

# World religions report – the islamic religion essay



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World Religions Report - The Islamic Religion INTRODUCTION: The Islamic religion is one of the three major monotheistic religions of the world. These three are Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

According to both Fisher and Bassiouni, these religions all can be traced to the prophet Abraham, and all of them originated in the Middle East (Fisher, 2005; Bassiouni, 1999). According to Bassiouni (1999), Abraham, who is also known to Islam as "The Patriarch," was the father of Isma'il (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac). The sons and daughters of Isaac formed what were to become the Hebrew tribes. The sons and daughters of Isma'il formed what were to become the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula and were the first people to become Muslims. The term "Islam" comes from the same root words "salaam" which means peace and "silm" which means the condition of peace.

A Muslim is one who is at peace and surrenders himself or herself to God. This surrendering to Islam means that one gives oneself to the belief without reservation, and following the letter and the spirit of the Qur'an's prescriptions (Bassiouni, 1999). According to Fisher (2005), Islamic tradition states that the Islamic "region sank into historical oblivion after turning away from Abraham's monotheism." Fisher also states that after centuries of oblivion, Muhammad was born around the year 570 CE to a poor clan in a very powerful tribe in the region.

His parents and his grandparents died and Muhammad was left to his uncle. His uncle put him to work as a shepherd (Fisher, 2005). Fisher also mentions that when Muhammad was in his teens and on a trip to Syria with his uncle, they met a Christian monk who said that he had the markings of a prophet.

When Muhammad was forty, he went on a spiritual retreat during the month of Ramadan. The angel Gabriel came to him and insisted that he recite, and the angel dictated the words that he should recite which became the beginning of the Qur'an (Fisher, 2005).

Fisher mentions that three years after these revelations, Muhammad was instructed to preach publicly and was ridiculed and stoned by the Quarayshites (Fisher, 2005). Muhammad was forced into exile for three years with his followers. When they returned, they continued to be persecuted by the Quarayshites. During his fiftieth year, which was called the "Year of Sorrows," his wife and his uncle died (Fisher, 2005).

Fisher mentions that during the height of his trials, he had the Night of Ascension where he ascended to the seven heavens and into the Divine Proximity. He saw other prophets and teachers; he saw heaven and hell and received the great blessings from the Divine Presence (Fisher, 2005).

Muhammad had many trials and problems over the years, but his popularity grew. Fisher also mentions that Muhammad returned to Mecca in the year 630 CE with such a following that the people from Mecca could not resist. He talks about the purging of the Ka'bah of all of its idols, and from that time to this it has been the center of Muslim piety (Fisher, 2005). Muhammad died two years later with no clear instructions as to who should follow him as spiritual leader.

Bassiouni (1999) states that "in Islam there can be no confusion or doubt that Muhammad was a man, and only a man, chosen by the Creator to fulfill a divine mission as a prophet. Muhammad's mission was literally to 'read'

what Allah had ordered and ordained nothing more” (Bassiouni, 1999).

Muhammad received his revelations from God, according to Islam. These revelations were received either in solitude or in the company of others.

Those who observed these revelations claimed that these words coming out of Muhammad’s mouth were inspired. Bassiouni also states that this was Muhammad’s wahy or a divine inspiration or revelation (Bassiouni, 1999).

The sacred scriptures of Islam are the Qur’an. According to Bassiouni (1999), “ Muslims believe that the Qur’an is the Word of Allah expressed through the revelations to the Prophet” Muhammad (Bassiouni, 1999). The Qur’an means, literally, recitations. It has 114 chapters revealed to Muhammad during a period of 23 years.

According to Bassiouni, these chapters were revealed to the Prophet in Mecca and Madina. Each chapter varies in length, and they are not arranged in chronological order of their revelation. They are arranged according to the length of each chapter or Surah. The longest is first, and the shortest is last. It has also been said that throughout the history of Islam, no one has challenged the accuracy of the Qur’an (Bassiouni, 1999).

**SITE REVIEW:** The Islamic site that I reviewed was the Islamic Center of San Antonio which happens to be on Fairhaven in San Antonio, Texas. This Islamic mosque was founded in 1997 and is directed by Iman Yousef Said who had an Islamic center in Houston, but decided to relocate to San Antonio after the tragedy of September 11. He is a very open minded Islamic leader in that he tries to have good ties with both the Islamic community of the region, but also with other churches and denominations in the area. They

have an annual event that they open their doors to non-Islamic people so that they can learn about Islam first-hand. The center also goes to other churches and tries to promote a healthy environment to other faiths.

This site is open every day for the required five prayers a day and has many activities for its members. The Islamic Center of San Antonio is a very beautiful building that has a white exterior and has the traditional domed entrances. The main building has a very large prayer hall and has separate entrances for men and women. I found that it also has a separate prayer room for women so that they can pray undisturbed. It also has a library that has texts in Arabic. The center also has a school called the Al-Madinah school that teaches Muslim students.

