

Religions and Denominations (8 minute video)

All world religions are broken down into 2 categories, polytheistic and monotheistic. Polytheistic meaning many gods, and Monotheistic meaning one god. That would include Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. We are also going to talk about Cults and the Occult, two distinctly different groups and then we will define some of the things as we go.

POLYTHEISTIC -

Hindus follow the writings in the Bhagavad-Gita. It is the oldest and largest polytheistic religion with over 330 million Hindu gods in deities. Many of those deities we know as Brahma Vishnu, Shiva, and Krishna.

Egyptians were also polytheistic. They had more than 1400 deities. They were patterned after men, women, animals, and even the solar system.

There are over 350 million Buddhists worldwide who worship in 129 temples. There are hundreds of millions of Buddhist statues and the largest Buddhist statue in China is twice as tall as the Statue of Liberty. Many Buddhists such as Richard Gere contend that Buddhism is only a philosophy and not a theology. Since they do not worship the great Buddha, they contend that he was the enlightened one who had reached nirvana, but they do not worship him.

MONOTHEISTIC -

(MUSLIM)

According to Islam, Allah, is God creator of the universe. Abraham was a prophet of Islam married to Hagar and his son Ishmael played a vital role. The prophet Mohammed born around 600 A.D. Was born in Mecca Saudi Arabia and was visited by the angel Gabriel who revealed the Quran to him. The Quran is the holy book or sacred writing that teaches the five pillars that include fasting during Ramadan and a pilgrimage to Mecca. The dome of the rock now stands on the side of Herods temple in Jerusalem. Muslims are known for their dedication to ritual prayers five times a day.

(JUDAISM)

Here we have a Jewish rabbi standing in the synagogue in front of a menorah. He teaches such things as the patriarchs of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and King David. We have orthodox and reformed Jews standing at the Wailing Wall. We also have a young boy who is finishing his requirements for a Bar mitzvah as he recites the Torah. Many eat the Seder meal commemorating the Passover. They blow the shofar and celebrate Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. They also light the Hanukkah menorah in honor of the rededication of the temple.

CHRISTIANITY -

(CATHOLIC)

The Catholic Church has over 1.2 billion members across the world. They have seven sacraments that they teach including baptism, confirmation, penance, and Eucharist. Vatican City is the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church. It is a sovereign state governed by an ecclesiastical monarchy and they manage \$18 billion in assets.

(PROTESTANT)

(Mainline and Evangelical)

The great reformers of the 16th century included such men as Calvin, Wycliffe, Luther, Wesley, and so many others. They stood up against the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church and stood for such principles as faith alone (Sola Fide) and the Scriptures alone (Sola Scriptura). The two subgroups of Protestants would include mainline Christians who are more traditional, have a formal liturgy, believe in infant baptism, and a more liberal interpretation of the Bible. While the second group Evangelicals only practice adult baptism, more modern music, more fundamental beliefs of the Bible and they believe in pursuing converts.

OCCULT -

A sorcerer by the name of Anton LeVay started the church of Satan in 1966. He wrote the Satanic Bible and began to recruit members such as registered members, active members, and high priests who would perform baptisms, weddings and funerals.

A séance is the meeting held by a group of people trying to communicate with the dead or to wandering spirits. There is usually a leader or a spirit medium who uses such devices as Ouija boards, crystal balls, palm reading, and tarot cards. This spirit medium is usually the channel by which communication flows from the living to the dead.

Astrology is based on horoscopes and charts that map out the solar system in the movement of the planets and stars. It is a type of divination that is supposed to explain one's birth and one's personality and behavioral traits. It is a type of occult behavior.

CULT -

Jim Jones was a cult leader in 1978. A group called the Peoples Temple in Jonestown Guyana. He led over 900 people to their death as they all took cyanide inside communion. They did this to avoid persecution.

David Koresh led a group called the Branch Davidians in 1993 in Waco Texas. They had a standoff with the ATF and the United States government for 51 days. At the end of the standoff there was over 80 people burned to death and killed as a result of being a part of this cult.

There are over 140 Mormon temples throughout the world. The Mormon church was started by Joseph Smith in the 1820s. It's also known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Mormon missionaries are known as elders and they must work in the mission field for two years without any salary at all. They have now over 80,000 full-time missionaries and 22,000 part-time missionaries. Since the history of the church began they have now had 1 million missionaries sent out from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Scientology was started by science-fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard. He wrote a book called Dianetics which he talked about human beings being immortal and that their method of spiritual rehabilitation is a type of counseling known as auditing. The Jehovah's Witness Organization started in the 1870s by a man named Charles Tays Russell. Their headquarters is in Brooklyn New York where they print the Watchtower magazine. It now has 53 million in circulation each month and is printed in 240 languages. They have 8 million members.

This has been a brief overview of world religions. Religion is surely man's attempt to find God, while Jesus is God's plan to connect with us. Knowing about other faiths can help us reach the nations because we believe that people are looking for answers.