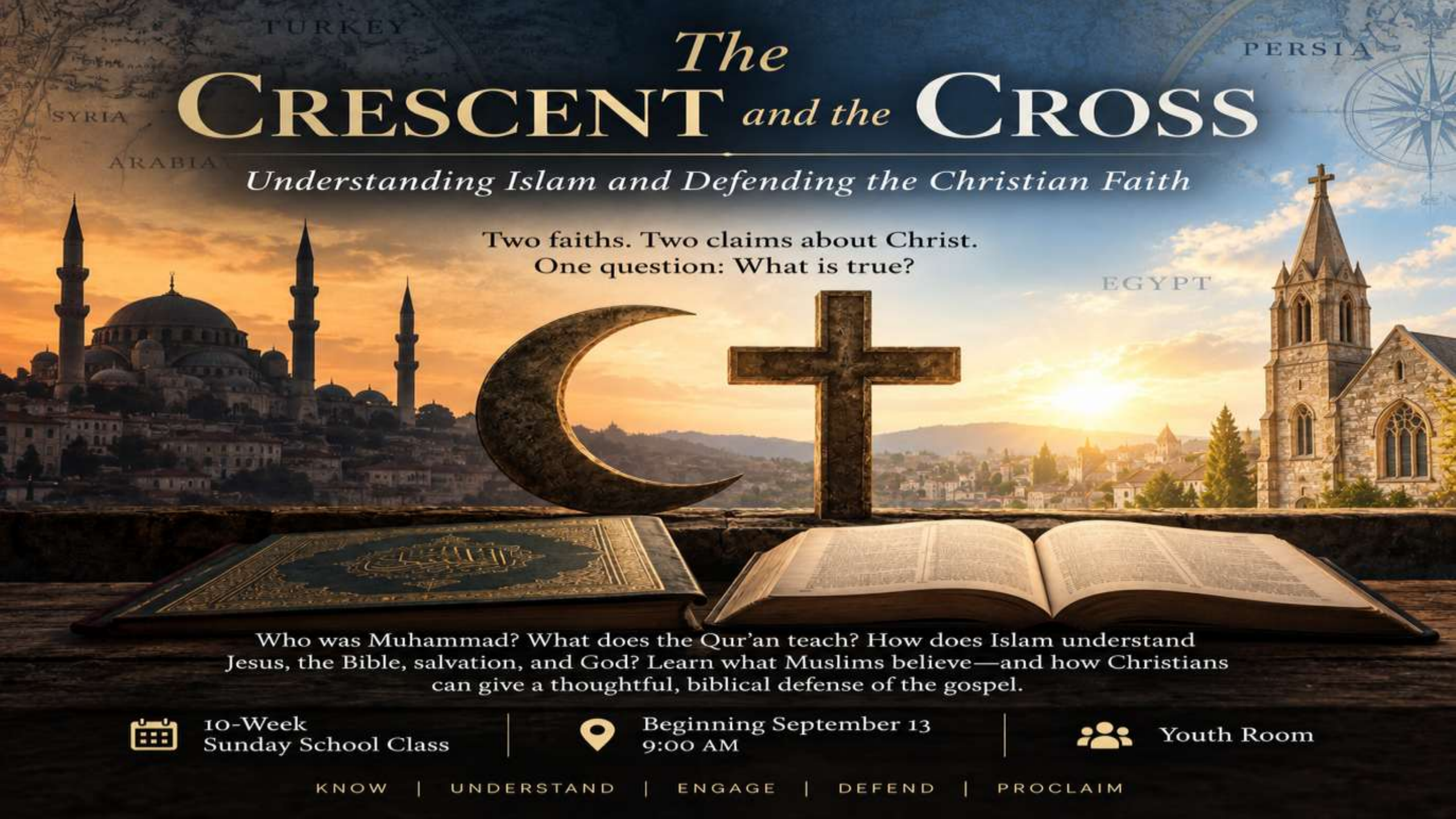




The CRESCENT *and the* CROSS

Understanding Islam and Defending the Christian Faith

Two faiths. Two claims about Christ.
One question: What is true?

