

God, Zoroaster and immortals

By BBC Team

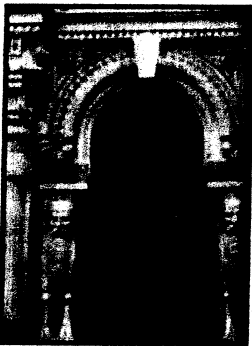
Zoroastrian beliefs about God

Zoroastrians believe in one God, called Ahura Mazda (meaning 'Wise Lord'). He is compassionate, just, and is the creator of the universe.

Ahura Mazda is:

- Omniscient (knows everything)
- Omnipotent (all powerful)
- Omnipresent (is everywhere)
- Impossible for humans to conceive
- Unchanging
- The Creator of life
- The Source of all goodness and happiness

God is worshiped as supreme. Zoroastrians believe that everything he created is pure and should be treated with love and respect. This includes the natural environment, so Zoroastrians traditionally do not pollute the rivers, land or atmosphere. This has caused some to call Zoroastrianism 'the first ecological religion'.



Exterior of a fire-temple

Zoroaster and God

Zoroastrians believe that Zoroaster is the prophet of God. Zoroaster himself is not worshipped, but through his teachings man can become close to God by following the path of truth and righteousness (asha).

Zoroaster's Vision

At the age of thirty, Zoroaster had a divine vision whilst bathing in a river during a pagan purification rite. On the bank of the river he saw a 'Shining Being' made of light who revealed himself as Vohu

Manah ('Good Mind').

Vohu Manah led Zoroaster to the presence of Ahura Mazda (God) and five other radiant beings, which are called the Amesha Spentas (Holy Immortals). This was the first of a number of visions in which Zoroaster saw Ahura Mazda and his Amesha Spentas; during each vision he asked many questions. The answers given to Zoroaster are the foundations of Zoroastrian religion.

Amesha Spentas, who are they?

Amesha Spentas translates as 'Holy Immortals'. Just as light rays are emanated from the sun but are not the sun, so the Amesha Spentas are emanated by God but are not God. These emanations are seen as the divine attributes of God. They helped God fashion the world and each is associated with a particular aspect of creation.

Western scholars have likened the Amesha Spentas to the Archangels in Christianity. This is not strictly correct as they also represent spiritual attainments. Zoroastrians believe that man can know God through his Divine Attributes.

The six Amesha Spentas are:

- Vohu Manah - Good mind and good purpose.
- Asha Vahishta - Truth and righteousness.
- Spenta Ameraiti - Holy devotion, serenity and loving kindness.
- Khashathra Vairya - Power and just rule.
- Hauravatat - Wholeness and health.
- Ameretat - Long life and immortality.

Good and Evil

In Zoroastrianism, Ahura Mazda has an adversary called Angra Mainyu (meaning 'destructive spirit'). Angra Mainyu is the originator of death and all that is evil in the world.

Ahura Mazda, who is perfect, abides in Heaven, whereas Angra Mainyu dwells in the depths of Hell. When a person dies they will go to Heaven or Hell depending on their deeds during their lifetime.

It is generally accepted that in the Abrahamic religions, the concepts of Heaven and Hell, as well as the Devil, were heavily influenced by Zoroastrian belief.

Related Links

BBC Links

- BBC Radio 4 - In Our Time: Zoroastrianism - http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20041111.shtml

External Web Links

- [avesta.org - Amesha Spentas and angels - http://www.avesta.org/angels.html](http://www.avesta.org/angels.html)

http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/zoroastrian/beliefs/god_print.html

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