

OBJECTIVE:

Identify key moments in the life of the prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam.

Prophet Muhammad

KEY CONCEPTS

Founder: the person who established a religion.

Vision: a vivid dream or mental image of something important.

Prophet: a person chosen by God to give people an important message.

Founder

- ◆ **Muhammad** is the **founder** of the religion of Islam. He was born in Mecca, in what is now Saudi Arabia, around 570CE. Muhammad married a wealthy widow, Khadijah, and had six children. He became a successful businessman leading camel caravans across the trade routes of Arabia.
- ◆ Muhammad was a good man and became troubled by the corruption and violence in Mecca. He went off regularly by himself to the hills outside the city in order to think and to pray.

Vision

- ◆ One night while praying and fasting in a cave on **Mount Hira**, Muhammad had a **vision** of something important. He believed the angel Gabriel appeared to him telling him there was one God, Allah, and Muhammad was chosen to be God's messenger.
- ◆ The experience was unsettling, but later his wife assured him that God had indeed called him to be his prophet. Muhammad continued to receive messages from God throughout his life.

Prophet

- ◆ Muhammad became a **prophet**, a person chosen to give people a message from God. He began to preach in the city of **Mecca**, urging people to live good lives and to worship the one God, Allah, not the idols in the Ka'ba.
- ◆ The Prophet's message was not well received among the business community in Mecca. He was threatened and eventually forced to flee to Medina, 400 km away across the desert. The journey from Mecca to Medina is called the Hijra, and marks the beginning of the religion of Islam.
- ◆ Under his leadership, the first Muslim community was born in Medina. They began to follow the **Five Pillars**, the moral code of Islam. Some years later Muhammad returned to Mecca with a large army. He met little resistance and took over the city.
- ◆ Muhammad removed all the idols from the Ka'ba, declaring that it was now a shrine to the one God, Allah. The people converted to Islam and Mecca became the holy city of Islam.
- ◆ The Prophet died in the year 632CE aged 62 years.

Test Yourself

1. Who is the founder of Islam? _____
2. What extraordinary event occurred on Mount Hira?

3. What was the Prophet's message to the people of Mecca?

Name the primary source of information about Islam.

Trace the development of its sacred text from the oral tradition to the written word.

Sacred Text

KEY CONCEPTS

Sacred text: the book of holy or sacred writings of a community of faith.

Revelation: the way in which God chooses to make himself known to human beings.

Oral Tradition: stories and religious teaching that a people pass on by word of mouth.

Evidence: information about a religious tradition collected from different sources.

Inspiration: the way in which a person is guided by God to pass on a sacred message.

Sacred Text

- ◆ The Qur'an is the **sacred text** of Islam. It is the primary source of information about the beliefs and practices of Islam. The Hadith is another sacred text.
- ◆ **The Qur'an** is a document of faith. Muslims believe the Qur'an is the word of Allah, revealed to Muhammad by the Angel Gabriel.
- ◆ The Qur'an is written in Arabic and is divided into 114 chapters or suras.
- ◆ The **Hadith** is a collection of sayings and teachings from the life of Muhammad.
- ◆ In Islam, there is a clear distinction between:
 - ▶ The Qur'an – the direct word of Allah.
 - ▶ The Hadith – the teaching of Muhammad.



Revelation

- ◆ **Revelation** is the way in which God chooses to make himself known to human beings. Muslims believe that the will of God was revealed to Muhammad through the Angel Gabriel. This revelation began on the night Muhammad had a vision in the cave on Mount Hira. The angel's message was that there is one God, Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.
- ◆ Further messages were revealed to the Prophet and were later written down, word for word, in the Qur'an.
- ◆ Muslims believe the words in the Qur'an are the exact words of God. The Qur'an is therefore treated with great respect by all Muslims.

Oral Tradition

- ◆ The **oral tradition**, or oral stage of the Qur'an, lasted for a number of years. The message the Prophet received from the Angel Gabriel was initially passed on by word of mouth.
- ◆ Not being able to read or write, Muhammad learned the angel's words by heart. He repeated them to his wife and followers; they too learned the angel's message word for word.
- ◆ Scribes wrote part of the Prophet's message down before his death.