Who was Muhammad? What does the Qur'an teach? How does Islam understand Jesus, the Bible, salvation, and God? Learn what Muslims believe—and how Christians can give a thoughtful, biblical defense of the gospel.



10-Week
Sunday School Class



Beginning September 13
9:00 AM



Youth Room

KNOW | UNDERSTAND | ENGAGE | DEFEND | PROCLAIM

*Different
People.
Deeper
Understanding.
Greater
Opportunities.*

U

UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

10-Week Sunday School Class Outline

Understand Islam -> Evaluate Islam -> Engage Muslims with the Gospel

1 Who Was Muhammad?

Origins, Arabia, Mecca, Hijra, Medina

2 What Is the Qur'an?

Revelation, recitation, surahs, compilation

3 What Do Muslims Believe?

Allah, Five Pillars, Hadith, Sunni/Shia

4 Islam and the Bible

Same figures, different story and theology

5 Who Is Jesus?

Messiah, prophet, Sonship, Trinity

6 Did Jesus Die and Rise?

Qur'an 4:157, cross, resurrection

7 Muhammad and Jesus

Testing a prophet and comparing claims

8 The Qur'an Examined

Preservation, variants, history, objections

9 Grace or Works?

Sin, judgment, mercy, assurance, gospel

10 How Should Christians Respond?

Questions, clarity, love, evangelism

*"Be always prepared
to give an answer..."*

1 PETER 3:15



BEGINNING
SEPTEMBER

Understan

Goal: understand what Muslims believe, know what Christians believe, and be prepared to give a gracious biblical answer.

Islam Pre-quiz

1. What does the word “Islam” mean?

Submission or surrender

2. In which century did Muhammad begin his preaching?

In the 7th century

3. Which city/sanctuary is Islam’s holiest place and destination for pilgrimage?

The Kaaba in Mecca

4. What does the word “Qur’an” mean?

Recitation

5. Which central Christian doctrine does Islam explicitly reject?

Trinity

6. What does the Qur’an actually affirm about Jesus?

Prophet and Messiah, born of the Virgin Mary

Pre-quiz Answers

7. Which person is mentioned by name most often in the Qur'an?

Moses (Musa) is mentioned 136 times, whereas Muhammad is mentioned only four times.

8. How many obligatory daily prayers are prescribed in Islamic practice?

5 prayers: dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and night.

9. Approximately what percentage of the World's Muslims are Arabs?

Only 20 percent.

10. What event marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar?

The Hijra (migration) marks the time Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Medina (Yathrib) in 622 AD. It is the starting point of the Islamic calendar: 1 AH (Anno Hegirae-year of Hijra).

Engaging with Muslims

A few things we must keep in mind:

1. Islam, like Christianity, is understood and practiced in many different ways, so we cannot assume uniformity in belief.

There is a big difference between the beliefs of the Sunni, Shi'a, and Sufi Muslims, as well as between the secular, nominal, and deeply observant.

Also, a Muslim in Indonesia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Nigeria, or America may have very different beliefs and cultural experiences.

