The **Rastafari movement**, or **Rasta**, is a spiritual movement. It arose in the 1930s in [Jamaica](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamaica), a country with a predominantly [Christian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity) culture where 98% of the people were the [black](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_people) descendants of[slaves](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_slave_trade).[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari_movement#cite_note-0)[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari_movement#cite_note-DreadJesus-1) Most of its adherents worship [Haile Selassie I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haile_Selassie_I" \o "Haile Selassie I), Emperor of [Ethiopia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopia) (ruled 1930–1974), as[God](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God) [incarnate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incarnation), the [Second Advent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Advent), or the reincarnation of Jesus. Members of the Rastafari movement are known as Rastas, or Rastafari. The movement is sometimes referred to as "Rastafarianism", but this term is considered derogatory and offensive by some Rastas, who, being highly critical of "isms" (which they see as a typical part of "Babylon culture"), dislike being labelled as an "ism" themselves.[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari_movement#cite_note-2)

The name *Rastafari* is taken from *Ras Tafari*, the [pre-regnal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regnal_name) title of [Haile Selassie I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haile_Selassie_I" \o "Haile Selassie I), composed of[Amharic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amharic_language) *Ras* (literally "Head", an Ethiopian title equivalent to [Duke](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duke)), and Haile Selassie's pre-regnal given name, Tafari. Rastafari are generally distinguished for asserting the doctrine that Haile Selassie I, the former and final [Emperor of Ethiopia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emperor_of_Ethiopia), is another [incarnation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incarnation) of the Christian God, called [Jah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jah" \o "Jah).[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari_movement#cite_note-3) Most see Haile Selassie I as *Jah* or *Jah Rastafari*, who is the [second coming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_coming) of [Jesus Christ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Christ) onto the earth, but to others he is simply God's chosen king on earth.

The Rastafari movement encompasses themes such as the [spiritual use](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entheogen) of [cannabis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cannabis_(drug))[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari_movement#cite_note-Dread-4)[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari_movement#cite_note-5) and the rejection of western society, called [Babylon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylon) (from the [metaphorical Babylon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylon_(New_Testament)) of the [Christian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian) [New Testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament)). It proclaims [Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa) (also "[Zion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zion#Rastafari_movement)") as the original birthplace of mankind, and from the beginning of the movement the call to [repatriation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Repatriation) to Africa has been a central theme.[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari_movement#cite_note-6) Rasta also embraces various [Afrocentric](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrocentrism" \o "Afrocentrism) and [Pan-African](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan-African) social and political aspirations,[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari_movement#cite_note-Dread-4)[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari_movement#cite_note-ChantingBabylon-7) such as the sociopolitical views and teachings of Jamaican publicist, organizer, and [black nationalist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_nationalist) [Marcus Garvey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Garvey) (also often regarded as a prophet). Another theme is [Royalty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_family), with Rastas seeing themselves as African royalty and using[honorifics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_honorifics) such as Prince or King in order to give royalty to their names.

Rastafari is not a highly organized [religion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion); it is a movement and an ideology. Many Rastas say that it is not a "religion" at all, but a "Way of Life".[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari_movement#cite_note-8) Many Rastas do not claim any sect or denomination, and thus encourage one another to find faith and inspiration within themselves, although some do identify strongly with one of the "[mansions of Rastafari](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mansions_of_Rastafari)" — the three most prominent of these being the*Nyahbinghi*, the *Bobo Ashanti* and the *Twelve Tribes of Israel*.

Today, awareness of the Rastafari movement has spread throughout much of the world, largely through interest generated by [reggae](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reggae) music, especially the major international success of Jamaican singer/songwriter [Bob Marley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Marley) (1945–1981).

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bob-Marley-France-Rastafari.JPG)

[http://bits.wikimedia.org/static-1.20wmf4/skins/common/images/magnify-clip.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bob-Marley-France-Rastafari.JPG)

Bob Marley in France noted as a Rasta.

By 1997, there were around one million Rastafari faithful worldwide.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari_movement#cite_note-9) In the 2001 Jamaican census, 24,020 individuals (less than 1 percent of the population) identified themselves as Rastafarians.[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari_movement#cite_note-state2007-10) Other sources have estimated that in the 2000s they formed "about 5 percent of the population" of Jamaica,[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari_movement#cite_note-11)or have conjectured that "there are perhaps as many as 100,000 Rastafarians in Jamaica".[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari_movement#cite_note-12)