

Core Curriculum

1 God, Religion and Islam: An Introduction

1.1 **The Problem of Evil, Suffering and Pain**

In this lesson, we look at two aspects of the problem of evil in the world. The first is the intellectual problem of evil and suffering. The second is the emotional problem of evil and suffering.

The intellectual problem of evil sees God and evil as mutually incompatible. If God is all-good and all-loving, then He would naturally want to alleviate suffering from us. Since there is great suffering and evil in the world, then God is either

1. powerless to do anything about suffering and evil
2. or careless and callous about His creation
3. or He does not exist

The emotional problem of evil is about people's dislike or even hatred of God who is seen as permitting suffering in the world. People lose their loved ones, their health, their jobs or see their societies around them fall apart as a result of evil like wars and crime. They are angry that God doesn't do anything about all the injustices they see.

In order to learn how Islam responds to these two problems, please tune into the full version of this lesson.

1.2 **God, Allah and Religion**

God, or Allah in Islam is the creator of the universe. He is not just a creator like an engineer who makes a car, no, He is what brought all being into

existence.

Whether the whole of existence has a beginning or is eternal, He is the one who sustains it and is the ultimate explanation as to why anything exists at all.

Unlike the God of deism, Allah is not a callous God. He is the all-Compassionate, the All-Merciful, the All-Forgiving and the All-Loving.

Out of His love and compassion He created humanity and all life in the world.

According to Islam, God did not create humankind out of play, but created it so that it might find spiritual perfection. He created us human beings so that as freely willing agents, we may purify our souls and become compassionate, merciful, loving and wise beings in a way that is analogous to the source of these wonderful attributes, namely God Himself.

In order to do this, Allah sends down His special revelation in the form of religion to guide humankind to spiritual perfection. Revelation comes in the form of constitutive instructions on how to lead the good life and cleans our hearts from spiritual impurities such as pride, anger, hatred and jealousy among other things, and therefore lead our hearts to be filled with the living light of God. With the light of God in our hearts, we become wise, insightful, patient, forgiving and loving like God Himself.

To learn more, please tune into the full version of this lesson.

1.3 Introduction to Islam

Islam began in the 7th century Mecca which is located in modern day Saudi Arabia. It is the second largest religion in the world. As articulated by its sacred text the Qur'an, it is God's final religion on earth. Islam was revealed by God's last Prophet on earth, Muhammad the son of Abdullah (s)

Islam is an Abrahamic religion, meaning that it is a monotheistic religion that

accepts most of the Old Testament and New Testament Prophets, including Abraham, Noah, Moses and Jesus among other Prophets sent by God to earth.

Islam also believes in the Devil, in angels, including the Archangels Gabriel and Michael, as well as the Day of Judgment. Like Christianity, Islam deems charity to be mandatory. Withholding help and charity is an immoral and sinful act according to it.

However, unlike Christianity, it rejects the concept of the Trinity and upholds God as absolutely one. Jesus (as) according to Islam was only a divinely guided Prophet and not God Himself.

Islam is the fastest growing religion on earth and it has over 1.5 billion followers.

The ultimate sacred text for the Muslims is the Qur'an. The Qur'an was originally revealed in Arabic and is believed to be the literal word of God that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (s) and expressed verbatim by him to the Muslim community.

According to the Qur'anic narrative, Islam does not see itself as a new religion. It sees itself as the culmination of thousands upon thousands of generations of Prophetic messages which began at the time of the Prophet Adam (as), unto the Prophets Abraham, Moses, and Jesus among others, and ending with the Prophet Muhammad (s).

To learn more, please tune into the full version of this lesson.

1.4 **What is “Religion” and What’s the Point of it Anyways?**

At first glance, we all think we know what religion is. Religion is often defined as a system of thought organized around the belief of a supernatural entity, usually some form of god or gods and a series of rituals and social regulations that stem from this belief.

Religion in this sense can be in many different forms. For one, there is

animism where totems and magic rituals form a central part of its worldview concerning the supernatural and the natural.

Then there are other forms of polytheism which posit the existence of many gods who perform tasks specific to them, such as controlling the rain, love or fertility.

Then you have monotheistic religions that believe in one creator God and that there is no deity aside this God. Among these religions we find Judaism, Christianity, Islam etc.

What purpose do all these religions serve?

Well, it isn't really clear what religion means, nor is there an agreement as to what its purpose is, at least in current academic Western debates. Something we think so simple is actually quite complex. Even explanations of why "religion" is failing is full of disagreements.

Despite this, Islam has its own definition of what religion means and what its purpose is.

To learn more on this subject, please tune into the full version of this lesson.

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

N/A