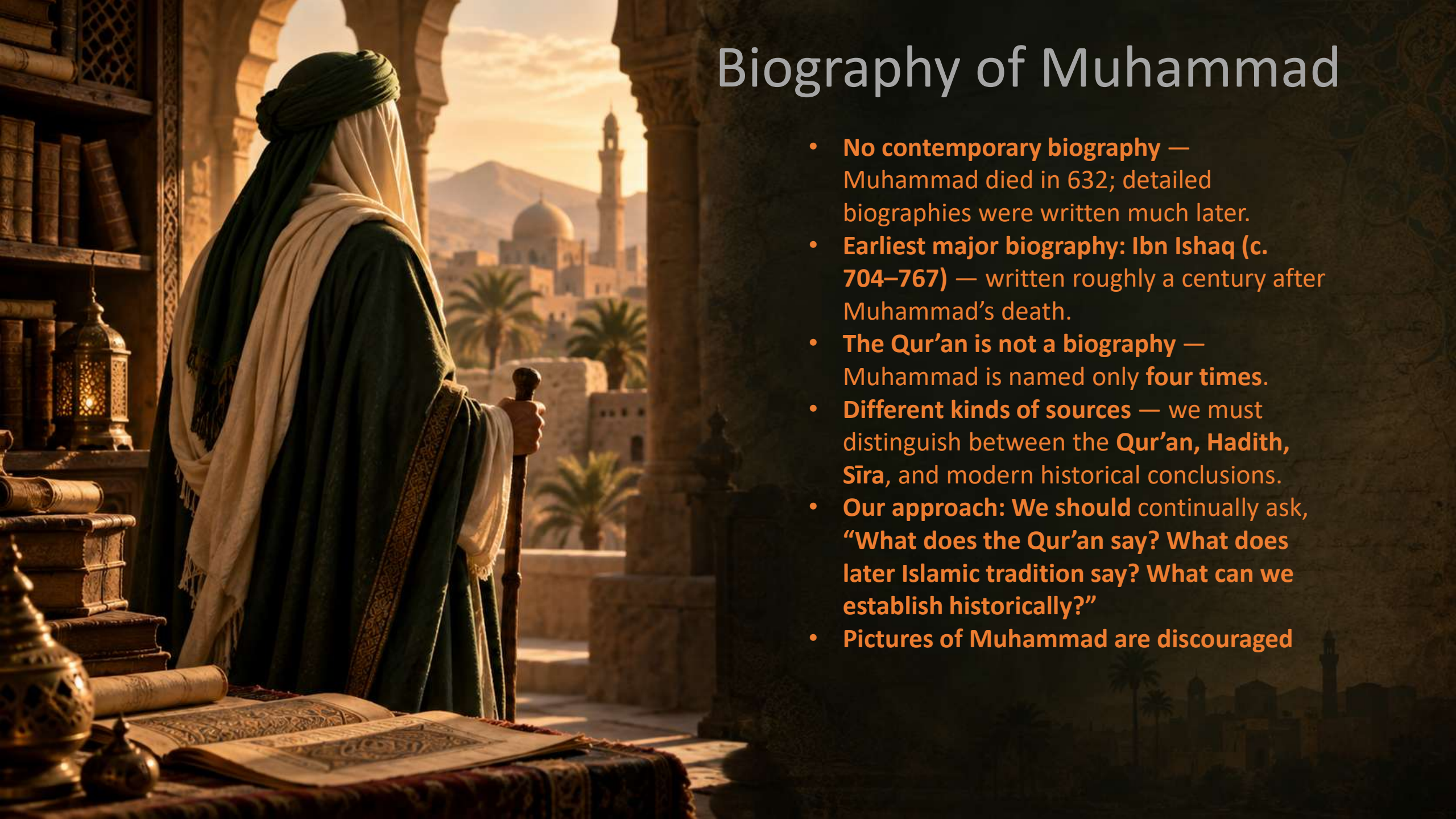
2. There may be a large gap between what authoritative Islamic sources teach and what individual Muslims actually believe or practice.

3. If we hope to engage Muslims genuinely, we must seek to avoid two mistakes: Ignorance — voicing strong opinions without having real understanding. **Caricature** — criticizing a distorted version of Islam instead of what Muslims actually believe.

4. Our goal is not merely to identify what is wrong with Islam, but to understand Muslims fairly and explain clearly why our hope rests in Jesus Christ. Christian apologetics is ultimately **positive**: “Always be prepared to make a defense...for the hope that is in you.” — 1 Peter 3:15

Biography of Muhammad

- **No contemporary biography** — Muhammad died in 632; detailed biographies were written much later.
- **Earliest major biography: Ibn Ishaq (c. 704–767)** — written roughly a century after Muhammad's death.
- **The Qur'an is not a biography** — Muhammad is named only **four times**.
- **Different kinds of sources** — we must distinguish between the **Qur'an, Hadith, Sīra**, and modern historical conclusions.
- **Our approach: We should** continually ask, "What does the Qur'an say? What does later Islamic tradition say? What can we establish historically?"
- **Pictures of Muhammad are discouraged**



Muhammad's Life: The Basic Timeline

AD 570	Muhammad born	In Mecca
AD 610	First claimed revelation	Reportedly receives the Qur'an through the angel Gabriel
c. AD 613	Public preaching begins	In his hometown of Mecca
AD 622	Hijra (Migration)	Migrates from Mecca to Medina
AD 630	Conquest of Mecca	Removes idols at the Kaaba
AD 632	Muhammad dies	Abu Bakar becomes first caliph

