

Basic Islam



According to Muslims, Islam began with the very first human beings, Adam and Eve, who were supposed to submit themselves to God. The word *Islam* means submission. Muslims believe that Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus were all prophets of Islam. Many Muslims even believe that Adam built the original *Beit Allah* (the house of God) in Mecca, the *Kaaba*. This stone structure, covered with a black cloth, has existed for a very long time. It existed even during the life of the most famous Muslim, Mohammed.

No one can possibly understand Islam without knowing something about the life of Mohammed. This man is revered by all Muslims as the last and greatest prophet. In Islam, Mohammed is considered the “ideal man.” Mohammed is in no way considered divine, nor is he worshipped, but he is the model for all Muslims concerning how they should conduct themselves. No images of Mohammed are permitted (in order to prevent idolatry).

The Early life of Mohammed: The prophet of Islam was born in 570 AD in Mecca, a city in Saudi Arabia. He was a member of the Hashim clan of the powerful Quraysh tribe. During much of Mohammed’s lifetime pagan idol worship abounded in Arabia. An estimated 360 gods and goddesses were adored by the Arabs in Mecca, which was a major center of idolatry in the region. Muslim historians think that even as a boy Mohammed detested idol worship and lived a morally pure life.

Initial Revelations: According to Muslims, at the age of 40, in 610 AD, Mohammed began to receive revelations and instruction that he believed were from the archangel Gabriel (*Gibrael* in Arabic). These “revelations” form the basis of the Qur’an. Mohammed proclaimed that his revelations were the final and superior message from the One Supreme God, although in the beginning Mohammed even doubted himself that he was a prophet. He banned the worship of idols and established civil and religious order in Medina and eventually Mecca. Mohammed died of natural causes in 632 AD in Medina, Saudi Arabia.

Relations with Jews and Christians: During his life, Mohammed met many people who were at least nominal Christians. He also learned many religious ideas and customs from Jewish clans that were living in the region of Mecca and Medina. Mohammed’s role as prophet was not accepted by the Jews, leading to serious conflict. Many Jewish and Christian ideas, practices and history are present in the Qur’an, although they are often distorted.

MUSLIMS BELIEVE IN ...

- One God, the Creator of all things*
- Angels and evil spirits*
- Prophets (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jonah, Jesus, Mohammed)*
- Mohammed, the last and greatest prophet*
- Holy books: the Torah (books of Moses), Zabur (Psalms), Injil (Gospel) and the Qur’an*
- The Day of Judgement for all people*
- The Bible has been corrupted and modified by Jews and Christians.*



Jesus says, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Are my ideas and attitudes toward Muslims shaped by this commandment?