

Core Curriculum

1 God, Religion and Islam: An Introduction

1.5 **A Brief Introduction to the Prophet Muhammad (s), the Prophet of Islam**

INTRODUCTION & BODY OF TEXT

Bismillāhir Rahmānir Rahīm, As-salāmu ‘Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh. Peace be upon you brothers and sisters.

Welcome back to the Muslim Converts Channel!

The Prophet Muhammad (s) was born around the year 570 A.D in the city of Mecca.

Mecca is in the Arabian Peninsula. The land the Prophet was born in was largely a desert land. The most valuable commodity was fertile land and access to water through wells.

Of the most important cultural practices of the time was the recital of poetry. The Arabs of Mecca were largely divided into tribes. The tribes played some positive roles in that they were social safety nets for vulnerable members of the community. They often acted as safety nets for the children of the tribe who were orphaned and for women who were widowed or divorced.

The Prophet Muhammad (s) was from the Tribe of Quraysh and the clan of Banu Hashim.

The Arabs, and particularly the Meccans, were plagued with troubles as well. Tribal wars were rampant not only because tribal conflicts were

often resolved through violence, but because war was also culturally glorified. People simply loved war.

Although a select group of women found financial success and social status, most women, especially those of the lower ranking classes of women did not fare well. For one, women were often inherited from father to son. This meant that a boy's stepmother would become his wife after his father's death.

Having daughters was a big no no. Many men were poor and could not afford to raise many children. As a result, they often killed their daughters by burying them alive in order to make room for sons. Daughters were not just less preferable, but they were a burden as well.

Slave women fared the worst. Slave women were forced into prostitution by their masters and were subjugated to starvation and brutal beatings. Male slaves did not do well either; they were often raped, beaten and only given junk to eat.

Most of the Arabs of Mecca were polytheists. They worshiped over three hundred different gods and idols. Most of them did not believe in the Afterlife and did not believe that Allah, the creator of the universe, was involved in the lives of people.

There were, however, a small group of people who were not polytheists and idol worshipers. These were Hanifs, a group of monotheists that followed the religion of Abraham, the father of the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

This is the background that the Prophet Muhammad (s) was born into. Like that small group of people, the Prophet Muhammad (s) was also a Hanif. He traced his family back to Ishmael or Ismā'īl as it is said in Arabic.

The Prophet Muhammad (s) found himself orphaned at a very young age. His father had passed away before he was born and his mother passed away a few years later while he was still a child.

As tribal custom usually had it, the Prophet Muhammad (s) was adopted by his grandparents, and after they passed away, he was adopted by his paternal uncle Abu Talib (as) who eventually became one of the staunchest supporters of his prophethood.

The Prophet Muhammad (s), even before his first encounter with the Angel Gabriel (as), was a very spiritual man. From a young age, he rejected all forms of idolatry. As a young man, he was always truthful which is why he was called al-Amīn, meaning the truthful one. People trusted his honesty as well as his modesty and wisdom.

The Prophet (s) would spend many nights meditating in the cave of Hira. It is on such a night when he was forty years old that he was visited by the angel Gabriel (as) in which he was given revelation by God in the shape of the Qur'an, the holy scripture of Islam.

At this moment, the Prophet Muhammad (s) officially began his career as a Prophet (s) and spread the message of Allah to the masses.

The Prophet's (s) message was essentially the Qur'an. The Qur'an was the verbatim word of God.

The Qur'an was to become a book divided into 114 chapters with over 6000 verses. As a divine book of guidance, it sought not only to correct people's theological beliefs, but it also provided a social commentary in order to rectify Meccan and indeed global moral corruption.

It began by dismissing the power of idols, whether they were physical in the form of statues, or the more sinister ones found in the minds of men and women, namely the worship of the self and desires called hawa in Arabic.

The message, although for all of humankind, taught the Meccans that

there was only one single deity in all of existence and that was God, the creator of the universe. Allah was not distant; He was closer to us than even our jugular vein. He was the sustainer of all of existence and was intimate in the guidance of all of humanity.

He cared for the wellbeing and salvation of humanity and sent Prophets to guide humankind via angels. The Prophets of Islam, included, among others, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, Joseph and Jesus.

The Qur'an accepted previous scriptures such as the Torah, the Gospels, and so on and so forth; however, it did express reservations in so far as some of their texts may have changed over time. As such, the Qur'an offered a corrective over these changes.

The Qur'an frowned upon the Arab love of war. It forbade incest with stepmothers as well as the prostitution of female slaves. Islam made it mandatory that slaves be treated as human beings and be given the same food as their masters were given.

The Qur'an expressed horror at the practice of killing female children. It not only forbade it, but it also subverted Arab gender discourse by seeing female children as equally valuable as male children.

As such, the Qur'an taught that a Muslim, that is, a follower of the religion of Islam, was to put all his or her trust in God and God alone. A Muslim was to be peaceful, disdain war, choose justice even if it meant going against one's own tribe.

Being a Muslim meant that a person had to be modest, hygienic, educated, compassionate and treat all humans, including women, as equal creations of God. Women, orphans, animals and the environment were no longer to be abused but cherished as masterpieces of God.

In short, being a Muslim was to be reborn in the image of God and fulfilling one's destiny as God's vicegerent on earth.

Until Next Time, Thank you for watching. As-salāmu 'Alaykum wa

rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh