

JAPANESE Fire Bible

Official Country Name: Japan

Location: In Eastern Asia, an archipelago between the North Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Japan, east of the Korean peninsula

Capital: Tokyo

Area: 145,850 square miles;
Urbanization: 66%

Government: Constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy

Industries: Among the world's largest and most technologically-advanced producers of autos, electronic equipment, machine tools, steel and nonferrous metals, ships and chemicals; textiles, processed foods; Chief crops: Rice, sugar beets, vegetables, fruit

Population: 127,433,494; Ethnic Groups: Japanese (99%), others (1% including Koreans, Chinese, Brazilians and Filipinos); Languages: Japanese

Education: Free and compulsory for ages 6-15; Literacy: 99%

Geography and Climate: An island nation located in the North Pacific Ocean, Japan lies off the northeast coast of Asia facing Russia, Korea and China. Japan is made up of four major islands (Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu) and many smaller ones. It is one of the most densely populated nations in the world. Mountains and hills cover the land; the majority of people live in urban areas on the narrow plains along the coasts.

Two ocean currents—the Japan Current and the Oyashio Current—influence the climate. Regional climates are similar to those of the states on the East Coast of the U.S. Seasonal winds called monsoons affect the climate as well. Rain is very abundant throughout Japan, with most areas receiving at least 40 inches a year.

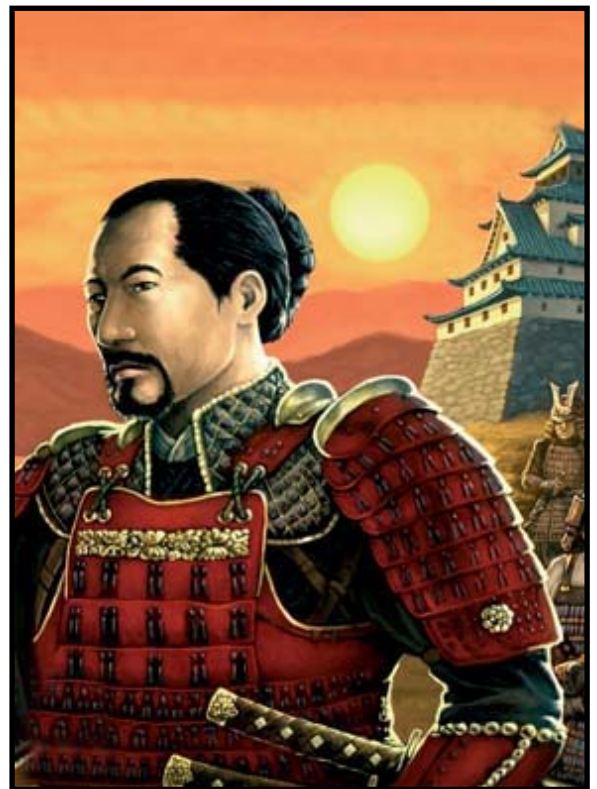


History and Government:

In the sixth and seventh centuries A.D., Japan was greatly influenced by neighboring China, adopting Buddhism, the Chinese writing system, Chinese bureaucratic organization and legal systems from her. Beginning in the late 700s, Japan saw a flowering of classical culture and literature at its new capital in Kyoto. In the late 12th century, military rule began as *samurais* (warriors) began to rule Japan, taking over from the nobles.

In the mid-1500s, the first Europeans visited Japan. Jesuit and Franciscan monks converted hundreds of thousands of Japanese to Catholicism. To keep Japan free from outside influences, the *shogun* (military ruler) of Japan, Tokugawa Ieyasu, published an edict in 1614 abolishing Christianity. Many Catholic missionaries and thousands of their converts were severely persecuted; some were even crucified, burnt alive, or beheaded. As a result, there remained almost no Christian witness. Tokugawa Iemitsu closed Japan to all foreign contact, except for a few Dutch and Chinese traders, in 1639. This isolation lasted two centuries until 1853, when Commodore Perry, a U.S. naval officer, anchored his four ships at Tokyo (Edo) Bay. The Japanese government realized that it could no longer maintain its isolationist state without risking war. In 1854, the Japanese and the U.S. signed a treaty allowing for trade and friendship between the two countries.

An alliance of powerful *daimyo* (warlords) overthrew the *shogun* in 1868, and restored the emperor to power; this event culminated in the “Meiji Restoration.” The capital of Japan was moved to Toyko, and Japan proclaimed its first constitution in 1889. The desire to emulate the imperialistic Western powers drove Japan to also modernize its army and navy; it attacked China in 1894 and Russia a decade later in 1904, winning both wars. In 1910, Japan also annexed Korea, then joined World War I on the side of Great Britain and her allies. In the late 1920s, Japanese nationalism rose to new heights, and an increasingly militaristic government in the 1930s led to a second war with China in 1937. The year before, Japan had signed an anti-communist treaty with Germany.



