

# CULTS

## Lesson 6 w/answers

## Islam

Last week we looked at the religion and followers of Hinduism. We discovered it's the third largest religion in the world, sees its "god" as a single being that manifests itself in many forms, focuses on meditation, living a pure life, and reincarnation.

We saw that one of the things that distinguishes this religion from Buddhism is the fact that Buddhism does not have a god or gods it worships, and that the Hindu religion believes reincarnation can place your soul not just in humans but others as well, such as animals, where Buddhist believe it only continues from human to human until you achieve "enlightenment".

This week we'll continue on our study by looking at the second largest religion in the world - Islam. Perhaps having roots as far back as Abraham, we'll look closely at the religion, Islam and its followers the Muslims that today seem to be in the news everywhere we look.

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***Get your research tools handy, you might find the Internet extremely helpful this week as has it been in the past, as well as Dr. Martin's book, "The Kingdom of the Cults", and answer the following questions:***

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1. How many followers of Islam are there today?
  - a. ANSWER 1: Estimates of the total number of Muslims range from 0.7 to 1.2 billion worldwide and 1.1 to 7 million in the U.S. About 21% of all people on earth follow Islam. The religion is currently in a period of rapid growth.
  - b. ANSWER 2: Christianity is currently the largest religion in the world. It is followed by about 33% of all people -- a percentage that has remained stable for decades. If current trends continue, Islam will become the most popular world religion sometime in the mid-21st century.
2. Where was it founded and when?
  - a. ANSWER 1: The name of this religion, Islam, is derived from the word "salam," which is often interpreted as meaning "peace." However "submission" would be a better translation. A Muslim is a follower of Islam. "Muslim" is an Arabic word that refers to a person who submits themselves to the will of God. Many Muslims feel that the phrases "Islamic terrorist" or "Muslim terrorist," which have been observed so often in the media, are oxymorons.
  - b. ANSWER 2: Most religious historians view Islam as having been founded in 622 CE by Muhammad the Prophet (peace be upon him). \* He lived from about 570 to 632 CE). The religion started in Mecca, when the angel Jibril (a.k.a. Jibreel; Gabriel in English) read the first revelation to Muhammad (pbuh). (Mohammed and Muhammed (pbuh) are alternate spellings for his name.) Islam is the youngest of the world's very large religions -- those with over 300 million members -- which include Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.
  - c. ANSWER 3: Muslims traditionally acknowledge respect for Muhammad, Jesus and other prophets (peace be upon them) by adding this phrase or an abbreviation "(pbuh)" after their names. However, many if not most of the followers of Islam believe that:
    - i. Islam existed before Muhammad (pbuh) was born,
    - ii. The origins of Islam date back to the creation of the world, and
    - iii. Muhammad (pbuh) was the last of a series of Prophets.
  - d. ANSWER 4: Followers of Islam are called Muslims. "Allah" is an Arabic word which means "the One True God." An alternate spelling for "Muslim" that is occasionally used is "Moslim"; it is not recommended because it is often pronounced "mawzlem": which sounds like an Arabic word for "oppressor". Some Western writers in the past have referred to Islam as "Mohammedism"; this is deeply offensive to many Muslims, as its usage can lead some to the concept that Muhammad the Prophet (pbuh) was in some way divine.

### 3. What is Muhammed's background and history leading up to his vision?

- a. ANSWER 1: Many unusual events have been recorded about Muhammad's (pbuh) birth and childhood:
  - i. His mother said "When he was born, there was a light that issued out of my pudendum and lit the places of Syria."
  - ii. Also at the time of his birth, "...fourteen galleries of Kisra's palace cracked and rolled down, the Magians' sacred fire died down and some churches on Lake Sawa sank down and collapsed."
  - iii. His foster family had many experiences of amazingly good luck while he was in their care.
  - iv. As a young child, the angel Jibril visited the boy, ripped his chest open, removed his heart, extracted a blood clot from it, and returned him to normalcy.
- b. ANSWER 2: While still young, he was sent into the desert to be raised by a foster family. This was a common practice at the time. He was orphaned at the age of 6 and brought up by his uncle. As a child, he worked as a shepherd. He was taken on a caravan to Syria by his uncle at the age of 9 (or perhaps 12). Later, as a youth, he was employed as a camel driver on the trade routes between Syria and Arabia. Muhammad (pbuh) later managed caravans on behalf of merchants. He met people of different religious beliefs on his travels, and was able to observe and learn about Judaism, Christianity and the indigenous Pagan religions.
- c. ANSWER 3: After marriage, he was able to spend more time in meditation. At the age of 40, (610 CE), he was visited in Mecca by the angel Gabriel. He developed the conviction that he had been ordained a Prophet and given the task of converting his countrymen from their pagan, polytheistic beliefs and what he regarded as moral decadence, idolatry, hedonism and materialism.
- d. ANSWER 4: He met considerable opposition to his teachings. In 622 CE he moved north to Medina due to increasing persecution. The trek is known as the hegira. Here he was disappointed by the rejection of his message by the Jews. Through religious discussion, persuasion, military activity and political negotiation, Muhammad (pbuh) became the most powerful leader in Arabia, and Islam was firmly established throughout the area.

