

A serene night landscape featuring a starry sky, a forest of evergreen trees, and a body of water reflecting the scene. The word "ISLAM" is prominently displayed in the center.

ISLAM



ORIGIN

Although many of us in the Judeo-Christian world think of Islam as a religion that began with Muhammed several hundred years after Christ, Muslims claim that Islam has always existed and that the Biblical characters that we claim as our own spiritual descendents were actually Muslims.

In fact, Jesus himself was a Muslim prophet whose teachings were later corrupted by his followers.

Surprise!



ORIGIN

Historically though, Islam was founded by Muhammed, born in Mecca in 570 AD

He was a businessman and each year spent a month praying and meditating in a cave

One such time (610 AD), an angel visited him and demanded that he read or recite from the book the angel brought

Though there was no book, Muhammed received a revelation and these visits would continue for years

He began openly sharing these in 613 AD

He had to eventually flee (Hijra) to Medina in 622 AD and this is the year one in the Muslim calendar

ORIGIN

Muhammed returned to Mecca in 620 and conquered it and died two years later

He was succeeded by Abu Bakr who received the title “Caliph”

When he died, Umar took over, developed the Muslim calendar, but was assassinated

His successor, Uthman, codified official version of the Qur’an (also assassinated)

The last caliph in the “Rightly Guided Caliphate” was Ali and his followers were called the Shiites.

A major branch broke off at this point and are called Sunnis.

MODERN ISLAM

Modern Islam includes more than 50 states that vary in language, ethnicity, customs, politics, and economic systems.

In response to modern culture, Islam takes four stances:

- Secularist (keep religion private)
- Traditionalist (Islamic law should guide society)
- Revivalist (Society should be essentially Islamic)
- Modernist (Islam should appropriate the best of the West, but not fully assimilate)



THE QUR'AN

Islam has few religious writings in comparison to Buddhism and Hinduism

The Qur'an is the source not only for theological beliefs and ritual practice but also for Arabic grammar and language, calligraphy, the arts and sciences, law, philosophy, and politics

The Qur'an is the series of revelations that Muhammed received from 610-632, organized into 114 chapters or suras arranged by length and about the size of the NT

The reason there are no manuscript variations is because Uthman ordered an official version based on Abu Bakr's copy and collected and burned the rest

OTHER WRITINGS

In addition to the Qur'an, the Hadith are important because they are stories of Muhammed's life

Whereas the Qur'an contains the words of God and no one else, the Hadith is focused on the stories of the prophet's life





BELIEFS

There are six primary articles of belief in Islam:

- God (as in Allah)
- Angels (also jinn)
- Scriptures (as in Qur'an)
- Prophets
- Predestination
- Heaven and hell and a divine judgment

There are four important messengers:

- Moses (Torah)
- David (Psalms)
- Jesus (Gospels)
- Muhammad (Qur'an)



PRACTICES

Muslim religious practice is built around Five Pillars:

- Confession (belief in Allah and final prophet Muhammad)
- Prayer (Five per day facing Kaaba in Mecca)
- Almsgiving (Giving 2.5 percent of wealth to needy)
- Fasting (During month of Ramadan)
- Pilgrimage (go to Mecca once in your life)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Derek Cooper, *Christianity & World Religions: An Introduction to the World's Major Faiths* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013).

