

## Islam

This is a basic overview of the Islam religion and Mohammed as their prophet.

Islam could very well be listed as the fastest growing religion in the world today. Estimates of its followers (Muslims) range from a conservative 800 million to 1.5 billion worldwide. This means that about 1 out of every 5 people on Earth is a Muslim. This population extends to 40 countries on 3 continents.

There are 2 major sects of Islam - the Sunnis make up 80- 90% of the Muslim population and the Shiites comprise the rest. The Shia is a sect of all which broke off from the main body of Muslims in the 7th century (which they call their 1st century). The division arose over a dispute that concerned the succession of leadership after Mohammed's death. The Shiites, who favored Mohammed's son-in-law and nephew: All believed that the caliph should have divine appointment and not be elected by men.

The 2nd disagreement concerned the doctrine of Imam, for the Shiites. an imam is a divinely appointed leader that will guide the people. New ones appear from time to time as they are needed. Throughout the history of Islam, men have claimed this position. The Sunni's believe that the imam is just the leader of the Friday night prayer service and nothing more.

The Sunnites make up the majority of the population in countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. The Shiites populate Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and parts of Africa and are the fundamentalists that we hear about so often on the news. They are also very active in the war for the Holy Land.

Both conservative and fundamentalist Muslims believe in a jihad, or Holy War. There are different interpretations of what a Jihad really is: Conservatives consider the Jihad to be a spiritual war, while the fundamentalists see it as literal.

There are also what we would call cults that have arisen from Islam such as the Baha'is. It is their goal to unite all religions under their prophet, Baha'u'llah. He has many similar claims to the Muslim's prophet Mohammed, one of which is being the comforter and successor to Christ..

Other Islam-based cults or offshoots of Islam include the Sufis (mystics), and the Druze (Shiite mystics). In addition, there are the Black Muslims who belong to the Nation of Islam, led by Louis Farrakhan.

Although a majority of Arabs are Muslims, not all Muslims are Arabs. We are probably familiar with certain Arab countries that are Islamic, but are not so familiar with the many non- Arab countries that are comprised of a Muslim majority. Here are some examples: Indonesia (pop. 195.6 million; 87% Muslim), Sumatra (pop. 1.8 million; 99% Muslim), Turkey (99.8% Muslim), Yemen (99.9% Muslim), Afghanistan (pop. 18 million; 99% Muslim), Central Africa (Chad 90%; Sudan - 70%; Nigeria - 40%),

Pakistan (97% Muslim), Bangladesh (85% Muslim - Note: These non-Arab countries are equal in Muslim population to Arab Muslim countries), and Iraq (pop. 22.4 million; 95.4% Muslim).

The above mentioned are just a few statistics to demonstrate Islam's great influence throughout the world. Almost 1/5 or more of the people on earth are Islamic.

In the United States, there are anywhere from 6 - 8 million Muslims. There are presently more Muslims than there are Episcopalians and Methodists, with 1500 mosques (Muslim temples) throughout America.

Here in Hawaii, there are an estimated 4000 adherents to Islam although attendance seems to be more like 1500 that practice the religion. This number will more than likely continue to grow since they have weekly exposure on television and radio.

Islam first made its way onto American soil in 1860 with Syrian and Lebanese immigrants. In the last 20 years, Islam has seen tremendous growth, especially among the black communities from which 40% of all American converts come from. Dr. Norman Geisler estimates that by the year 2080, 51% of all African Americans will be Muslim. Islam has been promoted through the teachings of Louis Farrakhan to unite the black community, and recently had tremendous public” with the Million Man March in Washington D.C. Farrakhan's Muslim beliefs are very different from that of fundamental Islam.

Islam is promoted strongly on college campuses. One-fifth of more than 400,000 international students in the U.S. comes from Islamic countries. We have 80,000 Muslims currently attending our universities.

In the U.S. Armed Forces there are approximately 10,000 Muslims. In 1993, the army needed to commission a Muslim chaplain to care for their needs. This is a conflict in their religion since the majority of Shiite Muslims consider Americans satanic. But the majority that are here in America are Sunni, and very conservative and would even be considered liberals to the rest of the Muslims in other countries in the world.

