

ISLAM

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The Basic Beliefs, Doctrines and Definitions

DEFINED:

Islam is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion teaching that there is none worthy of worship except God and that Muhammad is a messenger of God. It is the world's second-largest religion with 1.8 billion followers or 24.1% of the world's population, known as Muslims. Muslims make up a majority of the population in 49 countries. Islam teaches that God is one, merciful, all-powerful, and unique, and has guided humanity through prophets, revealed scriptures, and natural signs. The two primary scriptures of Islam are the Quran, believed to be the verbatim word of God, and the Sunnah, which composes the teachings and works of Muhammad (c. 570–632 CE).

Video Notes:

What's your experience, if any, with the Middle East?

What did Carl say that caught your attention? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Carl says most people in the Middle East want peace, not conflict. Do you think he's right...or has he missed something?

What's your response to Carl's story?
What might be your next step as a peacemaker?

The Five Pillars of Islam

The first pillar of Islam is the *Shahada*, the assertion of faith, combining the themes of unity and mercy that are found in the Quran. There are two shahadas: "There is no god but God" and "Muhammad is the messenger of God".

The second pillar of Islam is *Salat*, or prayer. Before a prayer is observed, ablutions are performed including washing one's hands, face and feet. A caller (Muezzin in Arabic) chants aloud in from a raised place in the mosque. Verses from the Quran are recited either loudly or silently.

The third pillar of Islam is *Zakāt*, or alms giving or charity. Zakat means purification which indicates that a payment makes the rest of one's wealth legally and religiously pure. By following this pillar, Muslims have to deduct certain amount of their income to support the Islamic community, and it usually about 2.5% of an individual's income. This practice is not found in the Quran but rather in the hadith.

The fourth pillar of Islam is *Sawm*, or fasting. Fasting takes place during Ramadan, which is the holy month in the Islamic calendar (lunar calendar). This means the month of Ramadan shifts 11 days each year. Sawm is directly stated in the Quran saying: "eat and drink until the whiteness of the day becomes distinct from the blackness of the night at dawn, then complete the fast till night...". The fast occurs from dawn to sunset each day during which time believers are expected to prohibit themselves from any food, drink, sexual intercourse, or smoking.

The final pillar of Islam is the *Hajj*, or pilgrimage. During one's life, a Muslim is required to make the pilgrimage to Mecca during the 12th month of the lunar calendar. This ritual consists of making journey to Mecca wearing only 2 white sheets so all of the pilgrims are identical and there is no class distinction among them

BELIEFS

MONOTHEISM: A Muslim believes in ONE GOD, Supreme and Eternal, Infinite and Mighty, Merciful and Compassionate, Creator and Provider. God has no father or mother, no son or daughter. None is equal to Him. He is God of all humankind, not of a special tribe or race.

MESSENGERS AND PROPHETS: A Muslim believes in all the Messengers and Prophets of God without any discrimination. All messengers were mortals, human beings, endowed with Divine revelations and appointed by God to teach mankind. The Holy Quran mentions the names of 25 messengers and prophets and states that there are others. These include Adam, the first Prophet, along with Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad.

REVELATIONS AND THE QU'RAN: A Muslim believes in all scriptures and revelations of God, as they were complete and in their original versions. Muslims believe in the original scriptures that were given to previous messengers; for example David received the Psalms (Zabur), Moses the Torah (Taurat) and Jesus the Gospel (Injeel). However, the previous scriptures do not exist today in the original form in which they were revealed. There are no versions of the Quran and every copy in the world remains identical, word for word in its original language Arabic. Muslims to this day continue to emphasize the importance of memorizing the Quran word by word, as a whole or in part, recognizing that it is the Speech of God and not a book written by Muhammad.

ANGELS: Angels are a creation of God. They are purely spiritual and splendid beings that require no food or drink or sleep. They have no physical desires or material needs. Like other creations of God, Angels spend their time worshipping God.

LAST JUDGMENT: A Muslim believes in the Day of the Judgment. This world as we know it will come to an end, and the dead will rise to stand for their final and fair trial. On that day, all men and women from Adam to the last person will be resurrected from the state of death. Everything we do, say, make, intend and think are accounted for and kept in accurate records. They are brought up on the Day of Judgment.