Evidence

- ◆ **Evidence** is information about a religious tradition collected from different sources. After Muhammad died, all the revelations from oral and written sources were gathered together and written down in one volume.
- ◆ The Qur'an was written:
 - ▶ To ensure the word of Allah was recorded correctly.
 - ▶ To preserve the message of Allah for future generations.

Inspiration

- ◆ **Inspiration** is the way in which a person is guided by God to pass on a sacred message. Muslims believe Muhammad received sacred messages from God through the angel Gabriel. Muhammad received inspiration or guidance from God to pass on these sacred messages to his followers, who in turn carefully wrote it all down in the Qur'an.
- ◆ This meant many more people learned about Allah and what Allah wanted them to do.

Test Yourself

1. What is the sacred text of Islam?

2. Outline the development of the Qur'an from the oral tradition to the written word.

3. How was the will of God revealed to Muhammad?

4. What did God inspire Muhammad to do with the sacred messages he received?

Section C - Islam: Sources of Evidence

Exam Questions

1. a. Pick **one** of the following world religions that you have studied:2003(H)
◆ BUDDHISM ◆ HINDUISM ◆ ISLAM ◆ JUDAISM
Name the world religion: _____
Name the founder/earliest followers of the world religion: _____
- b. Describe **one** important event that inspired the founder/earliest followers of this world religion.
- c. Briefly explain how the event described above can be seen as inspiration for the followers of this faith today.
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2. Tick ✓ **one** of the following world religions you have studied:2006(O)
 Buddhism Hinduism Islam Judaism
- a. Describe how religious belief had an effect on the life of an important person in the story of the world religion you have ticked above.
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3. Tick ✓ **one** of the following world religions that you have studied:2014(O)
BUDDHISM HINDUISM ISLAM JUDAISM
- a. Name the founder/earliest followers of the world religion that you have ticked above.
- b. Describe an example of how trust in God/gods/the divine was shown by the founder/earliest followers of the world religion that you have ticked above.
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4. a. Buddhism Hinduism Islam Judaism2007(H)
Tick ✓ one of the world religions above that you have studied:
- (i) Name **one** key person / group of people associated with the founding story of the world religion you have ticked above.
- (ii) Explain why the person / group of people you have named is important in the founding story of the world religion you have ticked above.
- b. Outline **one** way in which the story of the earliest followers influences members today in the world religion you have ticked.
- c. Explain how the world religion you have ticked above is linked to another major world religion.
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5. Tick ✓ **one** of the following world religions that you have studied:2009(O)
BUDDHISM HINDUISM ISLAM JUDAISM
- a. Name **one** sacred text that is associated with the world religion you have ticked above.
- b. Explain **two** reasons why a sacred text is important for members of a world religion.
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6. Tick ✓ **one** of the following world religions that you have studied:2013(O)
BUDDHISM HINDUISM ISLAM JUDAISM
- a. Name **one** sacred text that is most associated with the world religion which you have ticked above.
- b. Outline **two** reasons why the sacred text that you have named above is valued by the members of the world religion that you have ticked above.

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- 11.** a. In religious traditions the term 'revelation' means _____ **2009(O)**
b. Describe **one** example of revelation from the story of the founder/earliest followers of the world religion you have studied.

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- 12.** a. ◆ BUDDHISM ◆ HINDUISM ◆ ISLAM ◆ JUDAISM **2014(H)**
Name a sacred text that is associated with **one** of the above world religions.
Explain **two** reasons why it can be described as a document of faith.
SACRED TEXT: _____ WORLD RELIGION: _____
b. Describe what happened from the oral to the written stages in the development of the sacred text that you have named above.

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- 13.** ◆ BUDDHISM ◆ HINDUISM ◆ ISLAM ◆ JUDAISM **2009(H)**
Discuss the importance of a sacred text in **one** of the above major world religions that you have studied.
NOTE: *This is an essay question.*
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