

Islam - An introduction

Islam is the second largest religion in the world with over 1 billion followers. There are around 2 millions Muslims in Britain, around 2.7% of the population.

The word 'Islam' in Arabic means submission to the will of God.

Followers of Islam are called

Muslims. Muslims believe there is one true God **Allah** (the Arabic word for God)

Muslims believe that Islam was **revealed** over 1400 years ago in Mecca, Arabia through a man called **Muhammad**. Muhammad is so revered that it is usual for Muslims to say 'peace be upon him' whenever they mention his name.

Muhammad is believed by Muslims to be the last prophet sent by God (Allah) According to Muslims, God sent prophets to mankind to teach them how to live according to His law. Jesus (Isa), Moses (Musa) and Abraham (Ibrahim) are other respected prophets.

The Muslim holy book is called the **Qur'an**. Muslims believe this to be the word of Allah as dictated to Muhammad. They also have the **Sunnah**, which Muslims believe to be the practical example of Prophet Muhammad. Muslims follow the five basic **Pillars of Islam**. They are an essential part of Muslim life:

The Five Pillars of Islam are an essential part of Muslim life. These pillars are:

- the **declaration of faith** (Shahada)
- **praying** five times a day (Salat)
- giving money to **charity** (Zakah)
- **fasting** (Sawm)
- a **pilgrimage** to Makkah at least once in a lifetime (Hajj)

Muslims worship in a building called a Mosque. On Friday at noon, the most important of the weekly services is held. When Muslims pray, they must always face Makkah.

