

Gentrain Unit 5. Islam, 21 March, 2013, Dr. Cindy Ausec

The youngest of the world's major religions

- Also one of the largest with more than one billion adherents
- Dominant religion in many of the nations in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia

Pre-Islamic Arab Religion

- Worshipped a variety of Gods but recognized one supreme High God - Allah ("the God")
- Mecca already pilgrimage site – Meteoric stone had fallen there - enclosed by the Ka'ba

Muhammad's Life

- Muhammad (ca 570-632 CE) raised as an orphan in one of the commercial families of the Meccan tribe of Quraish who controlled the Ka'ba in Mecca. No education - illiterate
- Successful business man (career made possible by his marriage to Khadija, a wealthy Meccan widow and entrepreneur who ran caravans.
- At age 40 - called by the one "true" God to "rise and warn" his fellow Arabs of God's displeasure

Influences on Muhammad and Relationship with Judaism and Christianity

- Likely he had contact with: Christians, Jews, and perhaps Zoroastrians
 - Each religion had things in common: All believed in one god; all had a Scripture believed to be the word of God; and the belief in a Judgment Day
- "Foreknowledge" of the previous prophets allowed him to interpret God's final message
- Muhammad is only the last in a long line of prophets beginning with Abraham
- Qur'an is filled with references and stories of earlier Biblical figures
 - Old Testament - Abraham and Moses
 - New Testament - Mary, mother of Jesus
- Muhammad was given the "final" iteration of God's message

Qur'an Revealed to Muhammad - "recitation" (Qur'an) of God's Word in "clear Arabic" for Arabs

- Recitations given by the angel Gabriel
- Received the first "recitation" in the month of Ramadan, in a cave on Mount Hira
- Received recitations at frequent intervals during the rest of his life
- Qur'an (recitation)
 - An eternal Scripture, written in heaven and revealed to Muhammad
 - Word of God: eternal, absolute, and irrevocable
 - Muhammad acted only as a "stenographer" or "loudspeaker" for God – he dictated the recitations to his secretary who wrote them down. Collected after his death and made into the Qur'an: 114 chapters (*surahs*) and 6,000 verses (*ayas*)

Qur'an's Message

- There was only one God who is complete, eternal and undivided, called Allah
- Muhammad (the Last Prophet) is to warn his people against the worship of false gods and all immorality

- On Judgment Day – all mankind bodily resurrected to face judgment
- The way to paradise in the afterlife lies in gratitude to God for the bounties of creation,
 - Social justice and obedient worship of the one Lord are required of every person
 - Proper response is “submission” (*islam*) to God’s will and becoming *Muslim* (one who submits)

Muhammad’s Ministry and Rise to Ruler of Mecca

- Islam not a religion of the desert arose in an urban setting
- At first just his wife, family members and close friends were followers
- Most of his followers came from the young and the poorer classes in Mecca.
- Merchant aristocracy as a whole resisted.
 - Pilgrimage to Mecca idol shrine – very lucrative
 - Meccans began to persecute Muhammad’s followers.
- Muhammad traveled to Yathrib (Medina) to arbitrate tribal disputes - became the ruler of the city.
 - Created a distinctive Islamic community, or *umma*
 - In Medina, the Muslims were established as a clan among other clans
 - His religions was not widely accepted
 - Medina Charter granted political authority to Muhammad, but gave freedom of religious belief and practice to members of other communities
- Raided enemy Meccan caravans
- Arab Jews in Medina rejected his message and tried to align with Mecca - Muhammad killed or enslaved some of them
- 627 Meccans attacked Medina but failed to take the city
- 630 Muhammad conquered Mecca – destroyed the idols in the Ka’ba (black stone spared)
- 632 Muhammad died without naming a successor – the Muslims finally decided that abu-Bakr would be the *caliph* (successor)
- Acceptance of Islamic Political authority brought tolerance
 - Communities that yielded allowed to keep its lands, practice its faith and receive protection but had to pay a head tax, including Jews, Christian and other “people of Scripture” who accepted Islamic rule.

Five Pillars

- ***Shahada*** – Muslim Creed “there is no God but Allah; Muhammad is his prophet”
- ***Salat*** (prayer) – The Muslim is expected to pray five times daily.
- ***Sawm*** – fasting during Ramadan. Remembrance of the month when the Prophet first received his revelation.
- ***Zakat*** (alms) - Muslims are expected to share their possessions with the poor, widows, and orphans.
- ***Hajj*** (pilgrimage) – Every Muslim who can afford the trip should make the pilgrimage to Mecca once in his or her lifetime.