

14070 - He has been asked to research about Islam and its impact on Europe

the question

Discuss the rise of Islam by exploring the life and religious ideas of Muhammad, as well as development in the century after his death. Explain at length Muhammad's religious ideas, placing them in their historical context. That is, how do these ideas reflect Muhammad's personal life experiences and background, and more generally the environment of seventh century Arabian society? Then explain how and when Islam spread from Arabia to Europe addressing Islam's impact on the Christian West as well as Arabia and its surrounding regions.

Detailed answer

Firstly:

Our Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did not produce his ideas by himself, rather the message that he brought came from Allaah – it was Revelation (wahy) which Allaah sent to him.

Secondly:

with regard to his life (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him):

He was the best of all people on earth in terms of lineage, for he was descended from the noblest line. Even his enemies bore witness to that. Hence his enemy Abu Sufyaan testified to that effect before the Byzantine ruler. The noblest of people were his people; the noblest of tribes was his tribe; the noblest of clans was his clan. His full name was Muhammad ibn [son of] 'Abd-Allaah ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib ibn Haashim ibn 'Abd

Manaaf ibn Qusayy ibn Kilaab ibn Murrah ibn Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy ibn Ghaalib ibn Fahr ibn Maalik ibn al-Nadar ibn Kinaanah ibn Khuzaymah ibn Mudrikah ibn Ilyaaas ibn Mudar ibn Nizaar ibn Ma'd ibn 'Adnaan... ibn 'Ismaa'eel [Ishmael] ibn Ibraaheem [Abraham] (peace be upon them).

Allaah sent him as a Prophet at the age of forty, which is the age of perfection. The first sign of Prophethood which was sent to the Messenger of Allaah was dreams: he did not see any dream but it would come true like daybreak. It was said that that lasted for six months. The period of his Prophethood lasted for twenty-three years. These dreams were one of the forty-six parts of Prophethood. Then Allaah honoured him with Prophethood, and the angel came to him whilst he was in the cave of Hira', where he used to love to go to be alone. The first words (of the Qur'aan) to be revealed to him were:

“Read! In the Name of your Lord Who has created (all that exists)”

[al-'Alaq 96:1 - interpretation of the meaning]

His message came in stages. Firstly, he was appointed as a Prophet; secondly, he warned his nearest kinsmen; thirdly, he warned his people; fourthly, he warned the people to whom no warner had ever come, namely all the Arabs; fifthly, he warned all those whom his message reached, both jinns and humans, until the end of time.

After that (initial revelation), he spent three years calling people to Allaah in secret. Then the following words were revealed to him:

“Therefore proclaim openly (Allaah's Message Islamic Monotheism) that which you are commanded, and turn away from Al-Mushrikoon (polytheists, idolaters, and disbeliever”

[al-Hijr 15:94 – interpretation of the meaning]

See Zaad al-Ma'aad by Ibn al-Qayyim, 1/71

Thirdly:

With regard to the message to which our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) called people, it is sufficient to quote what was said by Abu Sufyaan – who was a kaafir (disbeliever) at the time. Heraclius, the ruler of Byzantium, asked Abu Sufyaan, “What does he tell you to do?” Abu Sufyaan said: “He tells us to worship Allaah alone, not associating anything with Him, and he forbids us to worship that which our fathers used to worship. He commands us to pray, to give in charity, to be chaste, to keep our promises and fulfil our trusts.” Heraclius commented on Abu Sufyaan’s words by saying: “This is the description of a Prophet. I knew that he would appear, but I did not think that he would be from among you [the Arabs]. If you are indeed speaking the truth, then soon he will take possession of the place where my feet are standing. If I thought that I could meet him I would not hesitate to go to him, and if I were with him I would wash his feet.”

(Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 2782; Muslim, 1773).

Fourthly:

After the death of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), he was succeeded as khaleefah (leader of the Muslim community) by Abu Bakr al-Siddeeq, during whose time a number of major events took place: the dispatching of the army of Usaamah [to Syria]; the wars against the apostates (ahl al-riddah); fighting those who refused to pay the zakaah; the emergence of Musaylimah the liar [a false prophet]; and the compilation of the Qur’aan.

Then came 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab, who was one of the earliest Muslims, one of the ten whom the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) had testified would enter Paradise, one of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (al-khulafa' al-raashideen), one of the in-laws of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), one of the greatest scholars and ascetics among the Sahaabah (the Companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)). Many conquests took place during his time, including the conquest of Damascus, Jordan, Iraq, Jerusalem and Egypt. He is the one who decided, in consultation with 'Ali, that history should be dated from the time of the Hijrah (the migration of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) from Makkah to Madeenah).

He was martyred in 23 AH by the kaafir Magian murderer Abu Lu'lu'ah.