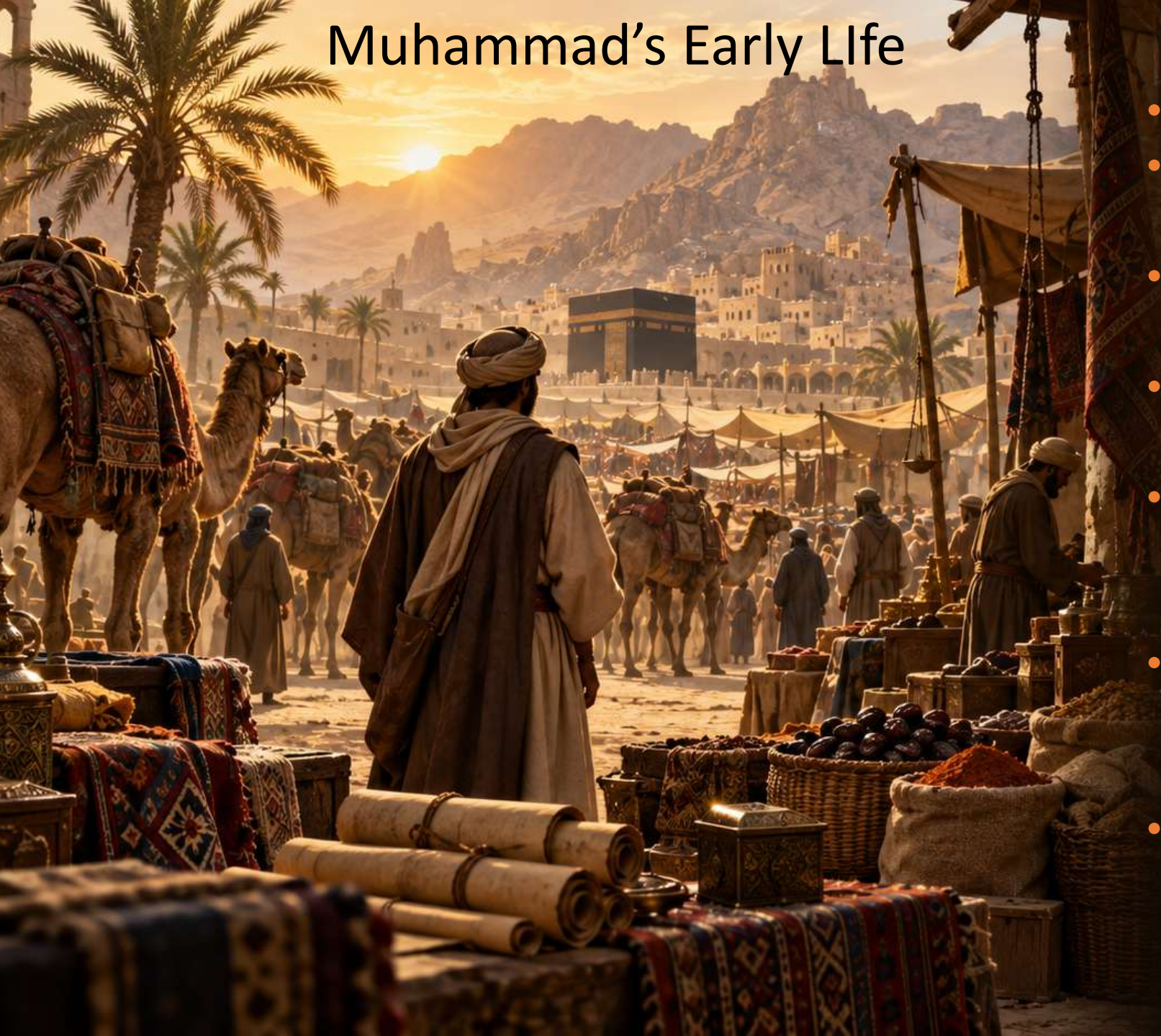
Arabia Before Muhammad

- Tribal society
- Polytheism and the Kaaba
- Jewish and Christian communities
- Mecca as a religious and commercial center