In order to prevent the U.S. from limiting Japan's imperialistic designs in Asia, Japanese forces attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, precipitating America's entry into World War II. In 1942, Japan rapidly occupied a number of countries, including the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), Burma (now Myanmar) and Malaya. In August 1945, the U.S. dropped the first atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima. The following day a larger bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, and Japan surrendered several days later. In 1947, a new constitution came into force, by which Japan renounced war, and the Emperor was given a ceremonial status.

Japan became a major economic power after the end of World War II, and developed a strong, rapidly growing economy heavily dependant on foreign trade. However, a series of shocks, including the 1995 Kobe earthquake that killed thousands, and a severe recession in 1997, sent the Japanese economy into a tailspin. In 1998, experiencing its worst recession since World War II.

These setbacks led to the resignation of Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto in July 1998. He was replaced by Keizo Obuchi. In 1999, Japan seemed to make slight progress in an economic recovery. Prime Minister Obuchi died of a stroke in May 2000 and was succeeded by Yoshiro Mori, whose administration was dogged by scandal and blunders from the outset.

Religion:

Although Japan is one of the most industrialized and modern nations in the world, most Japanese have often have vague or incorrect notions of who Jesus is. Christians (all denominations, including Roman Catholics) make up less than 1% of the population, and Evangelicals form a little over one-quarter of 1% of 1% (0.0029%) of the Japanese population.

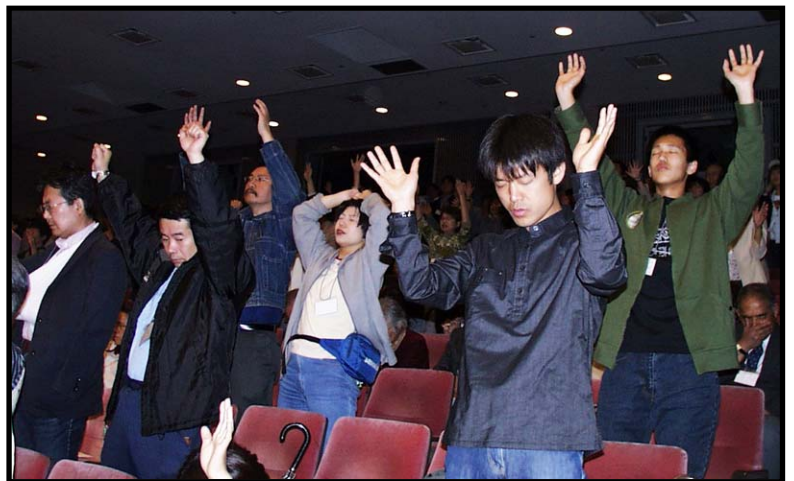
Shinto, which means the way of the gods, is native to Japan and is the oldest religion there, dating back to prehistoric times. Many gods, which are believed to be found in mountains, rivers, rocks, trees and other parts of nature, are worshipped; Shintoism also involves ancestor worship. More than 84% of Japanese follow both Shintoism and Buddhism, which came to Japan from China and Korea in 552 A.D.

Assemblies of God history in Japan:

Carl Juergensen received the baptism in the Holy Spirit in Cleveland, Ohio. Desiring to be used of the Lord on the mission field, he assumed God would call him to Germany, since he had been born there and knew the language. But God had other plans, and called him to Japan.

God confirmed His plans, and told Carl that his 11-year-old daughter, Marie, would be his mouthpiece. The Juergensen family sailed for Japan in 1913. Within less than three years, Marie was fluent in Japanese and was interpreting her father's messages. Juergensen ministered in Japan for 25 years. Through the dedicated ministry of this missionary and his daughter, hundreds of Japanese came to know the Lord.

The Japan Assemblies of God became a national organization in 1949. The activities of the Japanese assemblies are many and varied. A number of churches have kindergartens and daycare centers through which they evangelize both children and parents. Various assemblies have deaf interpreters. Many churches have outstations, which they foster until there are 15 baptized members. At that point the daughter churches are recognized as regular churches.



The Assemblies of God in country reports the following statistics:

- Churches and outstations—359
- Members and adherents— 30,162
- Ministers— 453
- Bible schools (1) enrollment—29
- Extension Bible schools (2) enrollment—25