This school teaches Arabic, the Qur'an, the life of Muhammad, Islamic law and how to worship. I found that this mosque was very different and more open than I had expected. The people there were very kind and respectful, and I learned a lot from Mr. Said. INTERVIEW SUMMARY: I interviewed a member of the Kerrville business community who I have known for ten years. He is from Iran, and has lived here for the last 25 years.

He is a Muslim and has always been a practicing one even though he is married to a Hispanic Catholic. I spent about two hours talking to him about his life as a Muslim and his knowledge of Islam. Many of the points mentioned in the introduction were reinforced through this interview. The information below is a summary of the interview without repeating the questions. The major Islamic holidays and celebrations change from year to year, because the Islamic calendar does not follow the same one as we know

it. The calendar is counted from the year of the Hegira which was the year that Muhammad emigrated from Mecca to Medina which was on July 16th, 622.

The year 2008 marks the beginning of A. H. 1429. The Islamic New Year is during the month of Muharram which is beginning of the Islamic liturgical year. The Islamic New Year is celebrated quietly, with prayers and readings and reflection upon the hegira.

The holiday of Mawlid al-Nabi is the Prophet Muhammad's birthday. This day is fixed as the 12th day of the month of Rabi I in the Islamic calendar. The word Mawlid means birthday of a holy figure and al-Nabi means prophet. This day is celebrated with recollections of Muhammad's life and significance. Fundamentalist Muslims do not celebrate this holiday.

The holiday of Eid al-Fitr means, literally, the " Festival of Breaking the Fast. This holiday happens at the conclusion of the month of Ramadan. Ramadan is a month of fasting, and the celebration of Eid al-Fitr is one of the two most important Islamic celebrations. On this holiday, people dress in their finest clothes, adorn their homes with lights and decorations, give treats to the children, and enjoy visits with friends and family. At this time, Muslims are obligated to share their blessings by feeding the poor and making contributions to mosques.

The other celebration that is important to Muslims is the holiday of Eid al-Adha. This holiday means the Feast of Sacrifice, and commemorates the prophet Abraham's willingness to obey Allah by sacrificing his son Ishmael. According to the Qur'an, just before Abraham sacrificed his son, Allah

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replaced Ishmael with a ram, and therefore spared his life. This holiday begins on the 10th day of Dhu'l-Hijja which is the last month of the Islamic calendar. This celebration lasts for three days, and occurs at the conclusion of the annual Hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca. This festival is celebrated by sacrificing a lamb or other animal and distributing the meat to relatives, friends, and to the poor.

This sacrifice symbolizes one's obedience to Allah and its distribution is an expression of generosity, which is one of the five pillars of Islam. He told me that Islam had shaped his life profoundly. He has found peace and truth through the Qur'an and the goal to serve Allah by helping as many people as he can. He follows the teachings of the Qur'an and prays the required five times a day. He has set up a private prayer section of his house as he can not go to San Antonio daily due to the requirements of his business. He has made great progress in fulfilling the five pillars of Islam and has made several pilgrimages to Mecca over the years.

The Qur'an is the main source of all Islamic law which is also called the Sharia. It contains the laws and rules that the Muslim world is governed and forms the basis for relations between man and God and between individuals. The Sharia contains the rules by which a Muslim society is organized and governed, and it provides the means to resolve conflicts between individuals and between individuals and the state. He told me that Islam is a religion and a legal system that is to be applied to all situations and to all times. Islam can provide the solution to contemporary social problems. The biggest challenge he has found in the practice of his religion in his life has been dealing with the bigotry of the people in this country over the Muslim people.

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He has made it a point to instruct others that all Muslims are not out to destroy this country, and only want peace. **COMPARISON AND CONTRAST:** The biggest comparison that I can make between Islam and Christianity is that both worship the same God. This is the God of Abraham. One can call Him Allah or God, He is the same. Both religions are dedicated to the worship of God, even if the way that each worship is different. Islam and Christianity are different in that Christianity worships Jesus as the Messiah, or savior, and Islam view Jesus as a great prophet.

Christians have the Bible as their sacred scripture, and more specifically, the New Testament. Muslims have the Qur'an as their sacred scripture. Allah gave the Qur'an to Muhammad in revelations over 23 years. The Apostles recount what they saw Jesus do over his life and ministry. The Christians have churches with pews and altars or podiums in which to pray and receive sermons.

Muslims have open spaces where they pray in mosques or at home or at work. They are not required to pray at the mosque. **CONCLUSION:** In conclusion, Islam and the Islamic people worship the same God as Christians, and are searching for peace. Their celebrations and calendars are different as well as how they pray. They are just as dedicated to Allah as we are to Jesus and our God. I feel that they have been misunderstood by the people in this country, and we should try to learn about the different religions of the world completely, and treat everyone with respect.

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