, his friend Abu Bakr became the first Caliph (king) of the Caliphate (kingdom) Dar'Al Islam (Kingdom of Islam). Bakr's death two years later was followed by a series of assassinations as people positioned themselves for power.

In 661 AD, a major schism formed, splitting Islam into two groups: the Sunni and the Shiites. The Shiites (meaning "faction") compose about 10-15% of the Muslim population. They believe Muslim leadership should be able to trace their heredity back to Muhammad's family, possessing the Light of Muhammad. Like the Pope for Christians, the Islamic leadership's interpretation of the Qur'an cannot be questioned. Thus, the Qur'an can be "updated" by the leadership and is able to change as the times change.

Sunni's (meaning "tradition") make up 90% of the Muslim population. Sunnis believed that leadership and spiritual wisdom could be given by Allah to anyone, thus the leadership is elected. They believe their leaders are capable of error, and thus can be questioned or replaced if they make poor decisions. Sunnis view the Qur'an and the Hadiths as being infallible and have created a system called Sharia Law based on their teachings. Also, the Sunnis do not allow statues or paintings in their Mosques.

## Diffusion

After Muhammad's death, Dar'Al Islam exploded in size, with most of the land gained through conquest. By 732 AD, Muslims controlled land from Spain to modern Pakistan, and by 1500, Islam had reached into India and Western China. Through trade, Islam spread along the Trans-Saharan Trade Route into Sub-Saharan Africa. Islam spread to Malaysia and the Philippines because of the Indian Ocean Trade, funded by Dar'Al Islam. This led to Arabic becoming an important lingua franca in the Middle East, Africa, and SE Asia. The creole Swahili developed as Arabic blended with other traditional Bantu languages.

This was the Golden Age of Islam. Wealthy Muslim funded and encouraged scientific, mathematic, and engineering advancements. They built great libraries by bringing in scholars from around the world and by translating all of the great texts into Arabic. Visiting the great libraries in Baghdad, Cordoba, and Damascus, a person who knew Arabic could read work from Plato, Confucius, and Buddha without having to leave the room or get a translator.

Muslims were highly tolerant of other religions. Cordoba, in Spain, was the peaceful and prosperous home to Muslims, Jews, and Christians. This tolerance came to an end with the crusades as the Vikings-turned-Christian warriors were led by the Pope on several unsuccessful conquests to ruthlessly kill and inspire terror throughout the Middle East. The European Renaissance, Age of Exploration, Scientific Revolution, and Industrial Revolution owe a massive intellectual and financial debt to Dar'al Islam in this era.

## E. Christianity's Globalization and Division

### Age of Exploration

The failures of the Crusades and the Islamic conquering of Constantinople cut the European Christians off from trade... or at least trade that did not directly enrich the Muslims. The Portuguese began to explore around Africa, with the Pope saying any non-Christian land belonged to the Portuguese. In 1492, the Spanish could not disobey the Pope, so they sailed west, arriving in the Caribbean and South America. The Pope gave all the "New World" to Spain (except Brazil). Thus, Roman Catholicism diffused to the Americas.



## Protestant Reformation

In the 1500s, Christianity experienced another major schism known as the Protestant Reformation. A German-Catholic monk named Martin Luther came across passages in the Bible he felt contradicted scripture: Pope's Power, worshipping Mary and the Saints, extra payments to the church, etc. When he presented his grievances to the Catholic Church, he was told to be quiet or be killed. Kings in England, France, and Germany rescued Luther and used his momentum to break away from the power of the Catholic Church and the Pope. The following issues were at the center of the Protestant Reformation:



- **Freedom from the Pope.** Kings could now rule and make decisions without fear of angering the Pope. People could now question the church's teachings without fear of being excommunicated, imprisoned, or having their souls sent to hell.
- **Humanism and Individualism.** People could talk directly to Yahweh/Jesus, and were able to improve spiritually WITHOUT the intervention of priests or trained leaders. People could use their minds to discover truths of the world and do great things (the start of scientific revolution).
- **The Bible should be in all languages.** This led to the translation of the Bible from Latin to German to English; as well as reducing it from 72 to 66 books.
- **Hard work** is Godliness. Laziness is a sin.

