ISLAM
AP World History Notes
Chapter 11
The Homeland of Islam

- Originated on the Arabian Peninsula
- Had long been inhabited by nomadic Arabs = the Bedouins
- Located along important trade routes → Indian Ocean, Mediterranean Sea, etc.
- Gave rise to large commercial cities
Bedouins

- Herded sheep and camels
- Lived in fiercely independent clans and tribes
- Often engaged in violent wars with each other
- Variety of gods and ancestor/nature spirits
- Valued personal bravery and group loyalty
Mecca

- Major commercial city
- Site of the Kaaba = most important religious shrine in Arabia
  - Housed representations of about 360 deities
- Ruling tribe of Mecca = the Quraysh
  - Controlled access to the Kaaba
  - Gained wealth by taxing local trade
Arabia – Connections to the World

- Participation in long-distance trade
- Location between the Byzantine Empire (to the northwest) and the Persian Empire (to the northeast)
- Result = many Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians lived among the Arabs in Arabia
- Many of their monotheistic ideas began to influence the Arabs
The Messenger

- Muhammad (570 – 632 CE)
- Born in Mecca
- From a Quraysh family
- A shepherd and a trader
- Troubled by the religious corruption and social inequalities of Mecca
- Often withdrew into the mountains to meditate
- 610 CE = he had an overwhelming religious experience
- (Similar to the Buddha and Jesus)
- Became convinced he was Allah’s messenger to the Arabs
The Messenger

- Muhammad claimed to be the “seal of the prophets”
- Meant he was the last in a long line of prophets, including Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and others
- Said he had God’s FINAL revelation to humankind
- Wasn’t trying to start a new faith
- More of an invitation to return to the old and pure religion of Abraham
The Message

- Muhammad’s revelations began in 610 CE and continued for the next 22 years
- Recorded in the Quran = the sacred scriptures of Islam
- Monotheistic → Allah is the only God
  - All-powerful Creator
  - Good, just, and merciful
  - Rejected the other deities housed in the Kaaba
  - Rejected Christian idea of the Trinity
The Message

• The Quran rejected:
  • Hoarding of wealth and materialism
  • Exploitation of the poor
  • Corrupt business practices
  • Neglecting widows and orphans
  • Abuse of women

• The Quran demanded:
  • Social justice
  • Equality
  • Aid to the poor
The Message

- Primary obligation of all believers = submission to Allah
- Not only an individual or spiritual act, but also involved the creation of a whole new society
- *Umma* = the community of all believers
  - Just and moral society of Islam
  - Would replace tribal, ethnic, or racial identities
The Message: 5 Pillars of Islam

1) Faith: “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of God.”
2) Prayer: Should be performed 5 times daily while facing in the direction of Mecca
3) Almsgiving: Supporting the poor and needy of the community
4) Fasting: Occurs during month of Ramadan; no food, drink, or sexual relations from dawn to sundown
5) The Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca
The Message: The 6th Pillar

- **Jihad** = “struggle”
- “Greater jihad” = interior personal effort to avoid greed and selfishness, and to strive toward living a God-conscious life
- “Lesser jihad” = “jihad of the sword” = belief that the Quran authorized armed struggle against the forces of unbelief and evil
- In order to: establish Muslim rule and defend the *umma* from the threats of infidel aggressors
Transformation of Arabia

• Muhammad’s message soon attracted opposition from Mecca’s elite families; they didn’t like his:
  • Claim to be the “messenger of Allah”
  • Strict monotheism
  • Call for social reform
  • Condemnation of business practices
  • Disloyalty to his own tribe (the Quraysh)
• Caused Muhammad and his followers to go to Medina
  • This is where the *umma* took shape
The Islamic Community

- Muhammad = both religious and political leader; also led the military
- Islamic community expanded throughout Arabia by:
  - Military conquest
  - Marriage alliances with leading tribes
  - Voluntary conversion
- By 632 (time of Muhammad’s death), most of Arabia had come under Islamic control
Islamic Law

- No distinction between religious law and civil law
- ONE LAW = the *sharia*
- Regulated every aspect of life