Muhammad's Early Life

- Born in Mecca, c. 570
- Member of the dominant Quraysh tribe
- Orphaned young and raised by relatives
- Worked in trade and caravan commerce
- Married Khadijah, a wealthy older widow and merchant, around age 25
- Muhammed was known in Islamic tradition for his trustworthiness
- He increasingly withdrew for reflection and prayer, especially to the cave of Hira



Muhammad's Claimed Revelation

A NEW MESSAGE IN A FAMILIAR LAND

*“Recite in the name
of your Lord who created...”*

— QUR’AN 96:1

— CAVE OF HIRA (TRADITIONAL LOCATION)
NEAR MECCA

1 610 — First revelation

Tradition holds that Muhammad received his first revelation around AD 610 while in the cave of Hira near Mecca.

2 The angel Gabriel

Muhammad claimed the revelation was delivered by the angel Gabriel (Jibril in Arabic).

3 Qur’an 96:1

*“Recite in the name of your Lord
who created ...”*

4 Continuity with the Abrahamic religions

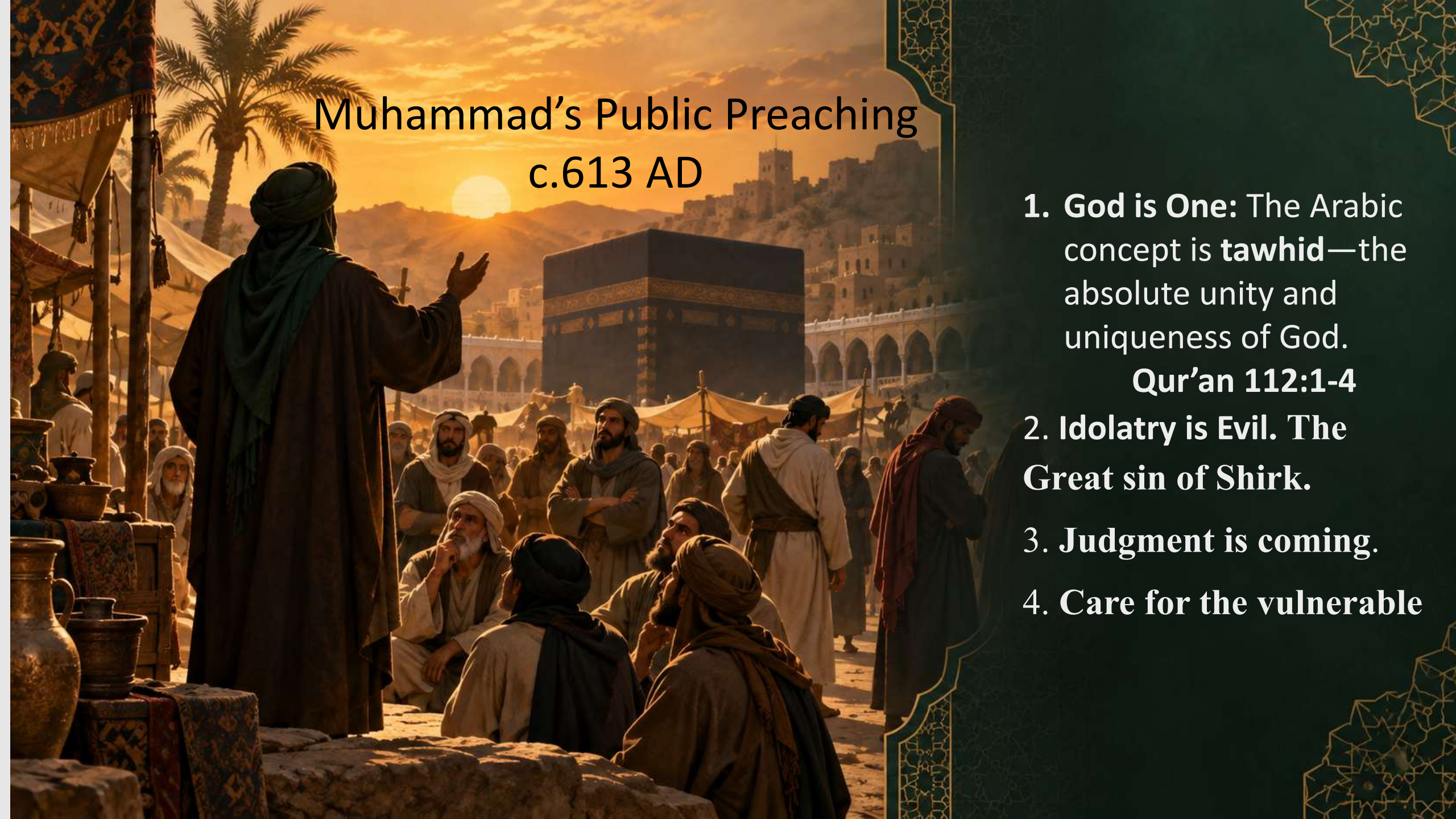
Muhammad presented his message as a continuation and correction of the earlier revelations given to Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.

