

Men's Discipleship

False Religions: Islam

The founder of Islam is **the False Prophet Muhammad** (c. 570–632 AD).

Key Points:

- **Full name:** Muhammad ibn Abdullah.
- **Born:** Mecca (in present-day Saudi Arabia), around 570 AD.
- **Role:** He is considered the **last prophet** in a long line of prophets in Islamic belief, which includes figures like Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.
- **Revelation:** Muslims believe that beginning in 610 AD, Muhammad received revelations from **God (Allah)** through the angel **Gabriel** over a period of 23 years. These revelations make up the **Qur'an**, the book of Islam.
- **Death:** He died in 632 AD in Medina.

While Muslims do not typically use the word “founder” in the religious sense (as they believe Islam is the original monotheistic faith revealed to earlier prophets and completed with Muhammad), historically he is considered the **founder and central figure** of the Islamic religion.

Islam is considered an **Abrahamic religion** because it traces its spiritual lineage to **Abraham**, a key patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Reasons Islam is considered Abrahamic:

1. Shared Ancestry

- Muslims believe that **Abraham** was a prophet and a monotheist who submitted to the one God (Allah).
- Islam teaches that **Muhammad is a descendant of Abraham** through his son **Ishmael (Isma'il)**.
- This links Islam directly to the Abrahamic tradition, just as Judaism and Christianity trace lineage through **Isaac**, Abraham's other son.

2. Common Beliefs and Themes

- **Monotheism:** Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam believes in one, all-powerful God.
- **Prophets:** Islam recognizes many of the same prophets, including Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.
- **Scripture:** The Qur'an refers to earlier revelations like the Torah (given to Moses) and the Gospel (given to Jesus), although it teaches that only the Qur'an remains fully preserved.

3. Abraham's Role in Islamic Practice

- Abraham is honored as a model of submission to God's will.
- The **Hajj pilgrimage** to Mecca commemorates events in Abraham's life, such as:
 - His willingness to sacrifice his son (understood in Islam to be Ishmael).
 - The building of the **Kaaba** with Ishmael, which Muslims face during prayer.

In Summary:

Islam is "Abrahamic" because it:

- Shares a theological and prophetic tradition with Judaism and Christianity.
- Honors Abraham as a foundational figure of faith.
- Emphasizes monotheism rooted in Abraham's example.

The term "Abrahamic religions" refers to these three faiths because of their common origin in Abraham and their belief in one God.

1. The First Revelation (610 AD)

- Muhammad was meditating in the **Cave of Hira**, near **Mecca**, during the month of **Ramadan**.
- At the age of **40**, he experienced his first revelation.
- The **Angel Jibril** appeared to him and commanded him to "**Read!**" (or "**Recite!**") – the Arabic word is "**Iqra**".
- Muhammad, who was **not literate**, replied that he could not read. This command was repeated three times.
- Then the angel recited the first verses of the Qur'an:

"Read in the name of your Lord who created – Created man from a clinging substance..." (Qur'an 96:1–2)

2. Ongoing Revelations (610–632 AD)

- The revelations continued over **23 years**, addressing:
 - Beliefs about God
 - Moral guidance
 - Laws and social justice
 - Stories of earlier prophets
 - They were often given in response to events, questions, or situations in Muhammad's life or the community.
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3. Method of Revelation

- Muhammad would sometimes hear a sound like a **bell** or feel a **heavy physical sensation**.
 - Other times, the angel would appear in **human form**, often resembling a companion named **Dihya al-Kalbi**.
 - After the experience, he would **recite** the verses to his companions, who would:
 - **Memorize** them (many were known as **ḥuffāz**, or memorizers).
 - **Write** them down on materials like parchment, bones, or palm leaves.
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4. Compilation of the Qur'an

- During Muhammad's lifetime, the Qur'an was **not compiled into a single book** but was memorized and written in parts.
 - After his death, the **Caliphs Abu Bakr and Uthman** led efforts to collect, compile, and standardize the Qur'an into the form used today.
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Summary:

Muhammad received the Qur'an through the **Angel Gabriel** in stages, by **oral revelation**, beginning in a cave and continuing throughout his prophethood. The words were **memorized, recorded, and preserved** by his followers, eventually forming the Qur'an, which Muslims believe is the **literal word of God**.

Many **Protestant Christians**—along with other branches of Christianity—**do not accept Muhammad as a true prophet**. From their theological perspective, **Muhammad is considered a false prophet**, primarily based on **biblical teachings** and **doctrinal differences** between Christianity and Islam.

1. Rejection of the Divinity of Jesus

- Islam teaches that **Jesus (Isa)** was a prophet, but **not the Son of God**, and that he **was not crucified**—instead, someone else was made to appear like him.
 - Protestant Christians believe that:
 - **Jesus is the Son of God** (John 1:1, John 20:28)
 - **His death and resurrection are essential** for salvation (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)
 - Any teaching that **denies the core gospel message** is seen as false (Galatians 1:8–9).
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2. Biblical Warnings About False Prophets

- Christians often cite passages such as:

“For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus... or if you receive a different spirit... you put up with it readily enough.” (2 Corinthians 11:4)
“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1)

- Since Muhammad’s teachings **contradict** central Christian doctrines (Trinity, deity of Christ, atonement), many Protestants believe these verses apply to him.
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3. Finality of Revelation in Christ

- Protestant theology holds that:
 - **Revelation is complete in Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1–2)
 - No further prophets are needed after Jesus.
 - Therefore, claims of **new revelation** (like the Qur'an) are considered **unnecessary or deceptive**.
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4. Contradiction with the Bible

- Protestants argue that the Qur’an **contradicts the Bible** on key points:
 - Nature of God (Trinitarian vs. strict monotheism)
 - Identity of Jesus
 - Means of salvation
 - Because of these contradictions, they view Muhammad's message as **inconsistent with God’s revealed Word**.
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5. No Miraculous Verification (According to Christian Standards)

- Protestant apologetics often argue that true prophets are validated by:
 - Miracles (as in Moses or Jesus)
 - Fulfilled prophecies
 - They claim Muhammad did not perform verifiable miracles (outside of what Islam claims) or prophesy in a biblically recognizable way.
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Summary:

From a **Protestant Christian perspective**, Muhammad is considered a false prophet because:

- He **denies essential Christian doctrines**
- His message **contradicts the Bible**
- Jesus is viewed as the **final and complete revelation** of God
- Biblical warnings caution against "**other gospels**" and "**false prophets**"

Many **Protestant Christians** argue that the **Qur'an is false** based on theological, historical, and textual grounds.