### 4. What is the background of the growth of Islam?

- a. ANSWER 1: By 750 CE, Islam had expanded to China, India, along the Southern shore of the Mediterranean and into Spain. By 1550 they had reached Vienna. Wars resulted, expelling Muslims from Spain and Europe. Since their trading routes were mostly over land, they did not develop extensive sea trade (as for example the English and Spaniards). As a result, the old world occupation of North America was left to Christians. Believers are currently concentrated from the West coast of Africa to the Philippines. In Africa, in particular, they are increasing in numbers, largely at the expense of Christianity.
- b. ANSWER 2: Many do not look upon Islam as a new religion. They feel that it is in reality the faith taught by the ancient Prophets, Abraham, David, Moses and Jesus (Peace be upon them). Muhammad's (pbuh) role as the last of the Prophets was to formalize and clarify the faith and to purify it by removing foreign ideas that had been added in error.

### 5. What is their position on the Bible, God and Theology?

- a. ANSWER 1: Islam considers six fundamental beliefs to be the foundation of their faith:
  - i. A single, indivisible God -- God, the creator, is just, omnipotent and merciful. "Allah" is often used to refer to God; it is the Arabic word for God.
  - ii. The angels.
  - iii. The divine scriptures -- which include the Torah, the Psalms, the rest of the Bible, (as they were originally revealed) and the Qur'an (which is composed of God's words, dictated by the Archangel Gabriel to Muhammad).
  - iv. The Messengers of God -- including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus and Muhammad -- the last prophet; (peace be upon them). Muhammad's message is considered the final, universal message for all of humanity.
  - v. The Day of Judgment -- when people will be judged on the basis of their deeds while on earth, and will either attain reward of Heaven or punishment in Hell. They do not believe that Jesus or any other individual can atone for another person's sin. Hell is where unbelievers and sinners spend eternity. One translation of the Qur'an, 98:1-8, states: "The unbelievers among the People of the Book and the pagans shall burn for ever in the fire of Hell. They are the vilest of all creatures." ("People of the Book" refers to Christians, Jews and Muslims). Paradise is a place of physical and spiritual pleasure where the sinless go after death.
  - vi. The supremacy of God's will.

b. ANSWER 2: Islam's other beliefs include the following:

- i. God did not have a son.
- ii. Jesus (pbuh) is a prophet, born of the Virgin Mary. They regard the Christian concept of the deity of Jesus (pbuh) to be blasphemous; it is seen as a form of polytheism.
- iii. Jesus (pbuh) was not executed on the cross. He escaped crucifixion and was taken up into Paradise. Jesus (pbuh) was not executed on the cross. He escaped crucifixion and was taken up into Paradise.
- iv. The existence of Satan drives people to sin.
- v. Muslims who sincerely repent and submit to God return to a state of sinlessness.
- vi. All people are considered children of Adam. Islam officially rejects racism.
- vii. All children are born on Al-Fitra (a pure, natural state of submission to Islam). His parents sometimes make him Christian, Jewish, etc.
- viii. When a child reaches puberty, an account of their deeds is opened in Paradise. When the person dies, their eventual destination (Paradise or Hell) depends on the balance of their good deeds (helping others, testifying to the truth of God, leading a virtuous life) and their bad deeds
- ix. Alcohol, illegal drugs, eating of pork, etc. are to be avoided.
- x. Gambling is to be avoided.

6. What are the Quran and the Hadith?

- a. ANSWER 1: These are two main texts consulted by Muslims. The Qur'an (Recitation) are the words of God. Muslims believe that it was revealed to Muhammad by the archangel Jibril. This was originally in oral and written form; they were later assembled together into a single book, the Qur'an. Its name is often spelled "Koran" in English. This is not recommended, as some Muslims find it offensive.
- b. ANSWER 2: The Hadith, which are collections of the sayings of Muhammad (pbuh). They are regarded as the Sunnah (lived example) of Muhammad. The Quran gives legitimacy to the Hadith. It states: "Nor does he say aught of his own desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him" (53:3-4). However, the writings are not regarded as having the same status as the Holy Qur'an; the latter is considered to be God's word. The great Islamic scholar Yahya bin Sharaf Ul-Deen An-Nawawi compiled a collection of 43 sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It is now known as "Al-Nawawi's Forty Hadiths".

