

World Religions and False Cults

Part 1 - Islam

The History of Islam

Islam was founded by an Arabian named Muhammad (570-632 A.D.). Muhammad claimed to have been visited by the angel Gabriel while in a cave outside Mecca, at which time he was told that he was the prophet of Allah (“the god”) and was to convert people to his faith, which he called Islam (“submission”). These revelations were compiled in the Koran (or Qur’an, the Muslim Bible). Facing hostility and rejection in Mecca, Muhammad, along with a small band of followers, moved to Medina in 622. His following grew and in 630 he returned to Mecca with a small army, overtaking the city and converting all the people to Islam. Islam would expand by similar means in the Middle East and Africa, eventually gaining followers (called “Muslims”) world-wide. Today, there are 1.5 billion Muslims; 5-8 million in the US.

Core Beliefs of Islam

Muhammad affirmed the biblical prophets and gave himself the same status, though he believed his teachings had more authority since they were more recent. Islam is centered on Muslims following the Five Pillars: 1) reciting the *Shahada*, stating that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet, 2) praying five times a day, 3) giving alms, 4) fasting during the month of Ramadan, and 5) a pilgrimage to Mecca. Key views:

- God: One supreme God (Allah) who is so beyond us that a personal relationship with him is not possible. Jesus was just a prophet, similar to Moses and Muhammad.
- Mankind: Human nature is weak, but not in a fallen sinful state. Focus is on bringing moral Islamic order to the world. Muslims look to the Koran as the final authority on truth.
- Salvation: Focusing on moral virtues, submitting to Allah and keeping the Five Pillars will bring about a favorable judgment from Allah in the end.

Keys for Evangelism

- Understand Islam is a very “religious” faith and departing from it often brings severe persecution. Know that conversations about the gospel will not be taken lightly.
- Be knowledgeable about their faith, understanding the similarities and differences they have with Christianity. Use this to point them to an accurate view of Jesus Christ.

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