

Religion	Origins/History	Global adherents	God(s) and universe	Human situation and life purpose	After-life	Practices	Written texts
Animism (Wicca, Native American, Voodoo)	Various	Varies	Major emphasis is encounters with spirits; Ultimate Reality is often impersonal	Appease and nourish the gods or spirits	Varies	Chanting, dancing, healing ceremonies, possession trances	Rarely have any
Buddhism	Founded by Siddharta Gautama (the Buddha) about 520 B.C. in NE India as offshoot of Hinduism	360 million	Varies: Theravada atheistic; Mahayana more polytheistic. Nothing is permanent	Follow 8-fold path to avoid suffering and gain enlightenment and release from cycle of rebirth (Nirvana) or at least attain a better rebirth by gaining merit	Reincarnation (different from Hinduism, with no surviving soul) until gain enlightenment	Meditation, chanting, mantras, devotion to deities (in some sects), sacred <i>mandala</i> art (Tibetan)	Tripitaka (Pali Canon) -- 100 volumes; Mahayana sutras like the Lotus Sutra; others
Christianity	Concurrent with Judaism	2 billion	One God who is a Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit	All have sinned and are thereby separated from God. Reconciliation and salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ	Eternal heaven or hell	Prayer, singing, Bible study, baptism, Holy Communion, weekly church gatherings	The Bible (writings of the Old and New Testaments)
Hinduism	Indigenous religion of India beginning as early as 1800 B.C.	900 million	One supreme Reality (Brahman) manifested in many gods and goddesses	Humans are in bondage to ignorance and illusion, but are able to escape. Purpose is to gain release from rebirth, or at least a better rebirth	Reincarnation until gain enlightenment; then comes absorption into or union with Brahman	Yoga, meditation, worship (<i>pūja</i>), devotion to a god or goddess, pilgrimage to holy cities, live according to dharma (purpose/role)	The Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana . . .
Islam	Mohammed, 622 A.D. in Saudi Arabia	1.3 billion	One God (Allah in Arabic)	Humans must submit to will of God to gain Paradise	Paradise or hell	Five pillars: Faith, prayer, alms, pilgrimage, fasting. Mosque services on Friday.	Qur'an (Scripture); Hadith (tradition)
Judaism	Abraham about 2000 B.C.	14 million	One God, (YHWH in ancient Hebrew)	Obey God's commandments, live ethically. Focus is more on this life than the next	Not emphasized. Beliefs vary from no after-life to shadowy existence in the World to Come	Circumcision at birth, bar/bat mitzvah at adulthood. Synagogue services on Saturdays. Kosher foods only. Holidays related to historical events	Hebrew Bible (Torah and the Tanakh), Talmud