Soon after England and Germany broke away from the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestants splintered into a large number of sects known as *denominations*. There are thousands of denominations, but this next section will examine a few of the most widespread.

Topics that divided them include: *Church Hierarchy* (Does a Church control itself or does it have to answer to a larger national/international body). *Free Will or Determination* (Does Yahweh decide who is saved? Or do people get a choice?) *Catholic Traditions* (Is the church attempting to "reform" or improve the Catholic model or become something completely different).

	Origin	Church Hierarchy	Free Will or Determined?	Catholic Based Traditions/Rituals	Important Notes
<b>Puritans</b>	England	Yes	DETERMINED!	Yes	No fun for anyone! Everything is bad, wicked, and it makes Jesus ANGRY!
<b>Methodists</b>	England	Yes	Free Will	Yes	Believes the Bible's interpretation changes over time and must adapt with it.
<b>Lutherans</b>	Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden	Yes	DETERMINED!	Yes	Trying to be "better" Catholics, not creating something unique.
<b>Calvinist/Reformed</b>	Switzerland, Germany, France	Yes	DETERMINED!	Yes	Believes the Bible is the final word and never changes. Holds its followers to every literal letter of the rules.
<b>Baptist</b>	England	No	Depends on the individual church	No	Very local and organic movements. No degrees or pedigrees required to start a church or preach. It places a high emphasis on the "Religious Experience" on Sundays.



## Christianity Goes Global

Freed from the restraints of the Pope, the Protestant countries began exploring and colonizing the world. The results of colonization continue to shape the cultural, linguistic, and religious landscapes around the globe. Missionaries travelled with the explorers to identify new indigenous populations around the world and to convert them from their “pagan” traditional ways to the missionaries branch of Christianity. The three most influential religious impacts of 1600s colonization:

- Diffusion of Roman Catholicism throughout Latin America.
- Spread of Eastern Orthodox throughout Russia. Moscow became the most important city to the Eastern/Russian Orthodox Church.
- Establishment of English-based versions of Protestant Christianity in the USA and Canada. The Puritans came over, thinking North America was going to be Yahweh’s new garden of Eden. Protestant ideals became deeply interwoven with American culture and government. The Protestant’s opposition to hierarchy and religious authoritarianism shaped the USA’s drive for economic freedom, political liberties, and protection of human rights.

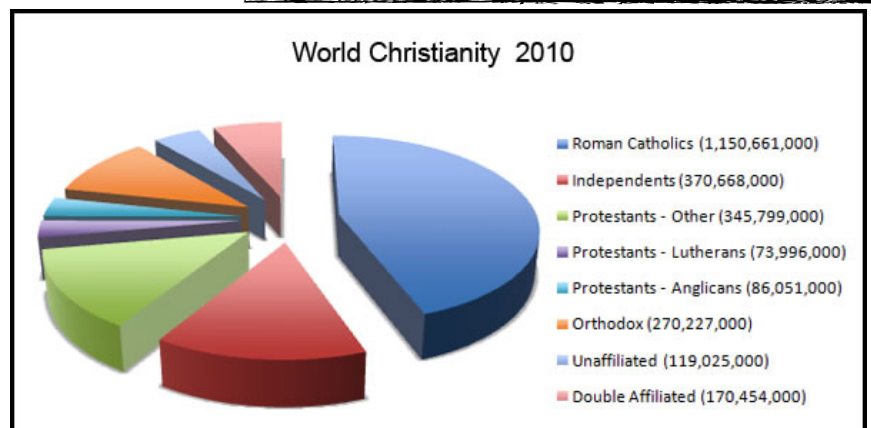
As industrialization took hold in England and the USA, the reduced space-time compression from faster transportation and communication had a profound religious impact. The humanist and individual beliefs promoted protestants to pursue science, engineering and innovation. They were unafraid to question the church’s or government’s beliefs which led to an explosion of scientific discoveries about the laws of nature and innovations that have led to the mechanization of society.

