Islam And Ramadan Essay, Research Paper

Islam

It is averaged that there are 750 million people practicing Islam. Islam is actually derived form Christianity. History books indicates that one night in the year 610, the first of many revelations came to Muhammad from God by way of the angel Gabriel. The message Muhammad received told him that there was but one God, not many gods,

as most Arabs believed. This God was creator of the world, and He would one day judge mankind.

The word Islam means “surrender” or “submission,” submission to the will of Allah, the one God. Muslims are those who have submitted themselves. The basic creed of Islam is brief: There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah. slam teaches that there is one God, the creator and sustainer of the universe. This God, Allah, is compassionate and just. Because He is compassionate, He calls all people to believe in Him and worship Him. Because He is also just, on the Last Day He will judge every person according to his deeds. On the Last Day, all the dead will be resurrected and either rewarded with heaven or punished with hell.

The life of each Muslim is always within the community of the faithful, all are declared to be “brothers to each other,” with he mission to “enjoin good and forbid evil.” Within the community, Muslims are expected to establish social and economic justice. They are also expected to carry their message out to the rest of the world. In the early Islamic community, this meant the use of force in the form of jihad, or holy war. The object of jihad was to gain political control over societies and run them in accordance with the principles of Islam.

During the decades following the death of Muhammad certain essential principles were singled out rom his teachings to serve as anchoring points for the Islamic community. These have come to be called the “five pillars of Islam.”

The revelations that Muhammad received were collected into a new book, the Koran, directing his followers what to believe and how to live. Many Muslims believed that everything Muhammad said and did was inspired by Allah, many reports of his sayings and deeds were collected. At first these were just remembered and spread by word of mouth. Later they were captured in writing, to serve as an additional guide for believers, along with the Koran. It was Muhammad’s contention that Christianity had departed from belief in God’s message as revealed in their Scriptures. God had sent many prophets, among them Abraham, who is considered the founder of the faith for Islam, as he is also for and Christianity. The Koran, using sources in the older Scriptures and later traditions, relates the stories of Abraham, Joseph, Moses and Aaron, David, Solomon, Jesus.

After Muhammad’s death in AD 632, it was feared that the content of the revelations might be lost, as those who had originally memorized it died. It was therefore decided to collect all the revelations, from what ever source, and make a compilation. Even at this early date, variations in the Korans revelations were becoming common in different parts of the new Islamic empire. An authorized version was created, with arrangement of putting the longer chapters first and the shorter one last.

The hajj, “pilgrimage,” is an annual Muslim rite that every believer is expected to take part in at least once in his lifetime. From the seventh to the tenth day in Dhu al- Hijjah, the last month of the Islamic calendar, thousands of Muslims converge on the city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia to visit the holy shrine of the Kaaba in the Great Mosque. The pilgrimage culminates with the feast of sacrifice, one of the two major festivals that are celebrated during the Islamic year. The zakat is an obligatory tax, a contribution made by Muslims to the state or to the community.

The Five Pillars of Islam Islam is centered around Five Pillars. These Five Pillars are shahada, salat, zakat, sawm, and the hajj. All of these pillars are significant and have a certain importance to all Muslims. The first pillar is shahada. It is the most important pillar. It is the profession of faith. It is the belief that “there is no god, but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger”. Shahada is important to followers of Islam because their faith in Allah results in security, accord, salvation, and an all over well being.

The next pillar is salat. It is daily prayer. All Muslims are required to worship facing Mecca, the birthplace of Muhammad, five times a day. Salat is important to Muslims because they can communicate with Allah and this will remind them to always follow the Qur’an and serve Allah. The next pillar is zakat. It is the giving of alms. Muslims must share what they posses with others who are less fortunate. This is emphasized throughout the Qur’an. Zakat is important to Muslims because it puts weight on equality of all people.

The next pillar is sawm. It is fasting during the month of Ramadan. It requires abstention from food, drink, smoking and sex from sunrise to sunset. Sawm is important to Muslims because it purifies the body and soul for prayer. The last pillar is the hajj. It is the pilgrimage to Mecca all Muslims must make at least once in their lifetime. There are numerous rituals associated with the hajj. It is important because it brings Muslims of different cultures together to bring a sense of unity and equality. The Five Pillars of Islam each have their own individual importance. Together they form the backbone of the Islamic religion.