

What Exactly is Islam?

FACTS ABOUT ISLAM:

1.6 billion adherents worldwide (about 23% of the world's population), 2nd largest world religion. Approximately 3 million Muslims in the USA; between 80,000-90,000 Muslim immigrants annually. Currently the fastest growing religion worldwide.

TERMS & VOCABULARY:

Islam — the religion of submission to Allah; derived from the Arabic root *salema*, “submission.”

Allah — Arabic for the strictly Unitarian God of Islam.

Muslim — “one who submits,” an adherent of Islam.

Qur'an (Koran) — The Holy Book of Islam, the word of Allah revealed by Muhammad.

Hadith — non-inspired records of the deeds and sayings of Muhammad; relied upon to learn his example, which must be emulated by Muslims; the Qur'an lacks much narrative about him.

Abrogation — Allah's practice of annulling a previous revelation and replacing it with a newer one.

Sunni and *Shia* — the two largest denominations of Islam.

Sharia — the moral code drawn from precepts of the Qur'an and Hadith; applied to Islamic states.

Jihad — the “struggle” to advance Islam and repel evil; used in a variety of contexts.

Mosque — buildings erected for a congregation of Muslims to meet for prayer and instruction.

Imam — a prayer leader at a Mosque.

Mullah — a teacher of Islamic doctrine.

FACTS ABOUT THE QUR'AN

Qur'an means “recitation” in Arabic; proclaims itself to be the final revelation of God (Allah).

Sent to Muhammad progressively over 23 years because God's previous revelations (including the Old and New Testaments) had been perverted.

One book, roughly the length of the New Testament, divided into 114 *surahs*.

Surahs — Arabic for “revelation” or “recitation”; synonymous with “chapter” in the Qur'an.

“Written for Arabs,” and strict adherents believe it can only truly be understood when read in Arabic.

FACTS ABOUT MUHAMMAD

Born in 570 A.D. Made a living by traveling the main Arabic trade route as a merchant.

Claimed that in 610 A.D., the angel Gabriel spoke to him while he was seeking solitude in a mountain cave, commanding him to “recite” the words of Allah. These words and later revelations became the *Qur'an*.

Known as “The Seal of the Prophets,” Allah's greatest and final messenger.

Faced with persecution in Mecca, he and his few followers migrated to Medina in 622 A.D. After eight years of uniting the tribes of Medina, he had gained 10,000 followers and conquered Mecca.

By the time of his death in 632 A.D., most of the Arabian Peninsula had converted to Islam and Muhammad had united the tribes of Arabia into a single Muslim religious and political empire.