The Protestant work ethic drove the desire for economic progress and increased productivity. As the USA and England grew wealthier and more advanced, Protestant Christian missionaries and churches could diffuse their message faster and farther than other religions. The American and British economic and military presence around the world allowed missionaries to further promote their religion around the world as well as cement English as an important lingua franca. With planes and ships, missionaries could reach the most remote destinations. With the internet, radio, and satellite TV, Christian messages and principles became interwoven with pop culture and began to be broadcast around the world instantaneously. This universalist push to evangelize has led to Christianity becoming the large

In modern times, Christianity has felt the influences of popular culture affect its beliefs and practices. Modern electric instruments and musical styles have taken the place of “traditional” choral or classical music. The presence of Western Individualism and moral relativism have caused churches to move the emphasis from teaching truths from the Bible to creating certain “spiritual” or “religious” emotional experiences.



NOTE: This means Christianity has diffused to an area, NOT that it is the dominant religion there.

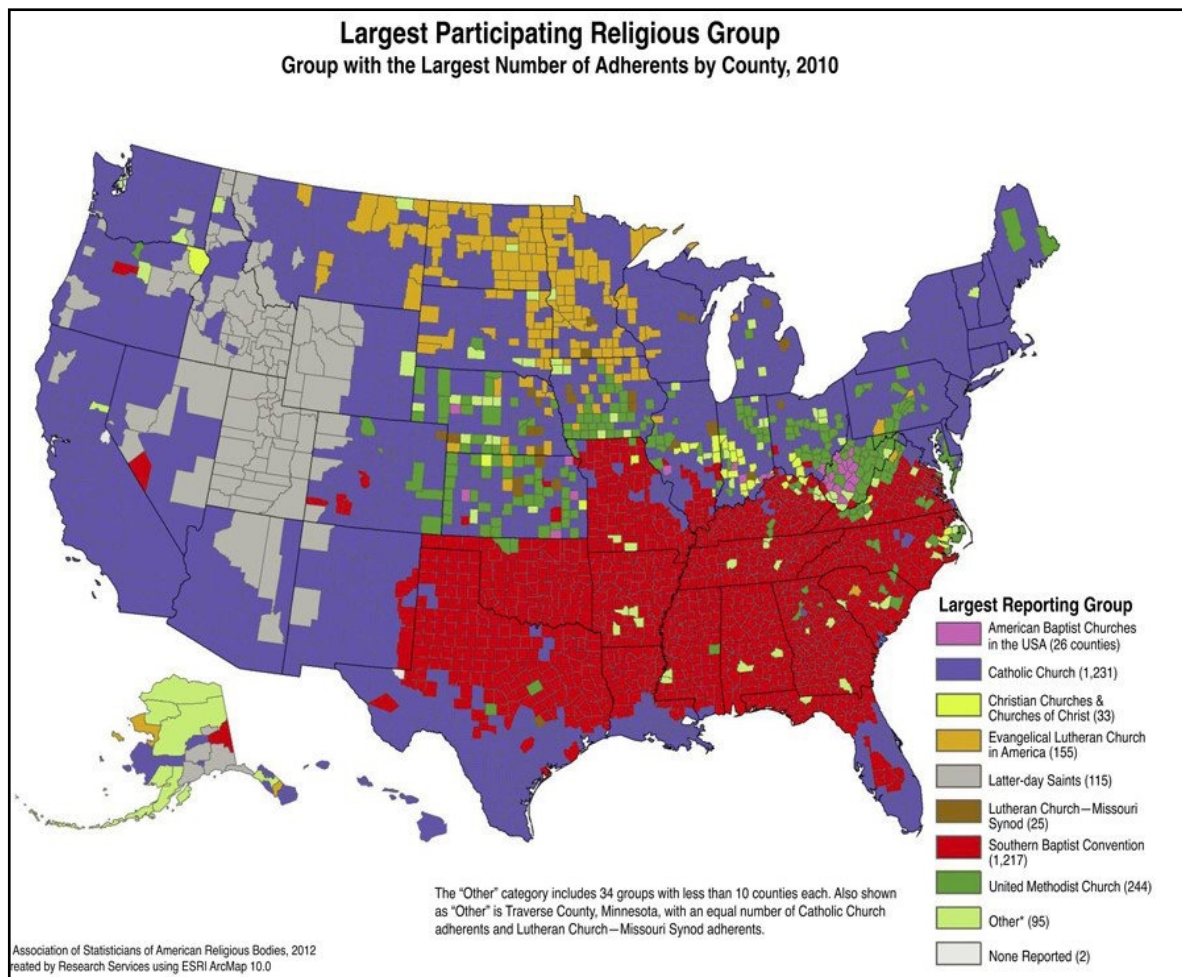




## Christianity in America

Migration has had a massive impact on the religious landscape in the USA.

