

Overview of Islam

Key Person, Date, Location

Founded in Mecca, Arabia by Muhammad (AD 570–632), considered the greatest man who ever lived and the last of more than 124,000 messengers sent by Allah (God) Main types: Sunni (People of the Tradition), Shi'a (Party of Ali), and Sufi (Mystics).

Key Writings

The *Holy Qur'an* (Koran), revealed to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. Essential commentaries are found in the *Sunnah* (Tradition), composed of *Hadith* (Narrative) and *Sirah* (Journey). The Qur'an affirms the biblical Torah, Psalms, and Gospels, but teaches that Jews and Christians corrupted the original texts.

Who Is God?

Allah is one and absolutely unique—he cannot be known. The greatest sin in Islam is *shirk*, or associating anything with Allah. Human qualities like fatherhood cannot be attributed to Allah. Many Muslims think that Christians believe in three gods and are therefore guilty of *shirk*.

Who Is Jesus?

Jesus (*Isa* in Arabic) was not God or the Son of God His virgin birth is likened to Adam's creation. He was sinless, a worker of miracles, and one of the most respected prophets sent by Allah. He was not crucified or resurrected. He, not Muhammad, will return to play a special role before the future Judgment Day—perhaps turning Christians to Islam.

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Who Is the Holy Spirit?

“Holy Spirit” can refer to Allah, to the angel Gabriel, or to a spirit used by Allah to give life to man and inspire the prophets.

How to Be Saved

Humans are basically good, but fallible and need guidance. The balance between good and bad deeds determines one’s destiny in paradise or hell. Allah may tip the balances toward heaven. One should always live with the fear of Allah and Judgment Day.

What Happens After Death?

Belief in bodily resurrection. One may pray for and seek favor for the dead before Judgment Day. Paradise includes a garden populated with *houris*, maidens designed by Allah to provide sexual pleasure to righteous men.

Other Facts, Beliefs, or Practices

- Muslims meet in mosques for prayers, sermons, and counsel.
- Emphasis on hospitality, developing a sense of community, and maintaining honor (or avoiding shame).
- *Shari’a* (Islamic law) governs all aspects of life in places where it is enforced.
- *Jihad* (fight) may refer either to one’s inner struggle to obey God or to literal warfare.
- Muslims who convert to Christianity or other religions face persecution and possible death.