Biblical Prophecy Preceding Muhammad

Date	Event	Significance
c. 2000 BC	Abraham	Islam regards Abraham (<i>Ibrahim</i>) as a major prophet and model of monotheism
c. 1440–1250 BC	Moses	Musa most frequently named
c. 1000 BC	David	Dawud: Islam associated him with the Zabur (Psalms)
c. 4 BC-AD 30/33	Jesus	Islam affirms Isa as Messiah and prophet
AD 570	Muhammed born	Born in Mecca

Children of Abraham?

- Pre-Islamic Arabia was dominated by **polytheism and idolatry**. Mecca contained the **Kaaba**, which would later become the central sanctuary of Islam. Islamic tradition teaches that the Kaaba ultimately goes back to **Abraham and Ishmael**.
- **Qur'an 2:125–129 in English.** (125) And when We made the House a place of return for the people and a place of security, saying, "Take the station of Abraham as a place of prayer." And We charged Abraham and Ishmael: "Purify My House for those who circle it, those who remain there in devotion, and those who bow and prostrate." (126) And when Abraham said, "My Lord, make this a secure city and provide its people with fruits—those among them who believe in God and the Last Day." He said, "And whoever disbelieves, I will grant him enjoyment for a little while; then I will compel him to the punishment of the Fire. What a miserable destination." (127) And when Abraham and Ishmael were raising the foundations of the House, they prayed, "Our Lord, accept this from us. Surely You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing." (128) "Our Lord, make us submissive to You, and from our descendants make a community submissive to You. Show us our rites of worship and turn toward us in mercy. Surely You are the One who accepts repentance, the Merciful." (129) "Our Lord, raise up among them a messenger from themselves who will recite Your revelations to them, teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them. Surely You are the Almighty, the Wise."



Muhammad's Public Preaching c.613 AD

1. God is One: The Arabic concept is **tawhid**—the absolute unity and uniqueness of God.

Qur'an 112:1-4

2. Idolatry is Evil. The Great sin of Shirk.

3. Judgment is coming.

4. Care for the vulnerable

Opposition in Mecca



Meccan Polytheism
(The Kaaba and the idols)



**Condemned
Idol Worship**



Quraysh Leadership
(Religious and Economic
Interests)



**Ridicule, Pressure,
and Persecution**



Flight to Abyssinia
(Ethiopia)



Growing Opposition
(Until the Hijra in 622)



Opposition Rises — But He Was Not Alone

His clan and his wife provided protection and support.

Abu Talib

His Uncle and Protector

- Leader of the Banu Hashim clan
- Provided tribal protection
- Supported Muhammad, even though he did not become a Muslim
- His protection made it more difficult for Quraysh to harm Muhammad early on

“As long as I live, no one will harm you.”