- **New England:** Because Ellis Island was the primary entry point for immigrants arriving from Europe, the USA became a massive melting pot of religions. However, the secondary sector economic opportunities in the factories and chain migration led the waves of Irish, Italian, and Eastern Europeans to stay up north. As these regions were majority Catholic, it has shaped the Northeast to be majority Catholic.
- **South/Southeast.** The South was shaped by the initial colonization and primary sector dominating the South. These regions were initially founded by the English, who came to America wanting opportunity and to be free from the social or religious restrictions placed upon them in England. In the South they found land, opportunity, and freedom. In the Baptist tradition, there were no overarching Church Hierarchies telling them what to do or placing requirements on who could become a pastor. Each community created their own unique, quasi-indigenous church that reflected their unique value. Once slaves were freed, the African-Americans were able to develop their own unique communities within the Baptist tradition. Because of the rural nature of the South, there was very limited in-migration from Europe during the 1800s-1900s, keeping the religious and social traditions unchanged until the 2000s.
- **Great-Plains:** During the 1800s, this area needed settlement but had an unattractive climate. The low cost of land encouraged migrants from Scandinavian countries to relocate, who were used to similar climate conditions. This started a chain migration, creating a strong Lutheran influence.
- **Mormon-Utah:** Shunned in New York, the Mormon movement moved out to the Salt Lake and established their community with peace and security. The rural nature with primary sector jobs, along with limited carrying capacity from harsh climates, did not attract in-migration from other populations, allowing the denomination to thrive.
- **West:** The rise in Latin American migrants from South America is changing the spiritual landscape. In the 1950s, it would have been a mixture of Lutheran and Catholic. With the influx of Latin Americans, it is now one of the largest concentrations of Roman Catholics in the USA.





## F. Islam & Judaism In the Modern Day

### Islam

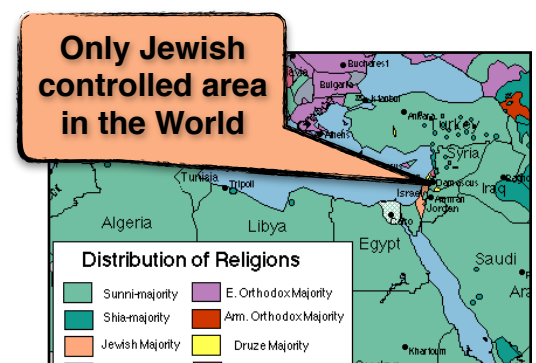
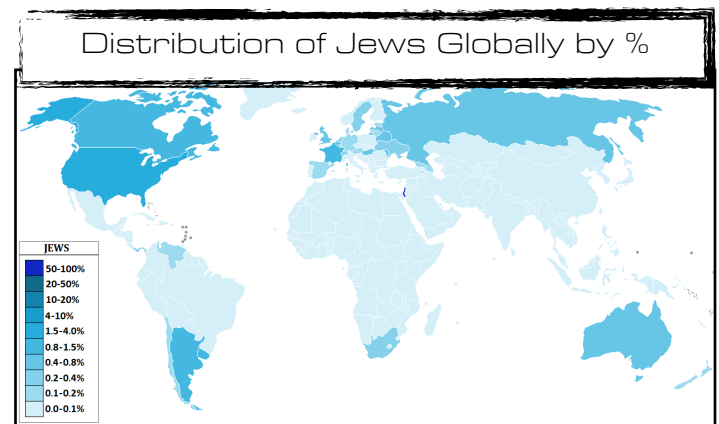
Islam is facing a unique religious problem. On one side, they are the fastest growing religion in the world, second only to Christianity. This is because Islam is the dominant religion of many semi-periphery countries which have been able to use oil money to build their societies. As a result, they have the ability to share the message of Muhammad using modern communication to reach millions of people they interact with via global trade deals and tourism.

