



At a Glance

By BBC Team

Zoroastrianism at a glance

Zoroastrianism is one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions. It was founded by the prophet Zoroaster [/religion/religions/zoroastrian/history/zoroaster_1.shtml] (or Zarathustra) in ancient Iran approximately 3500 years ago.

For 1000 years Zoroastrianism was one of the most powerful religions in the world. It was the official religion of Persia (Iran) [/religion/religions/zoroastrian/history/persia_1.shtml] from 600 BCE to 650 CE.

It is now one of the world's smallest religions with around a quarter of a million followers [</religion/religions/zoroastrian/history/parsis.shtml>] worldwide. There are 4000 Zoroastrians living in Britain.

- Zoroastrians believe there is one God [</religion/religions/zoroastrian/beliefs/god.shtml>] called Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord) and He created the world.
- Zoroastrians are not fire-worshippers, as some Westerners wrongly believe. Zoroastrians believe that the elements are pure and that fire represents God's light or wisdom.
- Ahura Mazda revealed the truth through the prophet, Zoroaster.
- Zoroastrians traditionally pray several times a day.
- Zoroastrians worship communally in a Fire Temple [</religion/religions/zoroastrian/worship/worship.shtml>] or *Agiary*.
- The Zoroastrian book of Holy Scriptures is called The Avesta.
- The Avesta can be roughly split into two main sections:
 - The Avesta is the oldest and core part of the scriptures, which contains the Gathas. The Gathas are seventeen hymns thought to be composed by Zoroaster himself.
 - The Younger Avesta - commentaries to the older Avestan written in later years. It also contains myths, stories and details of ritual observances.
- Zoroastrians are roughly split into two groups:
 - The Iranians
 - The Parsis

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](http://www.avesta.org/zfaq.html) - overview and frequently asked questions - <http://www.avesta.org/zfaq.html>
- http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/zoroastrian/ataglance/glance_print.html