



Islam Peace & Equality

Islam is a simple religion. One becomes a Muslim by believing and stating that there is only one God and that Mohammed was the messenger of this one God. Islam means submission and it stands for submitting one's will to that of Allah. Allah is the name of God in Arabic. But Allah is simply the Arabic word for "God." It is closely related to the word for God, Al-Ilah, in Aramaic, the language that Jesus and his disciples spoke, a language still spoken in a few areas as in the Middle East. If you are an Arab, Christian, Jew or Muslim, you pray to Allah. To question that is like arguing that French speakers don't worship God, they worship something else called "dieu".

To submit to Allah's will is to accept his commandments as revealed in the books he revealed to his Messengers. Muslims believe there were many messengers in the world. A Messenger is a special Prophet. A prophet is a person who prophesized about the future and, of course, whose prophecies all came true. A Messenger is a prophet with a specific message. The message is generally encompassed in a holy book.

Muslims also believe that Allah has an army of Angels that obey all Allah's commands. Muslims believe in Destiny as being written in a book and that all things that happen to us in this world are pre-ordained. Finally, Muslims believe that there is a day of judgment where people will be rewarded for their good deeds in heaven and, if Allah does not forgive them, punished for their bad deeds in hell.

Often, people confuse the simplicity of the beliefs of Muslims with the complexity of the moral code in Islam. It is like judging on a country with the traffic laws in the country. Anyone attempting to study Islam should, in my opinion, focus first on Allah and the beliefs. If he/she likes those, then they should discuss the laws.

Pillars of Islam

Islam has five pillars: witnessing that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammed is his messenger; praying five times a day; fasting the month of Ramadan; paying Zakat yearly and visiting Mecca once in a lifetime if one can afford it. These actions are mandated on every Muslim once they reach puberty

The Progression of Religion

We learn from biblical and Quran stories that Allah formed Adam with Allah's own hands from earth (clay or mud). Stories have it that Allah blew in Adam from Allah's own Soul and that the soul entered Adam's body from the nose and life spread in his head first then in the rest of his body.

According to this narration, Adam knew beyond doubt that he was created. Adam believed in Allah and taught Allah's commandments to his children. Adam carried religion down to earth with him from Eden. Adam believed and narrated the story of his own creation.

Other prophets performed miracles of varying magnitude but we can say that there was one common trend; miracles were getting smaller and smaller as man was getting more developed. The early miracles were more visual and the latter miracles were more intellectual. Moses' miracles were magical. Jesus' miracles were mostly medical (raising the dead and healing the sick).

Mohammed's everlasting miracle is the Quran. The Quran carries so many miracles in it that it challenges modern day readers to find fault in it or to discover all its miracles.

Yes, Islam does accept Abraham, Moses and Jesus, giving them the Arabic names of 'Ibrahim,' 'Musa,' and 'Isa' respectively. They are often mentioned in the Quran, the Holy Book of Islam, always with great respect. The Quran gives them the status of Prophethood. Muslims recognize Jews and Christians, as the 'People of the Book' and also those that believe truly in the one Allah. These three religions have more in common than many people tend to believe.

“Say (O Muhammad): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and that which was vouchsafed unto Moses and Jesus and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered” Quran: 3-84

Jesus in Islam

The Quran, or Recitation of the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad, the holy book of Islam, always refers to Jesus as "the Messiah." Christos or Christ is only a Greek translation of the Aramaic and Hebrew word, "messiah." The Quran also refers to Jesus as the word of Allah and spirit from Him, born of the sinless Virgin Mary, "purified above all women," and it gives more space to Mary than the New Testament does. Muslim honor and respect Jesus, It would be a rejection of what Islam has taught them if they do otherwise.

“He is nothing but a slave on whom We bestowed favor, and We made him a pattern for the Children of Israel.” Quran 43:59

“When Jesus came with clear proofs (of Allah's Sovereignty), he said: I have come unto you with wisdom, and to make plain some of that concerning which ye differ.

So keep your duty to Allah, and obey me. Lo! Allah, He is my Lord and your Lord. So worship Him. This is a right path." Quran 43: 63-64

Also, Muslim believes that Jesus was the promised messiah that he ascended to heaven and that he will come again before the world ends.

Misunderstanding of Islam

Still another word you often hear is that Islam fosters hatred, violence, and religious warfare. I want to spend a bit of time on this, because it is so widespread a misunderstanding. Jews are told to take an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Christians are told that when smitten, they should turn the other cheek-although I have met very few of them who actually do that. Muslims on the other hand are told in their revelation to resist oppression, even at great personal cost, because otherwise one is only assisting the oppressor to oppress, and Allah hates oppressors. This is basic to Islamic ethics, and we need to understand it.

Jihad in Islam

Living a good Muslim life, praying ritually five times a day, keeping the hard fast of Ramadan, going on the arduous Pilgrimage to Mecca, giving generously to the poor, rearing one's offspring in the fear of Allah, is all a jihad. "**You shall believe in Allah and in His messenger, and strive with your possessions and with your selves. That is better for you, did you but know**" Quran: 61-11. The early Muslims had to strive also in battle against attacks by their enemies. The Quran states the circumstances in which and Islamic state ruled by Islamic law, or an imperiled Islamic community, may resort to war. These are:

- When there is a grave and sudden threat to religion.
- When Muslims are subjected to oppression.
- When Muslims are forced out of their land

- When political entities commit deliberate breaches of treaties and pacts. "Those with whom you make an agreement, who then break their agreement every time, and keep not their duty

Muslims are also explicitly instructed in the Quran that all acts of war by them must cease immediately if their enemies request peace, pledge to end persecution and oppression, and sincerely undertake to abide by their oaths and covenants. "**But if they desist, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful**" Quran: 2-192. "**And if they incline to peace, then incline thou also to it, and trust in Allah. Surely He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing**" Quran: 8- 61.

Women in Islam

The history of Muslims is rich with women of great achievements in all walks of life from as early as the seventh century (B.C.). Woman is recognized by Islam as a full and equal partner of man in the procreation of humankind, in bearing personal and common responsibilities and in receiving rewards for her deeds. She is equal to man in the pursuit of education and knowledge and she is entitled to freedom of expression and vote as much as man is.

Islam grants woman equal rights to contract, to enterprise, to earn and possess independently. Her life, her property, her honor are as sacred as those of man. If she commits any offense, her penalty is no less or more than of man's in a similar case.

It is also worthwhile to state that the status, which women reached during the present era, was not achieved due to the kindness of men or due to natural progress. It was rather achieved through a long struggle and sacrifice on woman's part. In the case of Islam such compassionate and dignified status was decreed, not because it reflects the environment of the seventh century, nor under the threat or pressure of women and their organizations, but rather because of its intrinsic truthfulness.

Human Rights and Justice in Islam

Islam provides many human rights for the individual. The following are some Allah word in the Quran:

"Allah doth command you to render back your Trusts to those to whom they are due; And when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice: Verily how excellent is the teaching which He giveth you! For Allah is He Who heareth and seeth all things" Quran: 4-58. "**Make peace between them with justice, and be fair: for Allah loves those who are fair (and just)**" Quran: 49-9

"O ye who believe! Be steadfast witnesses for Allah in equity, and let not hatred of any people seduce you that ye deal not justly. Deal justly, that is nearer to your duty. Observe your duty to Allah. Lo! Allah is Informed of what ye do" Quran: 5-8.

Islam is the religion and faith of more than 1.2 billion people. There are about 650,000 Muslims in Canada and half are Canadian-born.

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