On the other hand, Islam is the dominant religion in many of the poorest countries in the world. As a result, a radical-extremist version of Islam, called Wahabi, has developed and promotes terrorist tendencies. Groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS manipulate the impoverished with stories of wealth, opportunity, and revenge against the system that is oppressing them to recruit followers, and train them to harm other people in the Global Jihad (struggle) against the West. Anyone who is not with them is against them, including other Muslims. This is creating a great deal of tension in the Muslim community.

### Judaism

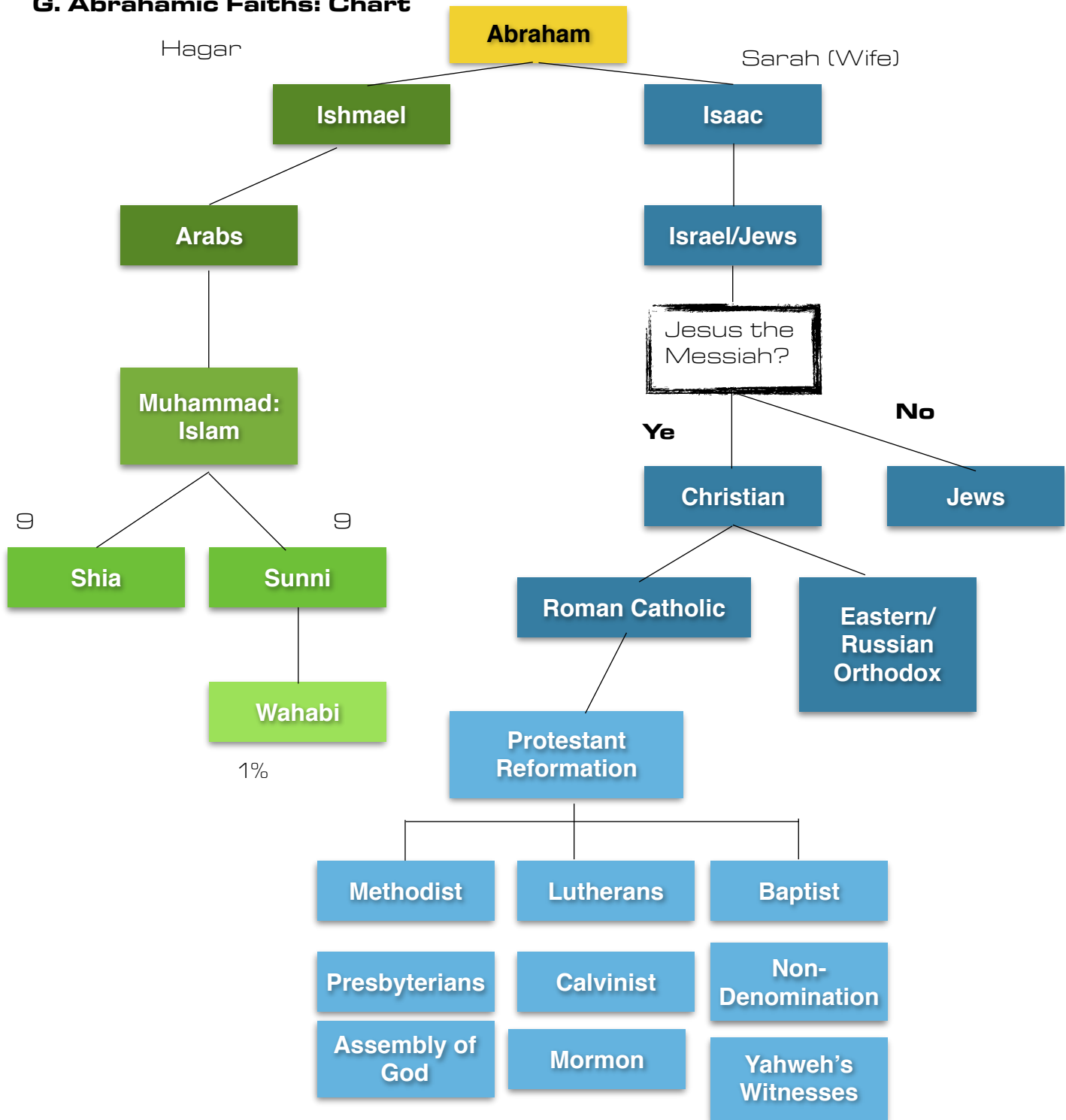
After WWII and the horrors of the Holocaust, the United Nations took part of the “Promised Land” away from the Palestinian Muslims and gave it to the Israelites to start their own country again. For the first time since 700BCE, Israel has controlled the land of Abraham. However, this caused a series of wars with the other Arab-Muslim countries - all won by Israel. Israel has worked to attract Jews to come back to Israel (the Zionist movement) and faces increasing tensions in the Middle East as the Muslim population grows bigger and countries, like Iran, develop nuclear weapons. The situation is further provoked by the international pressure for Israel to give some of its land back to Palestine to create a two-state solution. Over 3,500 years later, Isaac and Ishmael are still sorting out who gets their father’s blessing.