– Reported in early sira sources

Muhammad

Preaching the message of one God

Khadijah

His Wife and Supporter

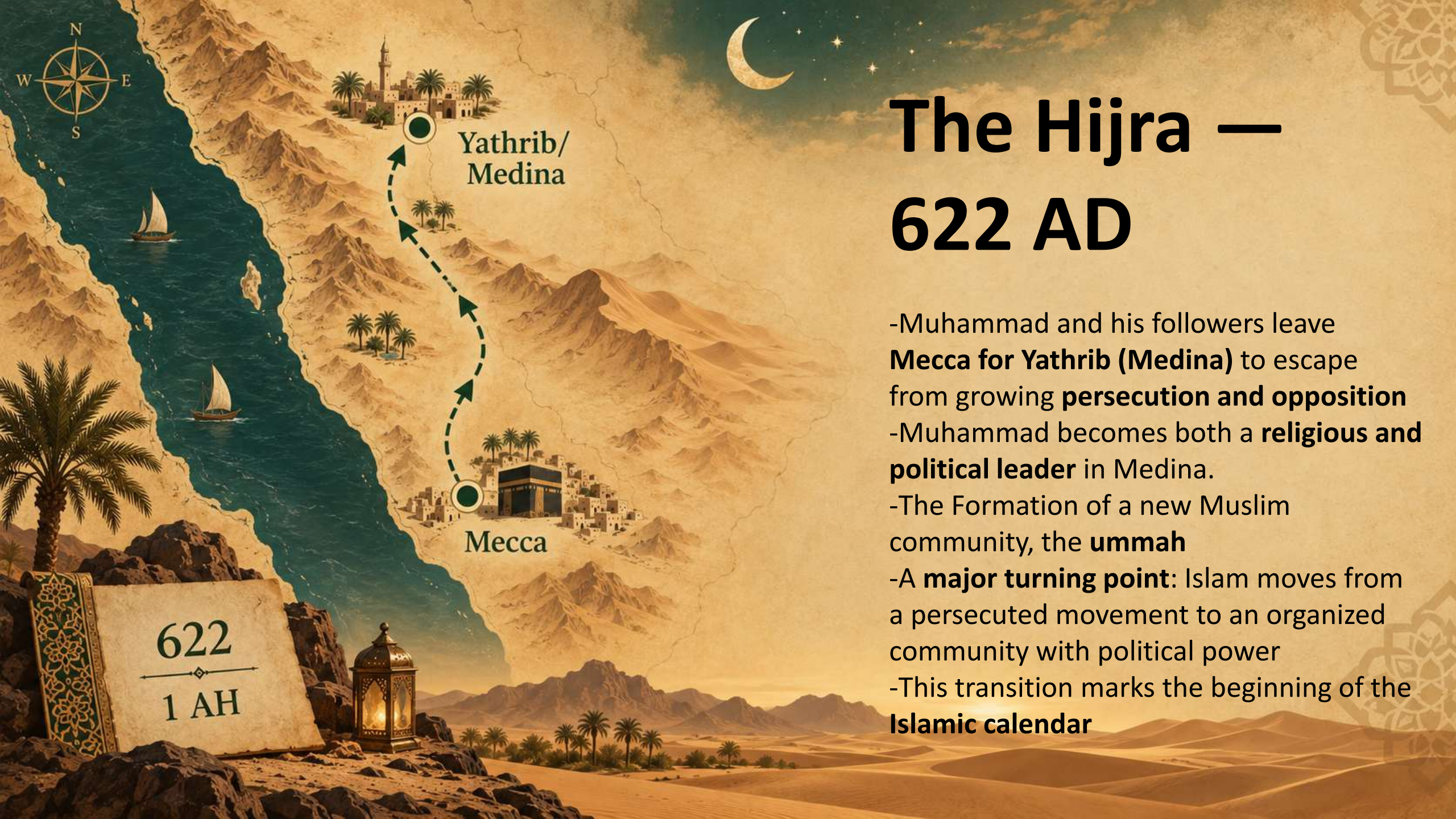
- Wealthy and respected Meccan merchant
- Employed Muhammad in her trade
- Married him around age 25
- Believed in his message early on
- Provided emotional, spiritual, and financial support

“She believed in him when others did not.”

Quraysh Opposition

- Resented his message against their gods
- Threatened his family
- Mocked and persecuted his followers
- Plotted to silence him

Key Point: Muhammad faced growing opposition, but his uncle Abu Talib and his wife Khadijah provided crucial protection and support in the early years.



