

The Top Ten Myths about Islam (part 1 of 2): Access to information does not stop the misconceptions about Islam

Description: A brief look at the first three of ten common myths about Islam.

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Ever since the Muslims swept out of Arabian Peninsula to establish the Islamic Empire there have been myths and misconceptions surrounding the Islamic way of life. Nearly 1500 years ago the worship of One God changed the known world; however myths still surround Islam even though the people of the world have access to unprecedented amounts of information. In this two part article we will examine 10 of the most common myths that today cause misunderstanding and intolerance.



1. Islam encourages terrorism.

In the second decade of the 21st century this is probably the biggest myth about Islam. In a time when it seems that the world has gone mad with the killing of innocents it must be reiterated that the religion of Islam sets out very specific rules for war and places great value on the sanctity of life.

"...that if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or (and) to spread mischief in the land - it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind..." (Quran 5:32)

The killing of innocents is completely forbidden. When Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, sent his companions into battle he said "Go out in the name of God and do not kill any old man, infant, child or woman. Spread goodness and do good, for God loves those who do good."[\[1\]](#) "Do not kill the monks in monasteries" or "Do not kill the people who are sitting in places of worship."[\[2\]](#) Once after a battle the Prophet saw the corpse of a woman on the ground and said, "She was not fighting. How then was she killed?"

These rules were further emphasised by the first Caliph of the Islamic Empire, Abu Bakr. He said, "I command you ten things. Do not kill women, children, or an aged, infirm person. Do not cut down fruit-bearing trees. Do not destroy an inhabited place. Do not slaughter sheep or camels except for food. Do not burn bees and do not scatter them. Do not steal from the booty, and do not be cowardly."[\[3\]](#) In addition to this Muslims are forbidden to carry out unjustifiable acts of aggression. It is never permissible to kill a person who is not hostile.

"Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but don't transgress limits; for God loves not the transgressor..." (Quran 2:190)

2. Islam oppresses women.

Islam holds women in highest regard in every phase of her life. As a daughter she opens the door to Paradise for her father.[\[4\]](#) As a wife, she completes half the religion of her husband.[\[5\]](#) When she is a mother, Paradise lies under her feet.[\[6\]](#) Muslim men are required to treat women respectfully in all circumstances because Islam demands that women be treated with both honour and fairness.

In Islam women, like men, are commanded to believe in God and to worship Him. Women are equal to men in terms of reward in the Hereafter.

"And whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer - those will enter Paradise and will not be wronged, (even as much as) the speck on a date seed." (Quran 4:124)

Islam gives women the right to own property and control their own finances. It gives women formal rights of inheritance and the right to education. Muslim women have the right to accept or refuse marriage proposals and are completely free from the obligation of supporting and maintaining the family thus working married women are free to contribute to the household expenses, or not, as they see fit. Islam also gives women the right to seek divorce if it becomes necessary.

Sadly it is true that some Muslim women are oppressed. Unfortunately many are not aware of their rights and fall victim to cultural aberrations that have no place in Islam. Powerful individuals, groups and governments claim to be Muslim yet fail miserably to practice the principles of Islam. If women were given their God-given rights, as set out in the religion of Islam, the global oppression of women could be crushed into oblivion. Prophet Muhammad said, "None but a noble man treats women in an honourable manner. And none but an ignoble treats women disgracefully."[\[7\]](#)

3. All Muslims are Arabs

The religion of Islam was revealed for all people, in all places, at all times. The Quran was revealed in the Arabic language and Prophet Muhammad was an Arab, but it would be wrong to assume that all Muslims are Arab, or for that matter, that all Arabs are Muslim. In fact the vast majority of the world's 1.57 billion[\[8\]](#) Muslims are not of Arabic ethnicity.

Although many people, especially in the West, associate Islam with countries in the Middle East, according to the Pew Research Centre nearly two-thirds (62%) of Muslims live in the Asia-Pacific region and in fact more Muslims live in India and Pakistan (344 million combined) than in the entire Middle East and North African region (317 million).

