

Understanding Islam ...

Preparation for Prayer



The Hira cave on the mountain Jabal Al Nur near Mecca where Mohammed supposedly received his first revelations.

The word “Islam” simply means “submission to God,” and a Muslim is one who follows the laws and practices of Islam. Muslims say Islam has its origins with Adam, but they revere Mohammed as the greatest prophet of the religion. Mohammed is not just a name, but a title which means “The Praised One.”

Pagan idol worship abounded in Arabia during much of Mohammed’s lifetime. There were an estimated 360 gods and goddesses adored by the Arabs, and Mecca was a major centre of idolatry in the region. Muslim historians indicate that even as a boy Mohammed detested idol worship and lived a morally pure life.

At the age of 40 Mohammed became very concerned about the state of his fellow countrymen. It was in a time of meditation during Ramadan in AD 610 that he began to receive revelations that he believed were from the angel Gabriel. These form the basis of the Qur’an. In addition to the Qur’an, Muslims rely on traditions called “Hadiths” about the life, teachings and practices of Mohammed which influence the daily life of most Muslims to one degree or another.

Mohammed proclaimed that the Qur’an was the final and superior revelation from the One Supreme God. Jewish and Christian ideas, concepts and history are very present

in the Qur’an, though they are often distorted. Mohammed banned the worship of idols and taught that a Muslim’s life must be wholly committed to Allah, with ritual washing before the five daily times of prayer facing Mecca. Friday became the appointed day for corporate worship.

Mohammed died of natural causes in AD 632 in Medina, Saudi Arabia. But before the end of his life, Islam had become the religion for much of Arabia. Within one hundred years of his death, Islam had spread as far as Spain in the West and India in the East. Later it spread throughout Southern and South East Asia.

The name Mohammed means "The Praised One."

A page from an ancient version of the Qur'an.



Mohammed was born in AD 570 in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. His father died before he was born, and his mother died when he was only six. Mohammed went to live with his grandfather, who was the guardian of the Kaaba, the sacred building of Mecca. Two years later his grandfather also died, so from the age of eight Mohammed was brought up by his uncle who was a merchant along the great camel trade routes.

Mohammed was employed in his early years by Khadija, a wealthy widow, to manage her caravan trade, and he became known as Al-Amin, the trustworthy one. At the age of 25 he married Khadija. Their marriage produced three children,

two sons who died in infancy and one daughter named Fatima. After Mohammed moved to Medina, his cousin Ali married Fatima. Ali would eventually become the fourth Caliph (successor of Mohammed).

Khadija and Mohammed were married for 25 years, and after she died, Mohammed practiced polygamy. He said that God permitted him to have numerous wives, but his followers were allowed a maximum of four, depending on their ability to provide for them. While this sounds shocking to modern Christians, Muslims are quick to point out that David, Solomon and many other biblical figures had multiple wives.

Islamic beliefs :

- One God, the Creator of all things
- Angels and evil spirits
- Prophets (Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, Mohammed)
- Mohammed was the last and greatest of the prophets.
- Holy books (Injil, Zabur, Qur'an)
- The Day of Judgement
- The Bible has been corrupted and modified.

Muslims believe Jesus:

- was conceived miraculously in the womb of Mary.
- is only a prophet.
- was actually a good Muslim.
- taught an earlier form of Islam.
- did not die on the cross.
- went to heaven.
- will come again, marry, have children and die.
- will be judged like all men at the Last Judgement
- is the Messiah and the Word of God in Islam.
(Yet Muslims do not really understand either concept).

Muslims do not believe :

- That it is possible to know God as in John 17:3.
(They only think that they can know about Him).
- God is a Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Jesus is the Son of God.