

# A Mercy to the Worlds

By Reading Islam Team

Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was an illiterate but wise and well-respected man, a member of the ruling Quraysh tribe, who was born in Makkah in the year 570 C.E.\*, at a time when Christianity was not yet fully established in Europe. He was orphaned at an early age and then raised by his uncle Abu Talib. As Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) grew up, he became known for his truthfulness, generosity and sincerity, so that he was sought after for his ability to arbitrate in disputes. His reputation and personal qualities also led to his marriage at the age of 25 to Khadijah, a widow whom he had assisted in business. From then on, he became an important and trusted citizen of Makkah. Historians describe him as calm and meditative.

Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) never felt content to be part of his society whose values were devoid of true religious significance. He never worshiped idols and never drank alcohol, although drinking was widespread in Arabian society at that time. It became his habit to retreat from time to time to meditate in the cave of Hira' near the summit of Jabal An-Nur, the "Mountain of Light", near Makkah.

At the age of 40, while engaged in one such meditative retreat, Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) received his first revelation from Allah (God) through the Angel Gabriel (Jibril). This revelation, which continued for twenty-three years, is known as the Qur'an.

Muhammad and his group of followers suffered bitter persecution

## The Early Message

His first convert was his wife Khadijah, whose support and companionship provided necessary reassurance and strength. He also won the support of some of his relatives and friends. The basic themes of the early message were the majesty of the One, Unique God; the futility of idol worship; the threat of judgment; and the necessity of faith, compassion and morality in human affairs.

All these themes represented an attack on the crass materialism and idolatry prevalent in Makkah at the time. So when he began to proclaim the message to others, the Makkans rejected him. He and his small group of followers suffered bitter persecution. Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and his followers

drew comfort from the knowledge revealed to him about other Prophets, such as Abraham, Joseph, and Moses, each of whom had also been persecuted and tested.

### Emigration

The persecution by the Makkans grew so fierce that in the year 622 c.e., thirteen years after the beginning of the revelation, Allah (God) commanded the Muslims to emigrate. This event, the Hijrah (migration), in which they left Makkah for the city of Madinah, some 433 km (260 miles) to the north, marked the beginning of a new era and thus the beginning of the Muslim calendar.

In Madinah the Muslims were able to live, worship, and spread their message in peace. During this period, the revelations of the Qur'an mainly dealt with the Muslims' relationships with family members, the community of believers, and the non-Muslims.

Within a century of his death, Islam had spread as far west as Spain and as far east as China

The Quraysh in Makkah continued their efforts to stop the growth of Islam and forced the Muslims to fight several battles. Finally a truce was called and the Treaty of Hdaybiyah was signed to bring an end to hostilities.

When the Makkans broke the truce two years later, the Muslims set off to fight them. However, on seeing the size of the Muslim army, the Makkans surrendered. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and his followers entered the city peacefully, where they forgave their enemies and established Islam definitively.

By the time the Prophet died at the age of 63, ten years after the Hijrah, the greater part of Arabia had accepted Islam. Within a century of his death, Islam had spread as far west as Spain and as far east as China. It was clear that the message was not limited to Arabs; it was for the whole of humanity. In the Qur'an, Allah describes Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) as (a mercy to the worlds) (21:107, [Shakir's translation](#)).

Although Muhammad is deeply loved, revered and emulated by Muslims as Allah's final Messenger, he is not an object of worship.

---

\* C.E. stands for Common Era, which is the period coinciding with the Christian era