

Muslim History

In the oasis of Mecca, in the country we call today Saudi Arabia, in the year 570 A.D. a boy by the name of Muhammad was born. His father died before he was born and his mother died shortly after. He was raised by his uncle, a trader, and Muhammad was a master of a caravan trading with the Fertile Crescent areas of the Middle East. He married a wealthy widow, Khadija. In 622, according to Islamic scriptures, God sent his angel Gabriel with a command to Muhammad to spread his message throughout the world. This new religion was called Islam (“submit to the will of God” in Arabic) and its followers are called Muslims.

Muhammad preached that there was only one God-Allah. Muhammad’s teachings angered the city leaders because they still believed in many gods. He left Mecca for Medina, a turning point in Islamic history, the starting point of the Islamic Calendar, the hijra or migration.

Muslim scholars say that in 624 Muhammad began to lead attacks on Meccan caravans, cutting off Mecca’s source of wealth. Muhammad’s followers gained in great number and in 630 he reached a peace agreement with Mecca allowing him back into the city. He immediately destroyed the statues of the many gods and goddesses and proclaimed Mecca a Muslim city. Muhammad died in 632.

During the next 100 years the Islamic community grew steadily and could be found from Spain all the way to the Indus River Valley.

Important facts about Islam

Dome of the Rock	Building in Jerusalem in 691 this is where Muslims believe Muhammad ascended into heaven.
Mosque	A holy temple that has a tall tower, always faces Mecca with special nooks in the walls so that the people inside always know which direction is Mecca.
Quran (also known as the Koran)	The sacred book of Islam, Allah’s teachings to Muhammad.
The Five Pillars of Islam	Five basic duties for all Muslims
Caliph	Leaders of Muslim lands – the name meaning “successor [to the Prophet]”
Chador	Cape-like garment worn by Muslim women to hide their bodies and faces.

The Five Pillars of Wisdom

Allah	Prayer	Charity	Fasting	Pilgrimage
All Muslims must believe that there is no God but Allah, and that Muhammad is his prophet	A Muslim must pray five times a day, facing the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia	A Muslim must donate money to the poor and less fortunate	During a special month in the Islamic calendar, Muslims cannot eat or drink during daylight hours	A Muslim must make at least one religious trip to the holy city of Mecca.

The Golden Age of Muslim Civilization

ART	LITERATURE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used beautiful writing and patterns to decorate buildings and art work • Adapted Byzantine domes and arches • Painted people and animals in nonreligious art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the Quran the most important piece of Arabic literature • Chant oral poetry • Collected stories from other people

Muslim Civilization

LEARNING	MEDICINE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translated writing of Greek Philosophers • Developed Algebra • Observed the earth turning and measured its circumference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required doctors to pass difficult tests • Set up hospitals with emergency rooms • Studied diseases and wrote medical books

Challenges today to Muslim Life

Education: More schooling and knowledge about other parts of the world through newspapers, television, radio and the movies have led people to demand changes.

Urbanization: The movement into the cities where individuals often meet non-religious people with Western ideas about life

Growing Middle Class: In some cities, this class is adopting Western ideas, dress, and values while rejecting traditional Islamic values.

Role of Women: Women are the center of conflict between modernization and tradition. Many now leave home and go to college. Some are entering the professions, and wear Western styles of clothing.



A Mosque



A Woman Wearing A Chador