1. Contradictions with the Bible

Protestants believe the **Bible is the inspired and authoritative Word of God**. Because the Qur'an often contradicts key biblical teachings, Protestants see it as incompatible with divine truth.

Key contradictions:

- **Jesus' divinity**: The Bible says Jesus is the **Son of God** and **divine** (John 1:1, John 20:28); the Qur'an denies this (Qur'an 4:171).
- **Crucifixion and resurrection**: Central to Christianity, but the Qur'an denies Jesus was crucified (Qur'an 4:157).
- **Doctrine of the Trinity**: The Bible teaches the **Trinity** (Matthew 28:19); the Qur'an explicitly rejects it (Qur'an 5:73).

From a Protestant view, a book that **denies core gospel truths** cannot be from God (Galatians 1:6–9).

2. Accusations of Historical and Scientific Errors

Some Protestants argue that the Qur'an contains **historical or scientific inaccuracies**, which they claim undermine its claim of divine origin.

Examples they point to:

- **Confusion of Mary (mother of Jesus) with Miriam (sister of Moses)** in Qur'an 19:28.
- **Seven heavens** or a **flat earth** interpretation (Qur'an 2:29; 71:15–16) – though interpretations vary.
- Stories about Alexander the Great (Dhul-Qarnayn) that resemble **legends**, not historical fact (Qur'an 18:83–98).

Protestants see these as evidence that the Qur'an is not divinely revealed.

3. Lack of Manuscript Continuity Like the Bible

While the Bible has **thousands of early manuscripts**, Protestant critics point out that the Qur'an was **compiled and standardized** after Muhammad's death under Caliph Uthman. They argue:

- Early variations existed.
 - Standardization involved **burning other versions**.
 - This, they say, casts doubt on the Qur'an's preservation.
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4. Absence of Fulfilled Prophecy

Protestants often point out that the Bible contains **many fulfilled prophecies**, especially about the Messiah (e.g., Isaiah 53), while they argue the Qur'an lacks clear predictive prophecy.

They claim the Qur'an focuses more on past stories and laws than on verifiable predictions, which undermines its claim to divine inspiration according to biblical standards.

5. No Miraculous Authentication

According to the Bible, prophets are confirmed by **signs and wonders** (Exodus 4:1–9; John 10:38). Protestant apologists argue that:

- Muhammad **did not perform miracles** publicly attested to in historical sources outside Islamic tradition.
 - The claim that the **Qur'an itself is a miracle** is **subjective**, not objective.
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6. Theological Incompatibility

Ultimately, Protestants reject the Qur'an because its theology **undermines the gospel**:

- **Salvation by grace through faith** (Ephesians 2:8–9) vs. **salvation by deeds** in Islam.
 - **Personal relationship with God as Father** vs. **strict transcendence of God** in Islam.
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Summary of Protestant Christian Arguments:

Category	Reason Qur'an is Rejected
Doctrinal	Contradicts the Bible on Jesus, Trinity, salvation
Historical/Textual	Alleged errors, contradictions, and unclear origins
Prophetic/Miraculous	No verifiable miracles or fulfilled prophecies
Theological	Offers a different view of God, salvation, and man

1. Confusion of Mary (Mother of Jesus) with Miriam (Sister of Moses) – Qur'an 19:28

Critics' Argument:

In Qur'an 19:28, Mary (the mother of Jesus) is referred to as:

"O sister of Aaron (ya ukhta Harun)!"

- In the **Bible**, **Miriam**, the **sister of Aaron and Moses**, lived about **1,400 years before Mary**, the mother of Jesus.
 - Critics claim this is a historical **confusion of identities**, suggesting the author of the Qur'an mistakenly thought Mary was the same as Miriam.
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2. Seven Heavens or Flat Earth Interpretation – Qur'an 2:29; 71:15–16

Critics' Argument:

Critics say the Qur'an appears to reflect a **pre-modern cosmology**, possibly implying:

- A **flat earth** with a **solid sky or dome** above it.
- A **seven-layered heaven** system, which they interpret as mythological.

Key verses cited:

- **Qur'an 2:29** – *"He created for you all that is in the earth. Then He turned to the heaven and made them seven heavens..."*
 - **Qur'an 71:15–16** – *"Do you not consider how Allah has created seven heavens in layers..."*
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3. Dhul-Qarnayn and Alexander the Great – Qur'an 18:83–98

Critics' Argument:

- The Qur'an tells the story of a figure called **Dhul-Qarnayn** ("the Two-Horned One") who traveled to the **east and west**, and built a **great barrier** to block Gog and Magog (Ya'juj and Ma'juj).
 - Many early Islamic commentators (e.g., al-Tabari, al-Qurtubi) identified Dhul-Qarnayn as **Alexander the Great**.
 - Critics claim the story in the Qur'an resembles the **Syriac Alexander Legend**, a **non-historical** apocryphal story that predates Islam.
 - They argue that this reflects **legendary borrowing**, not divine revelation.
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