Why has Islam come to America and how has it grown so much in so little time? The Muslims believe it is their duty to evangelize the world with what they consider is the last prophet's message. Mohammed was the final revelation to all mankind. They have become popular here in America because they have shown themselves to be sincere and extremely dedicated people in regards to their faith. They pray 5 times a day, 17 prayers. They will fast almost a whole day for nearly a month during their religious time called Ramadan. This is a celebration of Allah in which they thank him for the Quran. This celebration occurred from late January to February of this year.

When one looks into Islam and the Muslim's lifestyle, their seriousness and dedication is evidence that they really do believe in their practices. Although they claim similarities

between their beliefs in Christ and the Bible, a closer look reveals many differences. They are against Christianity.

What are the tenets of the Islamic faith ? A true Muslim must accept **5 main articles** of faith. These are known as **the shahada** (witness) :

**1st Article** : Belief in Allah as the one true God. This is a strict, numerical monotheism. A Muslim looks at the Judeo-Christian view of a unity in the Godhead with contempt.

**2nd Article** : Belief in angels as instruments of God's will. Mohammed allegedly received his revelation from the angel Gabriel.

**3rd Article** : Belief in the 4 inspired books - the Torah (5 books of Moses), the Zabur (the psalms), the Injil (the gospel), and the final revelation, the Koran.

Muslims claim that the Koran has been kept perfectly unlike the Christian Bible. While they claim to respect the Bible, they also believe that it has been corrupted. The Muslims make incredible claims about their writings and will always compare our Bible to the Koran for testing the truth. However, many of their claims cannot be substantiated and scholars have decidedly proven them untrue.

**4th Article** : Belief in the 28 prophets of Allah, Mohammed being the last and the greatest.

According to Islam, there are 124,000 prophets (Note: No one has ever seen the listing of names) which comprised the history of the human race, but there are 28 main prophets which include : Adam, Noah, Moses, David, Solomon, and Jesus. Jesus is viewed as just another prophet in line with the others.

**5th Article** : Belief in a final Day of Judgment.

Only those who obey Allah and his prophet can enter into Heaven (hopefully). All others will be sent to Hell.

So, if one wants to become a Muslim they need to say the shahada, bearing witness that there is no god but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet. The Islamic believer must perform good works which will be weighed at the end of their life. If Allah is graceful and merciful, the Muslim will enter Heaven. However, the Koran teaches that Allah is arbitrary in passing out his mercy, and no one has any guarantee of making it. The only sure way to make it to Heaven is if the Muslim dies in a Jihad. Only then will they go directly to Heaven. This is their only assurance for salvation. This explains why so many Muslims willingly give their lives in terroristic acts for their cause.

Of course, the Bible and that prophet they respect so much named Jesus has a very different opinion on all this. According to Christianity, to kill anyone or even stumble someone into losing their faith could bring one into judgment.

There are also **5 obligations** that are required for a Muslim - to pray, fast, give alms ("shakat" - 2.5% of their income), recite the Shahada while praying, and to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land (the "Hodge") at least once in their lifetime. As they pray, they must face towards Mecca and bow their faces to the ground. While Christians meet on Sundays, and Jews meet on Saturdays, the Muslims meet on Fridays.

The word "Islam" means 'submission to God', although it did not originally mean this. Dr. M. Braumann, a Middle East scholar, states in his book *the Spiritual background of early Islam* that Islam originally referred to "that strength which characterized a desert warrior who, when faced with impossible odds, would fight even to the death of his tribe."

Who is Jesus to a Muslim, and what do they believe about Him? According to Islam, Jesus is a prophet in line with many other prophets. Sura 43:59 states "Jesus was no more than a mortal whom Allah favored and made an example to the Israelites. They think we believe in three gods, the that the trinity consists of father, mother and the son. They think Jesus is the son of god, who was literally conceived by sex. "They are unbelievers who say God is Messiah, Mary's son." Everything they understand of Jesus is wrong because of the teaching from the Koran. The only thing that they agree with is his being a prophet, the virgin birth, and his being sinless and that he performed miracles. They deny the only Gospel that saves. Claiming he did not die and rise again, they claim he was taken to heaven alive because God does not have true prophets killed.

When saying His name or any other prophets name, the Muslim will always add the phrase 'Peace be upon Him' in respect.