Then came 'Uthmaan ibn 'Affaan, who was also one of the ten whom the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) had testified would enter Paradise. He had also become Muslim in the earliest days. He was one of those whom Abu Bakr al-Siddeeq had called to Islam. He migrated twice, first to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) then to Madeenah. He married Ruqayyah the daughter of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), then she passed away and he married her sister Umm Kalthoom. He ruled as khaleefah for twelve years, then he was martyred in 35 AH at the age of eighty-odd.

Then came 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib, who was also one of the ten whom the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) had testified would enter Paradise. He was the brother of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) according to the system of brotherhood established when the muhaajiroon (migrants from

Makkah) first came to Madeenah, and he was also the Prophet's son-in-law as he married his daughter Faatimah, the best of all women (may Allaah be pleased with her). He was also one of the first people to become Muslim, one of the greatest scholars, bravest warriors, prominent ascetics and preachers. He was one of those who compiled the Qur'aan and showed it to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

Fifthly:

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was guided by the teachings of the Qur'aan, indeed his whole attitude was the Qur'aan as the Mother of the Believers 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) said. The way our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was in Islam was the same as the way he had been before, but Allaah perfected his character and made it more beautiful. When the first revelation came, [his wife] Khadeejah (may Allaah be pleased with her) said, listing his attributes:

"No, by Allaah, Allaah would never let you down. For you uphold ties of kinship, you help the weak, you give charity to the poor, you honour your guests and you help the deserving calamity-afflicted ones."

(Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 4; Muslim, 160)

Both his companions and his enemies described him in a befitting manner, as he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) deserved, saying that he was honourable, brave, merciful, well-spoken, worshipped a great deal, was honest and trustworthy, and so on.

This was all summed up in the verse:

"And verily, you (O Muhammad) are on an exalted (standard of) character"

[al-Qalam 68:4 – interpretation of the meaning]

His good character and attitude had a great effect, as it was the reason for some of the mushrikeen (pagans, polytheists) coming to Islam.

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah said: “The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) sent some cavalry towards Najd, and they brought a man from Banu Haneefah whose name was Thamaamah ibn Athaal and tied him to one of the pillars of the mosque. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came out and said, ‘Untie Thamaamah.’ Then he (Thamaamah) went to grove of palm trees near the mosque and washed himself (did ghusl), then he entered the mosque and said, ‘I bear witness that there is no god except Allaah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allaah.’” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 4114; Muslim, 1764).

Sixthly:

With regard to Islam reaching Europe, it did so in several ways, including the following:

- 1 - The keenness of the Muslims to convey the truth to all of mankind. Andalusia [in Spain] was conquered by Tariq ibn Ziyad in 92 AH/711 CE, and the conquests in western Europe continued until they reached southeastern France in 114 AH.
- 2 - People coming from North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia to look for work and a better future.
- 3 - Westerners bringing some people from other countries, such as the Germans bringing Turks, to work in their country.
- 4 - The presence of Muslim daa’iyahs (callers, “missionaries”) in those countries.

5 – The conquests of the Ottoman state of part of Europe.

6 – The conversion of some indigenous Europeans to Islam, who then began to propagate Islam.

7 – Trade links between Muslims and Europe.

8 – Conversion of some Europeans to Islam.

9 – Changes in the European intellectual approaches.

10 – Rejection of the church myths which contradict revelation and the adoption of empirical knowledge whose foundation was laid by the Muslims.

11 – Participation of Muslim communities in the development of research, inventions and companies in Europe, through the work of qualified Muslim professionals, plus the increase in the number of Muslim communities in Europe, which resulted in the increase in the number of mosques, schools and Islamic centers. This has resulted in increased Muslim influence, to the extent that the enemies of Islam such as the Jews are scared. The Israeli newspaper “Ha-eretz” said, in an issue published in late June 2001 CE, “As is the case in western Europe, the great increase in the number of Muslims in the United States has led to an increase in their political influence... The increase in the number of Muslims and their increasing political awareness, especially the Arab students, who are the most active of the Arabs in the political field, and the decrease in the number of Jews as a result of mixed marriages and their assimilation into American society, will all, in the future, play a role in changing the balance of power and changing the influence that these competing groups have in Washington. This is now something tangible, as can be seen in the activities of the pro-Arab lobbies in Congress.

1. The increase in the number of Muslims in European countries. More than ten years ago the number of Muslims in Europe was approximately 12 million.
2. The spread of mosques, Islamic centers and schools.
3. The spread of hijab and Islamic dress in the capitals of European countries.
4. The holding of Islamic exhibitions and seminars, and the establishment of companies that take care of halaal slaughter of meat, and burying the dead in the manner prescribed in Islam.

And Allaah is the Guide to the straight path and the Source of strength.