7. What are the Five Pillars of Islam?

- a. ANSWER 1: To recite at least once during their lifetime the shahadah (the creed: "There is no God but God and Muhammad is his Prophet"). Most Muslims repeat it at least daily.
- b. ANSWER 2: To perform the salat (prayer) 5 times a day, if possible. This is recited while orienting one's body with qibla (the shorter of the two great circle routes towards the Kaaba at Mecca) This is generally North East in the U.S. 4 The five prayers are:
  - i. Fajr (Morning Prayer) which is performed some time between the break of dawn and just before sunrise.
  - ii. Zuhr (Noon Prayer) offered from just after midday to afternoon.
  - iii. 'Asr (Afternoon Prayer) offered from late afternoon until just before sunset.
  - iv. Maghrib (Sunset Prayer) offered between sunset and darkness.
  - v. Isha (Night Prayer) offered at night time, often just before sleeping.
- c. ANSWER 3: To donate regularly to charity through zakat. This is a 2.5% charity tax on the income and property of middle and upper class Muslims. Believers are urged to make additional donations to the needy as they feel moved.
- d. ANSWER 4: To fast during the lunar month of Ramadan. This is believed to be the month that Muhammad (pbuh) received the first revelation of the Qur'an from God.
- e. ANSWER 5: If economically and physically able, to make at least one hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca.

8. What is a Jihad?

- a. ANSWER: The Muslims believe that Jihad (struggle) is probably the most misunderstood religious word in existence. It often mentioned on Western TV and radio during news about the Middle East, where it is implied to be a synonym of "holy war" - a call to fight against non-Muslims in the defense of Islam. The vast majority of Muslims have an entirely different definition of Jihad. It is seen as a personal, internal struggle with one's self. The goal may be achievement in a profession, self-purification, the conquering of primitive instincts or the attainment of some other noble goal.

9. What does Islam teach its followers about suicide?

- a. ANSWER: This is forbidden. The Qur'an clearly states: "Do not kill yourselves as God has been to you very merciful" (4:29). Only Allah is to take a life. Since death must be left up to Allah, physician assisted suicide is not allowed. On the other hand, Muslim physicians are not "encouraged to artificially prolong the misery [of a person who is] in a vegetative state".

10. What is the significance of Islam's holiest period - Ramadan?

- a. ANSWER: Ramadan is the holiest period in the Islamic year; it is held during the entire 9th lunar month of the year. This was the month in which the Qura'n was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. The first day of Ramadan is listed above. It is a time at which almost all Muslims over the age of 12 are expected to fast from sunup to sundown.

11. Christians and Muslims both believe in Jesus - what's different about their beliefs?

- a. ANSWER 1: Traditional Christians and Muslims have certain beliefs in common concerning Jesus (pbuh). They both accept that:
- i. His birth was miraculous.
  - ii. He cured people of illness.
  - iii. He restored dead people to life.
- b. ANSWER 2: However, they differ from Christians in a number of major areas. Muslims do not believe:
- i. In original sin (that everyone inherits a sinful nature because of Adam and Eve's transgression).
  - ii. That Jesus (pbuh) was killed during a crucifixion. Muslims believe that he escaped being executed, and later reappeared to his disciples without having first died.
  - iii. That Jesus (pbuh) was resurrected (or resurrected himself) circa 30 CE.
  - iv. Salvation is dependent either upon belief in the resurrection of Jesus (pbuh) (as in Paul's writings) or belief that Jesus (pbuh) is the Son of God (as in the Gospel of John).

