



WHAT IS ISLAM?

Prof Ahmad Kamal Ariffin


Islam and Engineering 1

Wintersemester 2010 2011

19th Oct 2010

ISLAM

Islam began in Arabia and was revealed to humanity by the Prophet Muhammad SAW (peace be upon him) who is known as the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets.



Those who follow
Islam are called
Muslims.

Muslims believe
that there is only
one God.

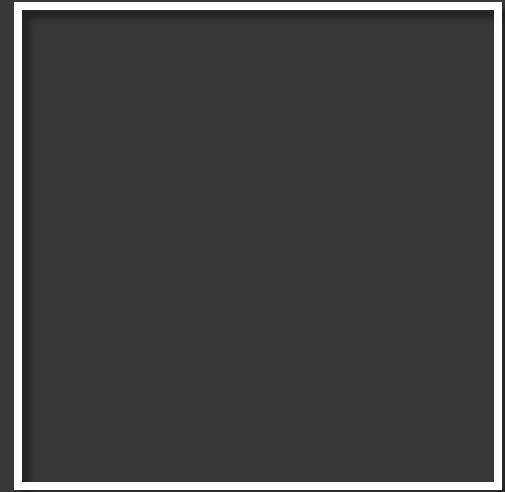
The Arabic word for
God is Allah.

Misconception: All Muslims are Arabs

- The total Muslim Population in 2009 is 1.66 billion.
www.islamicpopulation.com
- Although Islam is often associated with the Arab world and the Middle East, fewer than 15% of Muslims are Arabs.
- Over fifty countries have Muslim-majority populations, while other groups of believers are clustered in minority communities on nearly every continent.

Misconception: All Muslims are Arabs

- Some example of Muslim majority countries:
 - Indonesia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Egypt, Bangladesh, Iran, Turkey, Sudan, Algeria, Morocco, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Syria, Senegal, Maldives, Mali, Tunisia, Somalia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Sierra Leone, Oman, Lebanon, Albania, Djibouti, Kuwait, Egypt and other Arab countries
- For a glimpse of the Islamic world in pictures:
 - <http://www.muslimphotos.net/>



The word Islam in Arabic means "Peace" and also "Submission".

As the "religion", Islam implies a comprehensive way of life in full submission to the Will of Allah and at peace with Him and the universe.

According to the Islamic belief, it is the religion decreed for mankind by Allah who revealed it to His prophets and they in turn, taught it to the people around them.

Distinctive Features of Islam:

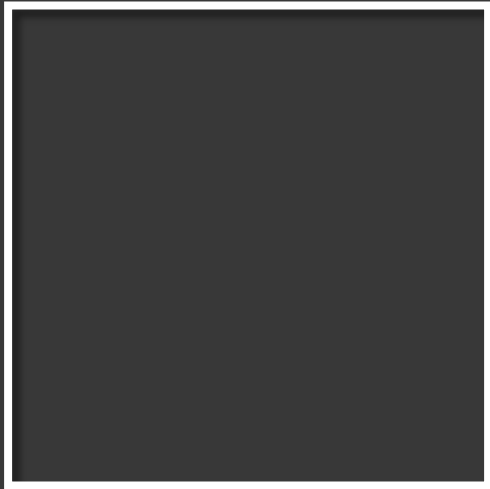
1. A harmonious equilibrium between the temporal and the spiritual (the body and the soul), permitting a full enjoyment of all the good that God has created, (Qur'an 7:32), enjoining at the same time on everybody's duties towards God, such as worship, fasting, charity, etc. Islam was to be the religion of the masses and not merely of the elect.
2. A universality of the call - all the believers becoming brothers and equals without any distinction of class or race or tongue. The only superiority which it recognizes is a personal one, based on the greater fear of God and greater piety (Qur'an 49:13).

From Introduction to Islam by Muhammad Hamidullah (<http://muslim-canada.org>)

From the beginning of mankind on the face of the earth, revelations came to Allah's chosen prophets and the first prophet was the first man, Adam and the last Prophet was the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him (pbuh)).

