



5 Facts to Know About: Zoroastrianism

- 1) Zoroastrianism (also called Mazdayasna) is the oldest practiced monotheistic religion in the world, with approximately 11,000 adherents in the United States and 190,000 worldwide.
- 2) Zoroastrianism was named after the prophet Zarathushtra (known to the Greeks as Zoroaster) whose teachings 3,000-3,500 years ago in modern-day Iran became the foundation of the religion. Zoroaster unified the nomadic tribes of the region with his revelations at the age of 30.
- 3) The sacred text of Zoroastrianism is the Avesta, also called Zend-avesta, indicating that it is Zoroaster's interpretation of ancient text. Legend dictates that the original volume of manuscripts was destroyed when Alexander the Great conquered Persia. What remains today of the Avesta includes five sections: the Yasana (The chief liturgical part of the text), the Visperad (less liturgical scripture), the Vidēvdāt (main source of law), the Yashts (hymns and ancient myths) and the Khordeh Avesta or little Avesta (condensed hymns and prayers from the Yasna). The Yasana incorporates the Gārhās—the 17 hymns composed by the Prophet Zarathushtra comprising his teachings.
- 4) A central -- but often misunderstood -- belief of Zoroastrianism is the conflict between good and evil, with good eventually vanquishing evil. There are two ways this comes into play -- within the universe or cosmically, and internally or morally, providing the context that one cannot be understood without the other (i.e. Cosmic: life/death, day/night; Moral: happiness/sadness, truth/deception).

(over)

5) Because it was the dominant world religion during the Persian empires, Zoroastrianism significantly influenced other religions, including Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It was a major world religion at the time of Jesus

Learn more at:

www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/zoroastrian/

www.avesta.org/zfaq.html

www.britannica.com/topic/Zoroastrianism

These five points are not meant to be comprehensive or authoritative. We hope they will encourage you to explore this tradition more deeply and seek out members of this community to learn about their beliefs in action. It is our firm belief that in understanding our differences we will better understand our common humanity.

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