

Abraham as a Central Figure in Islam

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Islam claims to be a religion with Abrahamic roots. You may even hear in the news that Judaism, Christianity and Islam are the three “Abrahamic” religions. While Judaism and Christianity can without doubt claim their origins in Abraham who was chosen by God, Islam does not have the same solid foundation.

The Quran speaks of Abraham by name a few times, and by inference even more. The verses of the Quran that were “given” to Muhammad in Mecca during the peaceful period of his “prophethood, Abraham is mentioned as a prominent prophet and an original monotheist. The Quran goes as far as to call him a follower of Allah.

“Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to Allah, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in Faith? For Allah did take Abraham for a friend.” Quran 4.125

At the same time, the Quran clearly states that no prophet had come before Muhammad to the Arab people.

“Or do they say, "He has forged it"? Nay, it is the Truth from thy Lord, that thou mayest admonish a people to whom no warner has come before thee: in order that they may receive guidance.” Quran 32:3

However, later in the Medinan period of Muhammad’s revelation of the Quran, we are to understand that Abraham lived in Mecca and built the sanctuary of Mecca, known as the Ka’aba, with the help of his son Ishmael (the ancestor of the Arabs).

“Remember We made the House a place of assembly for men and a place of safety; and take ye the station of Abraham as a place of prayer; and We covenanted with Abraham

and Isma'il, that they should sanctify My House for those who compass it round, or use it as a retreat, or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer). And remember Abraham said: "My Lord, make this a City of Peace, and feed its people with fruits,-such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day." He said: "(Yea), and such as reject Faith,-for a while will I grant them their pleasure, but will soon drive them to the torment of Fire,- an evil destination (indeed)!" And remember Abraham and Isma'il raised the foundations of the House (With this prayer): "Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: For Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-knowing. "Our Lord! make of us Muslims, bowing to Thy (Will), and of our progeny a people Muslim, bowing to Thy (will); and show us our place for the celebration of (due) rites; and turn unto us (in Mercy); for Thou art the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful. "Our Lord! send amongst them a Messenger of their own, who shall rehearse Thy Signs to them and instruct them in scripture and wisdom, and sanctify them: For Thou art the Exalted in Might, the Wise." (Quran 2:125-129)

According to the Quran, the religion of Abraham (which predates Judaism and Christianity) is the pure and original religion that Muhammad was sent to restore and complete.

While all of this is interesting, there is no historical or biblical evidence of Abraham ever traveling to Mecca with Ishmael and building Mecca. Abraham is never recorded as worshiping Allah and there is certainly not any Biblical evidence of Mecca being “*our place for the celebration of (due) rites.*”

As a matter of fact, Abraham is mentioned 250 times in the Bible and Abram 62 times, a total of 312 times. None of these citations include any mention of Mecca, travels to the Saudi Peninsula, the building of the Ka'aba, or worshiping Allah.

In the Bible, we see a picture of Abraham as a great man of faith, who was chosen by God to be the father of a great nation (Genesis 17:10-14). Without hesitation, Abraham trusts God's promises, leaves his home and land, and travels to Canaan, “the promised land” (Genesis 11). Later we see Abraham's faith waver when, in a time of famine, he travels to Egypt (Genesis 12-13) and then again when he sires a child with his wife's servant (Genesis 16).

Abraham's faith meets the ultimate test when God asks him to sacrifice his long-awaited son Isaac in the land of Moriah (Genesis 22).

Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac is one of the most striking examples of faith and trust in the Bible. And a foreshadowing of the ultimate sacrifice that God made for us by placing his Son on the cross in our place to pay for our sins.

Hebrews 11:8-12 describes Abraham like this:

"⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; ¹⁰ for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹ By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE."

Abraham was not a prophet sent to build a shrine to Allah and prepare a way for Muhammad. Abraham was a man "looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

Paul reminds us in the book of Galatians "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise." (Galatians 3:21)

Heirs of Abraham belong to Christ, they follow Him exclusively, not the god of Muhammad. While Islam may claim Abrahamic roots, their evidence is lacking and that which they use is faulty.

If you are a Muslim investigating your faith further, please read our other free resources on Islam.

If you are a Christian learning about Islam, pray with us that the True God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will change the hearts and minds of the Muslims around us. You can learn more about reaching Muslims with the love of Christ on our blog.