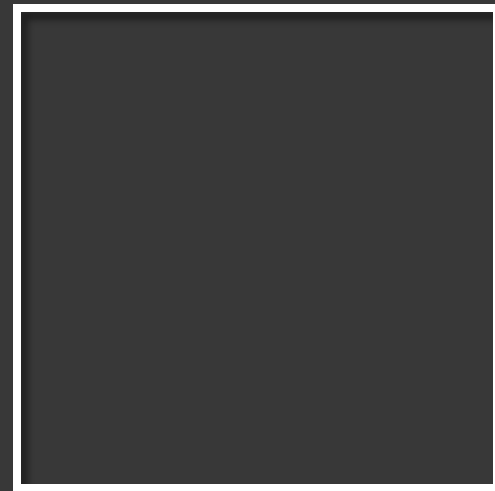
In between prophets Adam and Muhammad (pbuh), thousands of prophets came to the peoples, who inhabited different lands in different periods of history.

The Holy Qur'aan, Scripture of Muslims revealed from Allah to His last Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), mentions 25 names of those prophets and they all were chosen by Allah to show humanity the right path. Some of those names, mentioned in the Holy Qur'aan are Abraham, (Ibraaheem), Moses (Moosa), David (Daud) and Jesus ('Eesa).



All these prophets of Allah taught basically the same message to their people i.e. to follow Allah and to obey the messenger of the age, so that people could be informed the way in which the Creator of the worlds wants His creation to follow to be successful.

The final message of Islam emerged in the Arabian peninsula, which we know today as Saudi Arabia, in 612 C.E. through the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).



And it was through Muhammad (Peace be upon him), that the Guidance of Allah for mankind was completed and perfected. Muhammad (pbuh) taught the people, the Book of Allah called the Holy Qur'aan.

Therefore, Muslims follow the Holy Qur'aan (not Muhammad's words but Allah's words) and follow the Hadeeths (Sayings and Actions of the Prophet Muhammad in order to explain the Holy Qur'aan), since Islam was perfected in the life of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

MISCONCEPTION: Muhammad was the founder of Islam and Muslims worship him.

- While Muhammad (pbuh) was chosen to deliver the message, he is not considered the "founder" of Islam, since Muslims consider Islam to be the same Divine guidance sent to all peoples before.
- Muslims believe all the prophets from Adam, Noah, Moses, Jesus etc. were all sent with divine guidance for their peoples.
- Every prophet was sent to his own people, but Muhammad (pbuh) was sent to all of mankind.

CORE OF ISLAM

Based on five pillars:

1. The profession of faith (*shahada*: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger");
2. The ritual prayers (*salawat*). Prayers are prescribed five times a day as a duty towards Allah. Prayer strengthens and enlivens belief in Allah and inspires man to higher morality. Prayer purifies the heart and controls temptation, wrongdoing, and evil;



3. Fasting in the month of Ramadhan (*sawm*). This means abstention from food, beverages, and sexual intercourse from dawn to sunset, and curbing evil intentions and desires. Fasting teaches love, sincerity, and devotion. Fasting develops a sound social conscience, patience, unselfishness, and willpower;

4. The obligatory payment of alms (*zakah*). *Zakah* is a specific contribution collected from the wealth and earnings of those above the poverty line and spent on the poor and needy in particular, and the welfare of the society in general. The payment of *Zakah* symbolically purifies one's income and wealth and helps establish economic and social justice in the society;

5. The pilgrimage to Makkah (*hajj*). Pilgrimage is prescribed once in a life time, provided one has the means to do so.

The five pillars: Why are they important?

Carrying out these obligations provides the framework of a Muslim's life, and weaves their everyday activities and their beliefs into a single cloth of religious devotion.

No matter how sincerely a person may believe, Islam regards it as pointless to live life without putting that faith into action and practice.

Carrying out the Five Pillars demonstrates that the Muslim is putting their faith first, and not just trying to fit it in around their secular lives.

Cheating on the Five Pillars is impossible

The Five Pillars are a matter between the individual Muslim and Allah: the community may well insist on certain practices, but at the heart lies the relationship between a Muslim and Allah.

So there is no point at all in carrying them out insincerely, or, for example, trying to cheat on the fasting in Ramadan.

For God cannot be fooled and the only person who suffers is the individual concerned.

Further Reading

<http://www.angelfire.com/me/anneesa/introductiontoislam.html>

Excellent article on An Introduction to Islam, by Mohammad I. Hussain, M.D.

<http://www.angelfire.com/me/anneesa/intro.html>

INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM, By: Bilal Philips