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**A Glimpse Into the Religion**

*of* **Islam**



Rasheed Barbee

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# FOREWORD

Almost everyone is familiar with the universal greeting of Islam, As-Salaamu Alaikum (Peace be upon you). The yearly pilgrimage to Mecca is witnessed by Muslims and non-Muslims worldwide. Ramadan is recognized as the month wherein Muslims abstain from food and drink from daybreak until sunset. Nearly everyone has a Muslim co-worker, associate, classmate, or relative; however, many people are not well-acquainted with the actual beliefs of Islam.

This is a glimpse into the most misunderstood, misrepresented—yet fastest-growing—religion in the world. This is Islam.

Rasheed Barbee

Durham, North Carolina

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# IN THE NAME OF GOD

Muslims refer to the Creator of the Universe using the name *Allah*. In fact, when referring to God, the name *Allah* is used worldwide by all Arabic-speaking people, Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

As a native English speaker, it is uncommon to hear someone refer to God in a foreign language. But we must remember, English is a foreign language to much of the world's population. English is a West Germanic language which is less than 2,000 years old. Before English existed, people prayed to God using various languages.

Jesus spoke Hebrew; some scholars say he also spoke Aramaic; thus, he referred to God in what a native English speaker would consider a “foreign language.” According to the Bible, Jesus called upon God using the name *Eloi*. (Mark 15:34)

Today, almost 7,000 languages exist in the world; and societies continue to pray to God in many languages other than English. For this reason, when a Spanish-speaking Christian refers to God using the name *Dios*, no one assumes he is referring to a deity specific to the Hispanic community. Rather, the fair-minded person understands that *Dios* refers to God. Similarly, in the Arabic language, *Allah* refers to God.

# THE NOBLE QURAN

The Quran is the Book read by Muslims. It is the word of God and the final revelation; sent to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the Arabic language over 1400 years ago. Not a single letter has been altered, subtracted or added. There are not different versions of the Quran. For this reason, a Quran found in a mosque in China is the same Quran read in a mosque in South America.

The Quran centers around three fundamental matters:

1. Knowledge about the Oneness of Allah, and affairs of doctrine.
2. Commands toward good, and prohibitions from evil.
3. Knowledge about the creation, to include stories of the prophets and their nations, the beginning of creation, and the Afterlife.

The meaning of the Quran has been translated into numerous languages. The best, most widely distributed, English translation is *The Noble Quran*, translated by Dr. Hilali and Muhsin Khan.

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## THE BELIEFS OF A MUSLIM

Islam has six pillars of faith that every Muslim must believe in.

1. **Belief in Allah:** Muslims believe in one, incomparable God who, alone, created the entire universe and controls all affairs within it. He alone gives life, causes death, and all affairs are in His Hands. He has no sons or daughters, no siblings, no mother, no father, and no wife. Allah has no likeness and no equal; consequently, He



is the only One that deserves to be worshipped. Directing any aspect of worship to anyone other than Him is the greatest of all sins. Muslims do not worship prophets, ancestors, trees, stones, idols, stars, the sun, the moon, or anything from the creation. Muslims only worship Allah, praying directly to Him with no intermediary.

2. **Belief in the Angels:** Angels are a creation of Allah that is not visible to our eyes. They worship Allah, never disobeying Him. Countless angels perform assorted tasks at His command. The angel Gabriel delivers Allah's revelation to the prophets. Mikail is entrusted with rain. The angel of death collects the souls of man.
3. **Belief in the Books:** Allah has sent down many books to His messengers. Among them are the Torah, revealed to Moses; the Psalms, revealed to David; the Gospel, revealed to Jesus; and the Quran, which was revealed to Muhammad (peace be upon all of them). The Quran is the only book that was protected and remains intact today exactly as it was revealed. Accordingly, the Quran has abrogated all previously revealed books.
4. **Belief in the Prophets:** There are numerous prophets. Among them are Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, Lot, Joseph, Moses, and Jesus (peace be upon all of them). Muslims believe Jesus was born from a virgin birth; and that he spoke from the cradle and performed many miracles. Jesus is from the greatest prophets, but he has no share in divinity and is not the son of God. You can read the story of Jesus and his noble mother, Mary, in the Quran chapter entitled "Maryam." The final prophet sent to all of mankind is Muhammad, the son of Abdullah (peace be upon him). He is the final prophet. Therefore, it is compulsory for everyone who comes

after him to follow his guidance. Prophet Muhammad has no share in divinity and Muslims do not worship him.