While we can acknowledge their respectfulness, we must remember that the Bible says that it was our sin that was upon Him. This is the very reason He came and His peace is upon us who believe this. (Isa. 53:5 "The punishment for our peace He took upon Himself.") Muslims believe that Jesus was born of a virgin and also claim that He was the Word, however, their definition of this title is different. According to Islam, Jesus was the Word spoken, not the Word as God. For this reason, the Muslims call Jesus the Spirit of God, but this term also does not mean he was God Himself according to the Islamic interpretation. They believe Jesus lived a sinless life without fault, performed miracles, and ascended bodily into Heaven.

What Islam excludes is the very purpose that Jesus came for which is to die for the sins of the whole world. Muslims refuse to believe this since the Koran says that someone else took His place on the cross. According to Islam, God only kills false prophets so Jesus could not have been crucified. Since all false prophets are killed or die, this eliminates not only Jesus' death but His resurrection as well. It only stands to reason that since Mohammed was not killed, he was not a false prophet either in the eyes of a Muslim.

What should be asked is, "What of the false prophets in existence today, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses? Were they all killed? What about the psychics with their numerous false predictions and claims that God gives them their power? They are not killed either.

The concept of stoning false prophets in the Old Testament Covenant was never carried over into the New Testament Covenant. While we see Stephen being stoned by the Jewish people, we know he had no false information, so this was never continued as a Christian practice. The New Covenant emphasizes mercy not judgment. However, if this were mandated throughout the New Testament, who knows we may not have had Mohammed's writings and the Koran would not be with us today.

#### From "Let Us Reason Ministries"

**\*Shi'a** The Shi'a, who constitute the second-largest branch of Islam, believe in the political and religious leadership of Imams from the progeny of Ali ibn Abi Talib, who according to most Shi'a are in a state of ismah, meaning infallibility. They believe that Ali ibn Abi Talib, as the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, was his rightful successor, and they call him the first *Imam* (leader), rejecting the legitimacy of the previous Muslim caliphs. To most Shi'a, an Imam rules by right of divine appointment and holds "absolute spiritual authority" among Muslims, having final say in matters of doctrine and revelation.<sup>[141][142]</sup> Shi'a Islam has several branches, the largest of which is the Twelvers (iṭnāʿašariyya) which the label Shi'a generally refers to. Although the Twelver Shi'a share many core practices with the Sunni, the two branches disagree over the proper importance and validity of specific collections of hadith. The Twelver Shi'a follow a legal tradition called Ja'fari jurisprudence.<sup>[143]</sup> Other smaller groups include the Ismaili and Zaidi, who differ from Twelvers in both their line of successors and theological beliefs.<sup>[144]</sup>

**\*Wahhabi** (Arabic: Al-Wahhābīyya[الوهابية]) or **Wahhabism** was a reformist movement of Sunni Islam attributed to Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab, an 18th century scholar from what is today known as Saudi Arabia, who advocated a return to the practices of the first three generations of Islamic history. It was initiated to purge Islam of innovations and practices considered to be shirk by the leaders of Wahhabiyya movement.

Wahhabism has predominantly influenced Saudi Arabia where people mainly follow Hanbali school of jurisprudence.<sup>[1]</sup> It is often referred to as a "sect"<sup>[1]</sup> or "branch"<sup>[2]</sup> of Islam, though both its supporters and its opponents<sup>[3]</sup> reject such designations. It has developed considerable influence in the Muslim world through the funding of mosques, schools and other means from Persian Gulf oil wealth.<sup>[4]</sup>

The primary doctrine of Wahhabi is Tawhid, or the uniqueness and unity of God.<sup>[5]</sup> Ibn Abdul Wahhab was influenced by the writings of Ibn Taymiyya a Hanbali Jurist and questioned medieval interpretations of Islam, claiming to rely on the Qur'an and the Hadith.<sup>[5]</sup> He preached against a "perceived moral decline and political weakness" in the Arabian Peninsula and condemned idolatry, the popular cult of saints, and shrine and tomb visitation.<sup>[5]</sup>

The term "Wahhabi" (*Wahhābīya*) was first used by opponents of ibn Abdul Wahhab.<sup>[2]</sup> It is considered derogatory by the people it is used to describe, who prefer to be called "unitarians" (*Muwahiddun*).<sup>[6][7]</sup>

The terms "Wahhabi", "Salafi" (and also sometimes Ahle Hadith) are often used interchangeably, but Wahhabi has also been called "a particular orientation within Salafism",<sup>[2]</sup> an orientation some consider ultra-conservative.<sup>[8][9]</sup>

From "Wikipedia"