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**ISLAM**

* Worldwide—approx 1.3 billion—live on all continents.
* Began in Arabia during time of Muhammad—quickly spread elsewhere.
* Arabic=language of the Muslim holy book: Qur’an (Koran)—contains God’s actual words.
* Monotheistic: believe in one God.
* Followers are known as “People of the Book”—believing that God’s Word is revealed in their holy book.
* Is an ethical religion: concerned to ensure that followers should lead orally upright lives, in accordance with the will of God.
* Muslims believe in the one God, whom they call “Allah” which is Arabic for “The God.”
* Muslims believe that Muhammad was the final Messenger of Allah.
* Muslims’ declaration of faith: “There is no god except Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.”
* Five Articles of Faith in Islam:
	1. belief in Allah
	2. belief in his angels
	3. belief in his Books
	4. belief in his Messengers
	5. belief in life after death
* We can never fully know or understand what God is like. God is totally different from us: He is eternal, without beginning, and without end; He is all-powerful, all-seeing, all knowing—therefore, Muslims never try to depict God, and Islam has no images of God.
* Muhammad—born about 570 C.E. in Arabia, in Makkah (often called Mecca)—rejected the worship of idols that took place in Makkah—spent a lot of time alone in a cave—angel Gabriel came to him (revelation) and ordered him to read. Followers pass on his revelations; recording them after his death; Qur’an=”Recitation”. Died 632 C.E.
* Islam=”submission”—Muslims believe that God is the highest authority of all, and that he must be obeyed at all times. Obedience to will of Allah comes before all other obligations.
* Historians say that Muhammad started the religion of Islam in 7th century.
* Muslims say that Allah is the founder and that Adam, very first man, was the first Muslim because he “surrendered” himself to God.
* A prophet is someone through whom God speaks.—Islam recognizes at least 124,000 prophets. The five major prophets who had lived before Muhammad:
	1. Adam
	2. Noah
	3. Ibrahim [Abraham]
	4. Moses0
* Muslims believe that all the prophets were inspired by God and taught the same basic truth but Muhammad is the “Seal of the Prophets.”
* Different branches of Islam:
	1. Sunni—claim to follow the right “path” of Islam
	2. Shi’a—belongs to the party of Ali—claimed to be Muhammad’s true heir and successor.
* Five duties that adult Muslims should follow [the Five Pillars]—which help Muslims to worship Allah and to lead good lives.
	1. Belief (Shahadah)—declaration of belief in Allah as the only God. Affects the whole of a Muslim’s life.
	2. Prayer (Salah)—ritual prayer—five daily prayers at intervals from early in a.m. until late at p.m.
	3. Fasting (Sawm)—practiced for whole month of Ramadan.—an expression of faith in God.
	4. Charity Tax (Zakah)—required to give a small portion of one’s wealth to support the needy.
	5. Pilgrimage (Jajj)—at least once in lifetime—to Mecca.
* Rites of Passage: Islam has few rites of passage, the most important ones being at birth and death. A new child seen as a gift and blessing from God.
	1. Death—body is washed, wrapped in a shroud with face uncovered and buried as soon as possible, out of respect for the dead person.
	2. Cremation is forbidden—belief that the body will be raised up at the Last Day. Funeral service—simple and usually attended only by men. Do not encourage mourning or elaborate ceremonies when death. Strong belief in afterlife—mercy of God for believers.
* Mosque is an important place where Muslims pray. Pray in the direction of Mecca.