Also according to Pew, "Muslims make up a majority of the population in 49 countries around the world. The country with the largest number (about 209 million) is Indonesia, where 87.2% of the population identifies as Muslim. India has the world's second-largest Muslim population in raw numbers (roughly 176 million) though Muslims make up just 14.4% of India's total population."

Islam is not a race or ethnicity - it is a religion. Thus Muslims can and do exist in all parts of the world from the alpine tundra of Scandinavia to the warm coastal waters of Fiji.

"O humankind, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognize one another..." (Quran 49:13)

Endnotes:

[1] *Abu Dawood*

[2] *Imam Ahmad*

[3] Tabari, Al (1993), *The Conquest of Arabia*, State University of New York Press, p. 16

[4] *Saheeh Muslim*. In *Ahmad and Ibn Majah* a daughter is referred to as "a shield from the fire" for her father.

[5] *Al-Bayhaqi*

[6] *Ahmad, An-Nasai*

[7] *At-Tirmidhi*

[8] According to the report, "Mapping the Global Muslim Population," by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life.

The Top Ten Myths about Islam (part 2 of 2): More Myths Busted

Description: A continuation of part one, in which we examine myths four to ten.

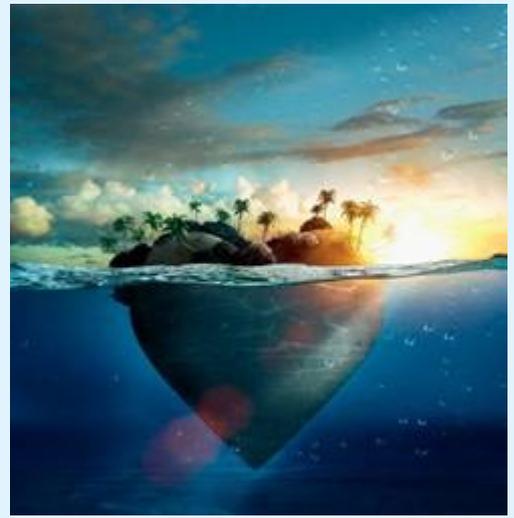
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4. Islam does not tolerate other faiths and beliefs.

Historically Islam has always respected and upheld the principle of freedom of religion. The Quran and other principle texts including the traditions of Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, preach tolerance towards other religions and non-believers. Non-Muslims living under Muslim rule are allowed to practice their religion and even have their own courts.



5. Islam only began 1400 years ago.

The root of the word Islam (sa-la-ma) is the same root that is shared with the Arabic word meaning peace and security - salam. In essence, Islam means, submission to the will of God and encompasses the peace and security that comes from living life according to God's will. Thus throughout history anyone who practised monotheism by submitting to the will of God is considered a Muslim. Human beings have been practicing Islam since the creation of Adam. Throughout the ages God sent prophets and messengers to guide and teach their own people. The main message of all the prophets had always been that there is only One True God and He alone is to be worshipped. These prophets start with Adam and include Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, John the Baptist, and Jesus, peace be upon them all. God says in the Holy Quran:

"We did not send before you (O Muhammad) any messenger but We revealed to him: 'none has the right to be worshipped except I, therefore worship Me.'" (Quran 21:25)

However, the true message of these prophets was either lost or got corrupted over time. Even the most recent books, the Torah and the Gospel were adulterated and hence they lost their credibility to guide the people to the right path. Therefore 600 years after Jesus, God revived the lost message of previous prophets by sending the Prophet Muhammad with His final revelation, the Holy Quran, to all of mankind. God Almighty says in the Quran:

"We have not sent you (O Muhammad) but to all mankind as a giver of good news and as a warner, but most people do not know." (Quran 34:28)

"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 3:85)

6. Muslims do not believe in Jesus.

Muslims love all of the prophets; to reject one is to reject the creed of Islam. In other words, Muslims believe in, love, and respect Jesus, who is known in Arabic as Eesa. The difference is that Muslims understand his role according to the Quran, and the traditions and sayings of

Prophet Muhammad. They do not believe that Jesus is God, nor the son of God and they do not believe in the concept of Trinity.