5. **Belief in the Day of Judgment:** This is the day when all of mankind will be raised to life from their graves and taken to account for their actions. Whoever fulfilled their purpose in life, by worshipping Allah, alone, as He commanded, will be rewarded with eternal bliss in Paradise. Whoever refused, will spend eternity in the fire of Hell. Those oppressed by others in this life with regards to their honor, wealth or person, will be granted retribution against their oppressors on the Day of Judgment.
6. **Belief in Divine Decree:** This is to believe that everything happens according to the will of Allah. Whatever He wills will happen; and whatever He does not will, then it will not happen. It is to believe that Allah's knowledge encompasses everything. He has written everything that will occur. And He is the Creator of all things.

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## THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

Islam has five pillars upon which it is built.

1. **The Two Testimonies of Faith:** This is the statement by which a person enters Islam. This statement is as follows: "I bear witness that nothing has the right to be worshipped except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

The first statement negates worship for everyone and everything other than Allah; while affirming that worship is for Allah, alone, without partners. The second statement affirms Muhammad is the

Messenger of Allah; thus, his statements are believed, and his commands are followed.

2. **The Prayer:** Muslims pray five times a day. The prayer is the connection between man and his Creator. The similitude for the prayer is that of the person who bathes at the riverbank five times a day. Would this person have any traces of filth upon them?
3. **Zakat:** Zakat is a form of charity taken from the affluent and given to the needy. Each year the individual is required to give 2.5% of his savings to the poor within his community. The poor are not required to pay Zakat. The benefits of Zakat include the fulfillment of love, solidarity, mercy, and cooperation. It also removes evil traits, such as envy, greed, and animosity.
4. **Fasting:** Ramadan is the ninth month of the lunar calendar. While fasting, the person abstains from eating, drinking, and sexual relations from daybreak to sunset. Fasting trains the soul to patiently abstain from what it desires and naturally craves. Fasting brings about empathy and compassion for those who go without food and water throughout the year due to poverty. Fasting also has many health benefits. Those who are sick, elderly, and unable to fast are excused.
5. **Hajj:** Hajj is the pilgrimage to Mecca. Muslims are only required to perform Hajj once in their lifetime, if financially and physically able. Hajj contains many spiritual and social benefits. During Hajj season, Mecca is the most diverse place on the planet. Muslims of all races, colors, nationalities, economic backgrounds—kings and laborers—unite in one place, dressing in uniformity, to worship their Creator.

## THE MERITS OF ISLAM

Islam enjoins upon mankind all traits of nobility, honor, and core values lost in much of today's society.

- ❖ **Honoring the Parents:** “Be good and dutiful to your parents.” (Quran, Chapter 6, Verse 151)
- ❖ **Kindness to Women:** “And live with them (the wife) in kindness.” (Quran, Chapter 4, Verse 19) Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “The best of you is the one who is best to his wife.”
- ❖ **Women's Rights:** Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “Women are the twin halves of men; they have rights just as men have rights.”
- ❖ **Diversity in Islam:** Islam views the diversity of man's languages, ethnicities, and races as a sign of the Creator's power; not a source of division. “And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your languages and your colors.” (Quran, Chapter 30, Verse 22)
- ❖ **Racial Equality:** Piety is the quality that makes a person noble in the sight of God, not race or skin color. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “O mankind, indeed your Lord is One, and your father (Adam) is one. There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab or for a non-Arab over an Arab, or for a white person over a black person or for a black person over a white person, except in terms of piety.”