The other great battle has been with relevance. As Jews have interacted with the larger world, it has been difficult to keep them interested in beliefs and laws 3,000 years old. Orthodox Jews and Zionists have tried to keep the Jewish religious practices relevant; bringing people back to the promised land to await the coming Messiah and the Third Temple from Heaven. However, many Jews have become “Jewish” in ethnicity only, abandoning its religious practices to live a “Modern” Western Lifestyle.





## G. Abrahamic Faiths: Chart



### APPLICATION:

How has the story line of the Universal Religions (Christ/Islam) differed from the Ethnic Religion (Judaism)? Are the differences between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam big or small (and explain)? Do you think the modern versions of these religions resemble what their founders (Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad) had in mind?

## H. Cultural Snapshots: Judaism

### Icons



Star of David



Menorah

### Holy City



Jerusalem

### Architecture



Synagogue

No special  
architectural  
design  
required.

### Holidays

- Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year)
- Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)
- Hanukkah (Festival of Lights)
- Passover (Moses Freedom from Egypt)

### Special Language



Hebrew



Yamaka & Side Burns

Problem: Muslim  
Dome of the Rock  
built on the same  
site...

### Buildings



Solomon's Temple Mount



Western Wall

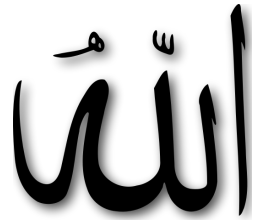


## Cultural Snapshots: Islam

### Icons



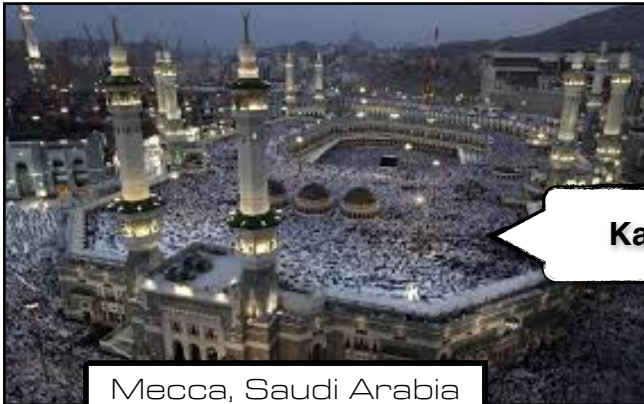
Crescent and Star



Allah (in Arabic)