12. Define the Sunni, Shi'ite and Sufism schools of practice within Islam.

- a. ANSWER 1: Sunni Muslims -- These are followers of the Hanifa, Shafi, Hanibal and Malik schools. They constitute a 90% majority of the believers, and are considered to be main stream traditionalists. Because they are comfortable pursuing their faith within secular societies, they have been able to adapt to a variety of national cultures, while following their three sources of law: the Qur'an, Hadith and consensus of Muslims.
- b. ANSWER 2: Shi'ite Muslims -- These are followers of the Jafri school who constitute a small minority of Islam. They split from the Sunnis over a dispute about the successor to Muhammad (pbuh). Their leaders promote a strict interpretation of the Qur'an and close adherence to its teachings. They believe in 12 heavenly Imams (perfect teachers) who led the Shi'ites in succession. Shi'ites believe that the 12th Imam, the Mahdi (guided one), never died but went into hiding waiting for the optimum time to reappear and guide humans towards justice and peace.
- c. ANSWER 3: Sufism -- This is a mystic tradition in which followers seek inner knowledge directly from God through meditation and ritual and dancing. They developed late in the 10th century CE as an ascetic reaction to the formalism and laws of the Qur'an. There are Sufis from both the Sunni and Shi'ite groups. However, some Sunni followers do not consider Sufism as a valid Islamic practice. They incorporated ideas from Neoplatonism, Buddhism, and Christianity. They emphasize personal union with the divine. In the Middle East, some Sufi traditions are considered to be a separate school of Islam. In North and sub-Saharan Africa, Sufism is more a style and an approach rather than a separate school.
- d. ANSWER 4: Islam does not have denominational mosques. Members are welcome to attend any mosque in any land.

### 13. Who are “The Baha’i World Faith”, “The Black Muslims” and the “Ahmadis”

- a. ANSWER 1: There are over 70 other groups which originated within Islam and broke away from the Sunni or Shi’ite faith communities. This question pertains to three of them.
  - b. ANSWER 2: Baha’i World Faith:
    - i. This religion attempts to integrate all of the world religions. It was originally a break-away sect from Islam but has since grown to become a separate religion. Members are heavily persecuted in some Muslim countries because they are regarded as apostates to the true Muslim faith. Oppression is particularly heavy in Iran.
  - c. ANSWER 3: Ahmadis:
    - i. Followers of the Ahmadiyya Movement believe that God sent Ahmad as a Messiah, "a messenger of His in this age who has claimed to have come in the spirit and power of Jesus Christ. He has come to call all people around one Faith, i.e. Islam..."
    - ii. The movement's founder was Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908). He was born in Qadian, India. He felt that he had a mandate from God to correct a serious error within Christianity. Most Christians believe that Jesus (pbuh) is a member of the Godhead. "...because Jesus, whom God sent as a Messiah to the Israelites was taken for a God, Divine jealousy ordained that another man [Ahmad] should be sent as Messiah so that the world may know that the first Messiah was nothing more than a weak mortal."
    - iii. After his death, the community elected a series of Khalifas (successors). The current and "Fourth Successor (Khalifatul Masih IV), to the Promised Messiah was chosen in the person of Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad" on 1982-JUN-10. The Ahmadiyya Community currently has more than 10 million members worldwide. They prefer to call themselves "Muslims of the Amadiyya sect." They are very heavily persecuted in Pakistan. They regard themselves as a reform movement within Islam.
  - d. ANSWER 4: Black Muslim Movement (BMM):
    - i. This is largely a black urban movement in the US. One driving force was a rejection of Christianity as the religion of the historically oppressing white race. It was started by Wallace Fard who built the first temple in Detroit. Elijah Muhammad (born Elijah Poole) established a second temple in Chicago and later supervised the creation of temples in most large cities with significant black populations. They taught that blacks were racially superior to whites and that a racial war is inevitable. The charismatic Malcolm X was perhaps their most famous spokesperson; he played an important role in reversing the BMM's anti-white beliefs. In its earlier years, the movement deviated significantly from traditional Islamic beliefs (particularly over matters of racial tolerance the status of the BMM leaders as prophets). This deviation is being reversed.
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Again this week we look at a religion that offers its followers freedom from the pain and struggles of this life and a hope that a lasting peace and freedom can be found through following the teachings, practices and writings of one person professing to be God’s messenger. Again you’ll see a focus on mankind’s actions in achieving salvation through works and a message that perverts God’s Holy Word into looking like the truth, when in fact it’s all a lie inspired by Satan and created by man.

It’s always difficult for us to understand how so many people could follow the teachings of Islam – or any other religion we’ve studied these past weeks, but we know that Christ taught us many would follow the path that leads to destruction, it’s our responsibility to offer ourselves as God’s messengers of the Gospel of Christ to them – and to pray for their salvation.

In today’s local paper we read that a prominent Catholic Bishop in Washington now teaches it’s ok to accept evolution as a valid teaching of the church – so long as “God” is the creator, that a literal translation of the creation story is not necessary. Apostasy is all around us, both in the guise of “Christian Doctrine” and in the religions and cults of the world.

As Bible believing Christians we are challenged at every turn to know the truth and to guard the truth with all diligence. Christ tells us He is the truth, believe in Him and the Truth shall set you free. I pray our studies these past few weeks have helped you in this quest, and in the daily battle to keep God’s Word pure and in our hearts.

Thanks again for studying with us.

In Christ,

Wes