- ❖ **Respect for the Elderly:** Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, “He is not one of us, those who do not show mercy to our youth and respect our elderly.”
- ❖ **Caring for the Widow:** Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, “The one who looks after a widow and a poor person is like the one who fasts the entire day and stands in prayer the entire night.”
- ❖ **Kindness to Neighbors:** Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, “Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him not annoy his neighbor.”
- ❖ **Kindness to Animals:** Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) forbade using animals as chairs, beating them, or branding them in the face. Islam allows hunting for food while forbidding us to use animals as target practice for mere sport.
- ❖ **Fairness in Business:** Islam forbids hoarding food or merchandise during times of distress then charging the consumer an inflated price. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “Whoever hoards is a sinner.”
- ❖ **Respect for the Dead:** Islam forbids insulting the dead. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “Do not vilify the dead and by way of that harm the living.”

Islam enjoins truthfulness, cleanliness, humility, modesty, keeping promises, dignity, justice, courage, contentment, chastity, forbearance, gratitude, and self-control in times of anger.

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## THE CORRECT RELIGION

There are an estimated 4,200 religions in the world today! This is astounding when you consider there is only one God, who alone, created the Universe and everything in it. How can there be over 4,000 religions for one Creator?

The notion that everyone can worship God according to their desires, and thus there can be countless religions, is inconceivable. Likewise, the thought that we can ignore God, and live our lives without accountability is unimaginable.

God did not create us in vain or leave us without guidance. Due to His mercy, He outlined for us a complete way of life, for our prosperity in this life and the Hereafter.

With so many religions in the world, how do we know which one to follow? You may be surprised to learn that out of all the world religions, there is only one religion that directs all aspects of worship to the Creator alone, without associating any partners with Him or deeming Him to be similar to His creation.

There are religions that believe the Universe contains many gods, like Greek mythology. Some religions believe idols are a physical representation of God, so they direct their worship toward carvings or statues. Others teach a doctrine of intercessory prayer to so-called saints. Some practice a form of ancestral worship, believing the dead can influence the fortune of the living; while many believe God begot a son who is also worshipped and serves as an intermediary between man and God.

All of the mentioned examples have different rituals, carrying distinctive names, while sharing a common practice. They all direct aspects of worship toward the creation; either something that was created or someone that was born.

The correct religion, the natural way of life, is to worship your Creator, alone, not the creation. Prophet Muhammad simplified this when asked, “What is the greatest of all sins?” He said, “That you set up rivals with Allah in worship, while He, alone, created you.”

This is Islam. This is the religion of Abraham.

“Say, ‘Indeed, my Lord has guided me to a straight path—a correct religion—the way of Abraham, inclining toward truth. And he was not among those who associated partners with Allah.’” (Quran, Chapter 6, Verses 161)

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## HOW TO EMBRACE ISLAM

You become a Muslim by saying with your tongue, sincerely from your heart, “I bear witness that nothing has the right to worshipped except Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.”

You are not required to have any witnesses or a ceremony for the validity of this testimony of faith. You do not have to change your name.

## REASONS TO EMBRACE ISLAM

- ❖ Those who embrace Islam will enter Paradise.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “Whoever says sincerely from his heart, “Nothing has the right to be worshipped except Allah,” will enter Paradise.”

- ❖ Those who embrace Islam are forgiven of all past sins.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “Islam wipes away everything that came before it.”

- ❖ Islam enables you to have a direct connection with God.

Allah said in the Quran, “And when My servants ask you, concerning Me, indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me.” (Quran, Chapter 2, Verse 186)

- ❖ Islam is the way of life God chose for mankind to follow; therefore, it is the only religion that will be accepted.

“And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter, he will be one of the losers.” (Quran, Chapter 3, Verse 85)

- ❖ Whoever dies upon other than Islam will enter the Hellfire. “Indeed, he who associates others with Allah, Allah has forbidden him Paradise, and his abode is the Hellfire.” (Quran, Chapter 5, Verse 72)



## FREQUENTLY HEARD EXCUSES

### EXCUSE:

Islam will be too difficult for me.

