

Introduction to Islam



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Article

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by Masooma Beatty

Islam was not born in the 7th century A.D. Rather, it is the same religion that God revealed through His messengers (peace be upon them) to every people.

Islam sometimes seems strange to non-Muslims because it is a religion which impacts every part of life, from eating and sleeping to working and playing. It is not only a personal religion, but also a social one. Muslims seek to live in accordance with God's laws. By doing so, they strive to obtain nearness to God and victory over temporary trials and temptations in this world.

All aspects of their practice including prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage are intended to help meet this goal. Although strict by secular standards, Islam is not an ascetic religion. Islam requires its followers to be active participants in their communities.

Muslims believe that God is One, indivisible, and they believe in all the prophets of the Christians and Jews including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Elias, Jonah, John the Baptist, and Jesus (peace be upon them). Muslims also recognize another prophet named Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family), who is a direct descendant of Abraham through his first born son, Ishmael. His prophethood may be prophesied in the Bible in several places, including Deut 18:18 and John 14:16.

The Qur'an is the holy book of Muslims. It contains many stories that are familiar to Christians and Jews.

It was not created by man but was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) through the Angel Gabriel at the command of God. It contains no scientific fallacies or internal contradictions.

In fact, it contains much scientific knowledge discovered by scientists only in this century. The Qur'an is an unparalleled Arabic literary masterpiece. Furthermore, it survives in its original revealed form, unlike the Torah and the Gospel. People living in the West and throughout the world should not allow themselves to be ignorant about Islam and Muslims.

For example, there are six million Muslims living in the United States out of 1.2 billion in the world. Only 18% of Muslims live in the Arab world. Demographers say that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the U.S. (and the world) due to high birth rate, immigration, and high conversion rate.

By the year 2000, Islam is predicted to be the second largest religion in America if it is not already, surpassing Judaism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness, and other religions.

Here are some things you can do with regard to your Muslim neighbors, students, employees, and coworkers that would be appreciated:

- * Respect their religious convictions by allowing them to pray, dress, fast, and socially interact according to their beliefs.
- * Be sensitive about dietary constraints, particularly when it comes to alcohol and pork .
- * Feel free to ask questions!

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