

Islam

From Muhammed to Mecca

Islam (or Muhammedism) is now the largest and fastest growing religion in the world. Surpassing Roman Catholicism (1.2 billion), it has over 1.5 billion followers worldwide and makes up 23% of the world's population (All Christianity – 2 billion followers, 33%). The followers of the Islam faith are called Muslims (Moslems). The word “Islam” means *to submit* and the word “Muslim” means *those who submit*. The Islamic religion is based on the writings and revelations of Muhammed, the prophet and founder of Islam.

Muhammed (also Mohammed)

Muhammed was born in the Arabian city of Mecca in A.D. 570. He claims to have been approached by the angel Gabriel and told to write down revelations from God that would be recited to him. The Arabic word for “recite” is Quran (or Koran), which means *the reciting* or *the reading*. For 22 years, he continued to receive and record these revelations from God (Allah). He began to preach in the streets against immorality and idolatry, all the while insisting that Allah had called him to be a prophet.

He was run out of town on July 22, A.D. 622. This flight, called the *hegira*, marks the beginning of the Islam religion. (In fact, the Muslim calendar begins here and subsequent years are labeled *A.H. – after hegira*.) He became the religious and political leader of Medina and in 630 returned to Mecca with his followers and defeated his opponents. He destroyed all the idols in the Temple (the Kaaba), except for a sacred stone (*the Black Stone*), and claimed the Kaaba to be the most holy shrine in Islam.

He became Islam's and Arabia's religious, political and military leader in the name of Allah. His death shortly thereafter in 632 did not lessen the zeal of his followers, then or now.

So What's the Difference (what they believe)?

1. **God** – There is one God – Allah. He is all-knowing, all-powerful, all-seeing. He is the creator of the universe. The emphasis is on power, not grace; and judgment, not mercy. The idea of a Trinity is not even considered.
2. **Jesus Christ** – Jesus was [only] a great prophet, equal to Moses, Abraham and Jonah. He is, however, ranked below the greatest prophet, Muhammed. He was not born of a virgin, and was not the Son of God and was never crucified (Islam claims that it was Judas in disguise). (*Luke 1:24-26, John 1:14, Philipians 2:5-7*)
3. **Man and sin** – Man is sinful and headed for hell. The responsibility and burden of securing salvation (and thus heaven) is his, and his alone. (*Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23*)
4. **Salvation** – To obtain salvation, a Muslim must faithfully perform (“works” again) five (5) duties – *the five pillars of faith* and believe in the six (6) doctrines. These will be described at the end of the lesson. Suffice it to say that the burden rests solely on the follower's ability to perform certain tasks. (*Ephesians 2:8-9, Acts 2:21, Acts 16:31, I John 1:9*)
5. **Heaven and hell** – The Islam religion teaches that there is a heaven and hell. One obtains heaven by being sinless and pleasing Allah (by performing the items in number 4). Heaven is a place of pure, unending, physical pleasure for the follower, not the dwelling place of the Lord where He will be glorified and worshipped. Hell is for those who are sinful (unsuccessful) and is a place of punishment. *A Muslim can never be certain whether he is going to heaven or hell!* (*Romans 5:18, Acts 2:21, John 5:24*)
6. **The Bible** – The Muslim believes in four God (Allah)-inspired books:

The Torah of Moses (Pentateuch) – Genesis to Deuteronomy

The Injil – The Gospel (teachings) of Jesus

The Zabur – Psalms of David

The Quran (Koran)

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The Quran takes precedent and supersedes the other books. It is *the only truly* sacred scripture of the Islam religion. It is made up of 114 chapters or *surahs*. They are arranged according to length with the longest ones at the beginning. (Example of referencing – *Surah 4:171 – Jesus was a messenger of God. Far is it removed from his (Allah’s) transcendent majesty that he should have a son*”. The other 3 books, though important, are thought to have been distorted by Western civilization and therefore cannot be considered sacred. Additional writings and teachings have been developed and recorded in a book called the *Hadith* (“tradition”). A saying in the Hadith is called a *sunna* or custom. These are all supposed to describe how Muhammed *would have* acted or thought in a given situation (WWMD?).

The 6 doctrines of Islam

- 1) GOD – There is only one God – Allah.
- 2) ANGELS – The chief angel is Gabriel. There is an evil fallen angel, *Shaitan* (Satan), and his followers, the *djinn* (demons).
- 3) SCRIPTURE – The four books described above. The Quran is the sacred scripture.
- 4) MUHAMMED – The greatest prophet of Allah. There are 28 other minor prophets including Jesus, Moses, Jonah, David, Adam, Noah and Abraham (*remember – the Arab can trace his roots back to Ishmael, Abraham’s son by Hagar*).
- 5) THE END TIMES – On the last “day”, the dead will be resurrected and judged by Allah and each person will be sent to either heaven or hell.
- 6) PREDESTINATION (FATALISM) – “*It is Allah’s will...*”- God [Allah] has pre-determined everything and nothing (or no one) can change it

The 5 Pillars of faith (the duties to be performed)

- 1) **The Shahadah or Kalima** (statement of belief) – This *must* be repeated in public: “There is no god but Allah and Muhammed is the prophet of Allah.”
- 2) **Prayers** – These must be performed 5 times a day, in a kneeling position and facing the holy city of Mecca.
- 3) **Alms** – Muslim law requires the believer to give 1/40th (2.5%) of his income to help the widows, orphans, the sick and others less fortunate.
- 4) **Ramadan** – Observed during the ninth month of the Muslim lunar year (~July). It is a holy season and Muslims are required to fast during the day (dawn to dusk) for the entire month.
- 5) **Pilgrimage to Mecca** – This is called the *Haji* and must be performed at least once in a Muslim’s lifetime. This is so important that, if the trip is impossible or too dangerous for the believer, they may send someone in their place.

Additional Info:

There are 3 major sects in the Islam faith.

- The largest, the *Sunni*, is considered to be the mainstream “orthodox” Islam sect (83% of Muslims).
- The *Shi’a* completely dominates the country of Iran and make up roughly 16% of the Islam faith. The leader of the Shi’ites is called the Ayatollah.
- The third group, the *Sufis*, involves the mystical and emotional practices (*dervishes*) of the Islam religion, including the whirling dancing that produces a spiritual frenzy among its participants.

Islam is both a religion and a way of life that is also closely tied to the politics of the land. A true Muslim will go to war (*Ji’had* – holy war), resort to terrorism (mainly Shi’ites) or *fatwa* (ordered executions) and fight to the death to spread or preserve Islam. Contrary to mainstream belief, the goal of Islam is to propagate the growth, dominance and spread of Islam globally and subdue non-believers [in any way possible] in the name of Allah.

Why do Islamic extremists (terrorists) hate the United States?

- The United States is the primary icon of “Western civilization” which is seen as the major threat to the Islamic way of life – and as such is referred to as the Great Satan.

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- The U.S. is an ally with Israel. Israel occupies and claims the right to possess Palestine (the Holy Land), which the Arabs insist is their rightful claim
- The U.S. represents all of “Euro-Christianity” which, during the Crusades (1095-1290) and many other times in history, slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Muslims