Three chapters of the Quran feature the life of Jesus, his mother Mary and their family, and each one reveals details of Jesus' life that are not found in the Bible. Muslims believe he was born a miraculous birth without a father to virgin Mary and never claimed to be the son of God or said that he should be worshipped. Muslims also believe that Jesus will return to earth in the last days.

7. Prophet Muhammad wrote the Quran.

This claim was made for the first time by Prophet Muhammad's opponents. They were desperate to protect their interests that were being over shadowed by Islam and were trying to spread doubt about the Quran's divine authorship.

The Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammad, by the angel Gabriel, over a period of 23 years. God Himself addresses the assertion in the Quran itself.

"And when Our clear verses are recited to them, the disbelievers say of the truth (this Quran), when it reaches them: 'This is plain magic!' Or they say: 'He (Muhammad) has fabricated it.'..." (Quran 46:7-8)

In addition to this Prophet Muhammad was an unlettered man, that is he was unable to read or write. God also mentioned this in the Quran.

"Neither did you O Muhammad read any book before it (this Quran) nor did you write any book..." (Quran 29: 48)

The Quran is filled with astonishing facts, so in order to prove that Prophet Muhammad did not write the Quran we ask how a seventh-century CE man could know things that have only recently been accepted as scientific truths. How could he have known how rain clouds and hailstones form, or that the universe is expanding? How was he able to describe in great detail the different stages of an embryo's development without modern inventions such as the ultrasound machine?

8. The crescent moon is a symbol of Islam.

The Muslim community lead by Prophet Muhammad did not have a symbol. Caravans and armies used flags for identification purposes but it was a solid colour usually black or green. Muslims do not have a symbol representing Islam the way the cross represents Christianity or the Star of David represents Judaism.

The Crescent moon symbol has historically been associated with the Turks and before Islam it was a feature on their coins. The crescent moon and star became affiliated with the Muslim world when the Turks conquered Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1453 CE. They chose to take the city's existing flag and symbol and make it the symbol of the Ottoman Empire. Since that time the crescent has been adopted by many predominantly Muslim countries and wrongly become known as symbol of the Islamic faith.

9. Muslims worship a moon god.

Deluded people sometimes refer to Allah as a modern interpretation of an ancient moon god. This is categorically untrue. Allah is one of the Names of God and is referred to by this name by all Arabic speaking people including significant numbers of Christians and Jews. Allah is in no way associated with moon worship or moon gods.

There is scant information about the religion of the Arabs before Prophet Abraham but there is little doubt that the Arabs wrongly worshipped idols, heavenly bodies, trees, and stones. The most popular were deities known as Manat, al-Lat, and al-Uzza, however there is no evidence linking them with moon gods or the moon.

10. Jihad means Holy war.

The Arabic word for war is not *jihad*. The use of the words 'holy war' by uniformed people might have its basis in the Christian use of the term during the Holy Crusades. The term *Jihad* is the Arabic word that means to struggle, or to strive. It is often described as being of several levels. Firstly, an internal struggle against one's self in an effort to become closer to God. Secondly it is a struggle to build a Muslim community based on social justice and human rights. Thirdly it is a military or armed struggle.

The armed struggle can be defensive or offensive. The defensive *jihad* is fought when Muslim lands are invaded and the lives of people, their wealth and honour are threatened. So the Muslims fight back the invading enemy in self defence. In the offensive *jihad* those people are fought who oppose the establishment of Islamic rule and from Islam reaching the people. Islam is a mercy for all of mankind and came to bring people out from the worship of stones and humans to the worship of One True God, from the oppression and injustices of culture, people and nations to the equality and justice of Islam. Once Islam has been made accessible to people, there is no compulsion in accepting it - it is up to the people.

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