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### ANSWER

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Islam is not difficult.

Allah said, “He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty. It is the religion of your father, Abraham.” (Quran, Chapter 22, Verse 78)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “I have been sent with pure monotheism and the religion of ease.”

Examples of ease in Islam:

- ❖ **The Prayer:** One prayer may take five minutes; thus, a day’s worth of prayer may only require 30 minutes of your day. If you are incapable of standing for the prayer due to sickness, injury, or old age; you are allowed to pray sitting or lying down. If you are sick, you can combine your prayers. While traveling, you can shorten and combine your prayers.
- ❖ **Fasting:** Those who are sick or elderly—and unable to fast the month of Ramadan—are excused from fasting. Persons traveling, experiencing temporary illnesses, or who are pregnant can make up the fast during later days.

**EXCUSE:**

Islam is a religion for Arabs.

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**ANSWER**

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Eighty percent of Muslims worldwide are non-Arabs. Thus, you find Muslims of all races, colors, nationalities, and economic backgrounds in every part of the world. Islam is a universal religion. Prophet Muhammad was sent to all the people of the earth regardless of their race, culture, ethnicities, or geographical location. Allah said in the Quran, “Say (O Muhammad) ‘O mankind, indeed I am the Messenger of Allah to you all.’” (Quran, Chapter 7, Verse 158)

**EXCUSE:**

Islam will prevent me from the enjoyment of the world.

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**ANSWER**

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Islam is moderate—being neither neglectful nor extreme—and Muslims live normal ordinary lives. Islam does not forbid us from enjoying the amenities of life. It shifts the focus to our ultimate goal, which is the everlasting, unimaginable enjoyment of Paradise. The only place where sickness, sadness, and old age do not exist. Therefore, we attempt to abstain from the temporary desires of the world if these vices will distract us from reaching our ultimate goal.

**EXCUSE:**

I enjoy pork.

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**ANSWER**

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The One who created the pig has infinite wisdom for why He forbade the consumption of pork. From His mercy, He provided us with countless other meat options; to include the aquatic animals of the ocean, cattle, poultry, sheep, and goats. Likewise, He gave us fruits, vegetables, grains, beans, nuts, dairy, and other foods. It is sufficient for the Muslim to avoid pork simply because his Lord commanded him to do so. If your physician advised you to avoid certain foods to improve your health, wouldn't the sensible person comply? Although eating pork is a sin in Islam, it does not prevent someone from becoming Muslim. So even if you may need time to wean yourself off pork, you can still embrace Islam today.

**EXCUSE:**

I have too many bad habits and sins to embrace Islam at the moment.

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**ANSWER**

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Embracing Islam saves the individual from the gravest of all sins, which is the worship of other than Allah. Once you enter Islam, you can gradually continue your self-improvement with the aid of Allah. Don't delay. Delaying something until tomorrow only benefits those who can guarantee they will live to see tomorrow. Embracing Islam while maintaining your bad habits is better than not embracing Islam at all.

**EXCUSE:**

My family and friends may disapprove.

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**ANSWER**

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As individuals, we make personal choices that might go against the expectations and plans our families envisioned for us, such as those concerning our career, education, even our choice for a spouse. We say, "This is my life and I have to do what is best for me."

I say to you, the religion of Islam came to provide humanity with prosperity in this life and the Hereafter. Therefore, the decision to embrace Islam is the best decision you will ever make. Don't jeopardize your wellbeing and happiness in this life and the Hereafter fearing the disapproval of others. A true loved one, a true friend, would respect your decision.

I pray that Allah blesses you with true guidance.

I also encourage you to pray directly to the Creator. Ask Him to open your heart. Ask Him for His guidance.

How can anyone go wrong seeking guidance from the All-Mighty, Ever-living God?

God said, "O My servants, all of you are astray except those whom I have guided, so seek guidance from Me and I shall guide you."

Here is a simple prayer that will not take much of your time.

O God, guide me to the correct path and save me from misguidance.





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