Church History

Mr. Myers

Rise of Islam

1. Life of Muhammad and the Birth of Islam
   1. Born in A.D. 570 in the Arab city of Mecca
   2. Orphaned at a young age, he was raised by a well-to-do and influential uncle
   3. He became a successful businessman, running trade routes between Asia and Europe; he would have had contact with both Jews and Christians in the trading business
   4. At age 25 he married a wealthy 40-year old widow named Khadijah
   5. Having established his wealth, Muhammad turned to philosophical and religious quests, seeking to know “the truth”; he liked to go to a cave and spend hours in meditation; according to Muhammad, it was in this cave in A.D. 610 that he received his first vision from the angel Gabriel; he was worried that he was hearing a devil but some others, including a Christian man assured him that his vision was from God
   6. Muhammad began to proclaim that Allah was the one true God and that all of the idols that the people worshipped in the region were false, eliciting strong opposition and antagonism
   7. Over a number of years, Mohammad gained a following, but in the year 622, the group had to flee Mecca because of persecution they faced; they went to Medina where the local people accepted his message and his leadership; this is called the *hejira* and could be considered the beginning of the religion of Islam
   8. From then on, Muhammad’s power and influence grew; some accepted his message willingly, but as Mohammed led his followers to wage a holy war against the surrounding tribes, many more people faced the choice between Islam or death; over the next century, Muslims conquered the Middle East region, much of the Byzantine Empire, and northern Africa
   9. Mohammed died in 632; the visions that he received from Gabriel are recorded in the Koran (Qur’an), the holy book of the Muslims
   10. After Mohammad’s death, a power struggle followed over who was his legitimate successor—this led to a division within Islam that exists to this day—the Sunnis and the Shiites.
2. Teachings of Islam
   1. The Five Pillars of Islam
      1. **The confession of faith**  "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah". (A person who recites this confession in Arabic becomes a Muslim.)
      2. **Prayer** This is the duty of every Muslim (able to do so). The prescribed ritual prayers five times daily, at prescribed times, with the prescribed posture, have to be observed. During these five prayers a fixed prayer-text must be recited seventeen times altogether (twice in the morning; four times at noon; four times in the afternoon; three times in the evening and four times at night).
      3. **The giving of alms** is a religious duty and should amount to not less than 2.5% of the income above ones needs
      4. **Keeping the Fast during the month of Ramadaan** is a duty for all, except the sick, travellers, pregnant women, nursing mothers and children. The fast is to last from the rising of the sun until sunset
      5. **Pilgrimage to Mecca** is required once in a lifetime during the month of Zu'l-Hijjah, if the means allow this. There is also a minor pilgrimage (Umra), which is performed at other times. (A pilgrim is to follow carefully prescribed activities during his or her pilgrimage. The steps involve visiting certain sites, spending time in prayer and meditation, and throwing stones at a statue symbolizing Satan.)
      6. **Holy War—**some add this as a sixth pillar of faith; some interpret this as “spreading the faith”
   2. **Other Beliefs**
      1. There have been many other true prophets, but Muhammad supersedes and replaces all other revelations; Jesus is a human prophet along with the rest
      2. Muslims believe in earning merit from Allah through their obedience; they do not have assurance of forgiveness for wrong deeds; they don’t believe human beings are inherently sinful and that they need to be “born again, ”converted, and saved by God’s grace like Christians do.
      3. Islam’s morality is similar to Christianity: it is more strict in some ways, but it allows for polygamy and more violence