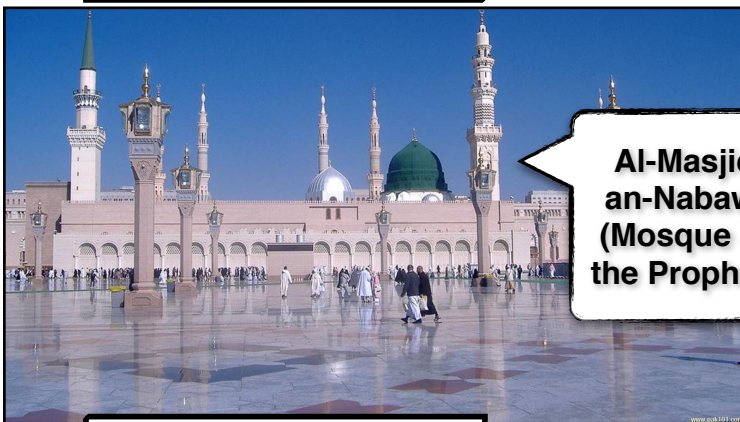


### Holy Cities & Buildings



Kaaba

Mecca, Saudi Arabia



Al-Masjid an-Nabawi (Mosque of the Prophet)

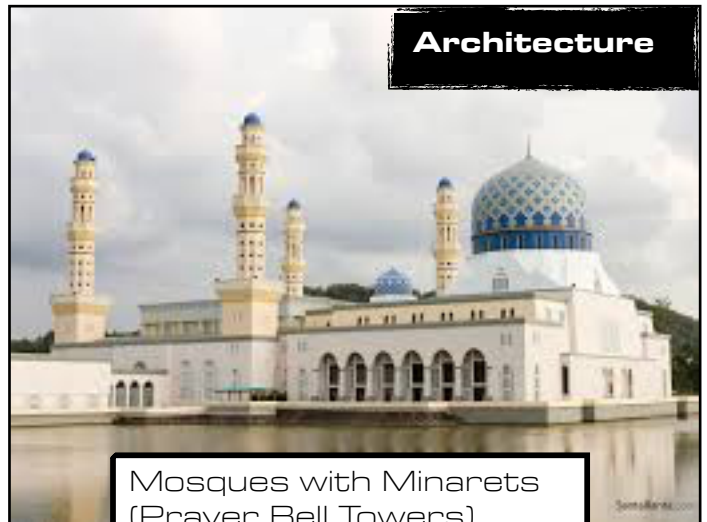
Medina, Saudi Arabia



Dome of the Rock: Spot where Muhammad took the "Night Journey" to Heaven

Jerusalem

### Architecture



Mosques with Minarets (Prayer Bell Towers)



### Special Language- Arabic



### Holidays

- Eid-Al-Adha (Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Ishmael)
- Mawlid an-Nabi (Muhammad's Birthday)
- Isra Mer'Aj (Night Journey/ Ascension)
- Ramadan (Holy month - fasting)
- Eid-Al-Fitr (End of Ramadan)



# Cultural Snapshots: Christianity



## Icons

Cross

Ichthus

Rosary

## Holy Cities & Buildings



Place where  
Jesus was  
crucified

Jerusalem - Church of Sepulchre



Vatican City - St. Peters Basilica



Moscow - St. Basil



Zambia - Churches



Communion

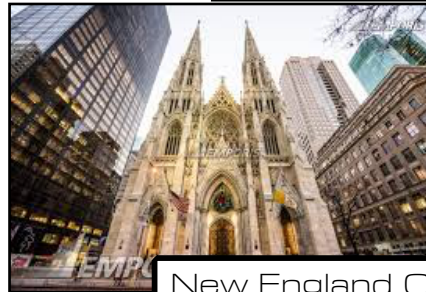


Baptism

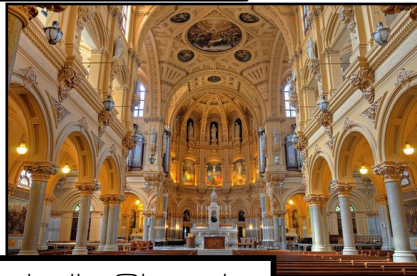
## USA Landscape



Small Town USA Church



New England Catholic Church



Midwest USA - Protestant Megachurches



## Holidays

- Christmas (Jesus Birth)
- Ash Wednesday (First Day of fasting for Lent)
- Lent (Self reflection, fasting, and denial before Easter)
- Palm Sunday/Good Friday (Crucifixion)
- Easter (Resurrection)
- Ascension Day (Jesus goes to Heaven)
- Pentecost (Holy Spirit Arrives)