



JAPAN

Background: The earliest Japanese people migrated across straits from the Asian mainland and various tribal groups had unified by the mid 4th Century AD. Although the indigenous religion of Japan is Shinto, Buddhism, with its beautiful statuary, temples and other religious paraphernalia, was introduced in Japan during the 6th Century and is a major religion in modern Japan. A 7th Century constitution established rules for organization of the state and human conduct. All land was held by the state until an edict in 1069 recognized private estates. The Mongolian Empire sought to expand eastward with an invasion of Japan, which was twice defeated. A system of noble warriors emerged that superseded other civil authority with the chief civil and military administrator known as the shogun. Japan held to a strict policy of seclusion from foreign affairs during the 17th to 19th Centuries, but foreign ships were seen more and more often in Japanese ports as worldwide trade expanded. Foreign pressure led Japan to open its trade restrictions in the mid 1800's, but resulted in internal conflict. Japan invaded China in 1937 having successfully occupied Korea and Manchuria. In 1941, Japan attacked United States forces in Hawaii and occupied much of East Asia. After its defeat in WW II, Japan recovered to become one of the world's strongest economic powers despite its scarce natural resources. There is a strong sense of cooperation between industry and government.

Geography: Japan is an archipelago in Eastern Asia off the Korean peninsula. The climate varies from tropical in the south to temperate in the north. The terrain is largely mountainous.

Gideon

Organization: The Gideons International in Japan was organized in 1950. Brother Norihiro Hirai is the Executive Director of this National Association.
Camps - 168; Gideons - 1,541; Auxiliary - 770; Scriptures placed as of 05/31/2013 - 36,347,154.

Population: 127.3 million. 99% literate.

Religions: Buddhist & Shinto 83.9%; Christian 2%

Language: Japanese

Government: Japan is a constitutional monarchy with parliamentary control. There are 47 administrative divisions called prefectures. The capital is located in Tokyo.

Legislative Branch: The bicameral Parliament consists of the House of Councillors with 242 seats elected by popular vote for 6-year terms and the House of Representatives with 480 seats elected to 4-year terms.

Executive Branch: Chief of state: Emperor AKIHITO. Head of government: Prime Minister Yoshihiko NODA. The cabinet is appointed by the Prime Minister.

Judicial Branch: The chief justice is designated by the cabinet and appointed by the emperor. All other justices are appointed by the cabinet.

Current

Situation: Nationalistic Shinto practices tend to exacerbate the constitutional freedom of religion guarantee. Some 80% of the population claim no personal relationship with any god, yet most follow the ancestral worship prevalent in Buddhism or the polytheistic worship in Shintoism, or newer variations of those. The earthquake and tsunami of 2011 caused an estimated \$235 billion to \$310 billion (US) in damages and has led to electricity shortages. Government debt exceeds 200% of GDP. Due to recent changes in Japanese society, a recent poll shows 10% of Japanese citizens view Christianity as a viable option. Pray for openness to the Gospel in light of intense societal pressure to conform to Shinto practices. Pray for Gideon and Auxiliary Scripture distributions; that people will come to know the Truth. Pray also for church growth and that pastors will remain true to the Gospel.