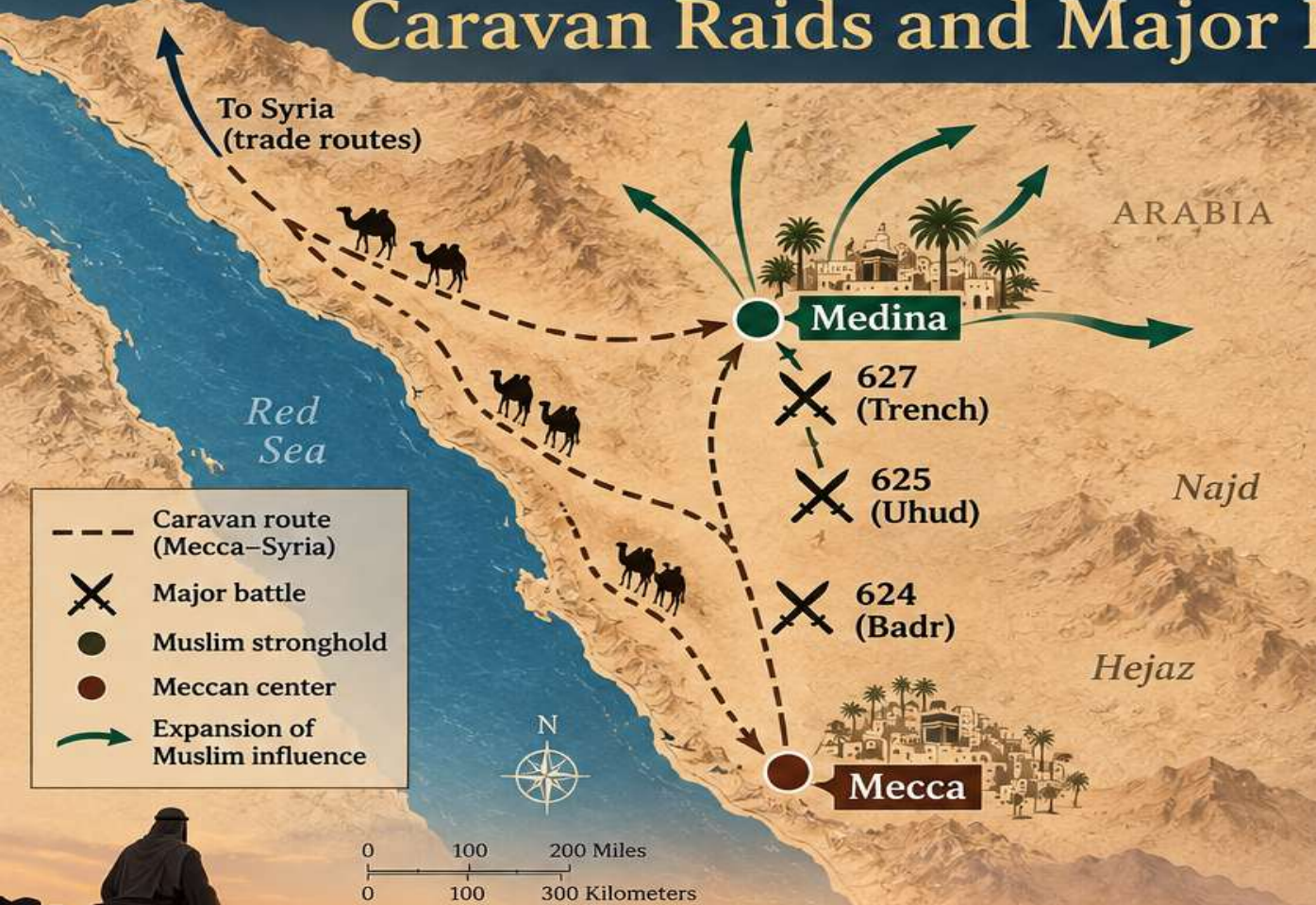
The Hijra — 622 AD

- Muhammad and his followers leave **Mecca for Yathrib (Medina)** to escape from growing **persecution and opposition**
- Muhammad becomes both a **religious and political leader** in Medina.
- The Formation of a new Muslim community, the **ummah**
- A **major turning point**: Islam moves from a persecuted movement to an organized community with political power
- This transition marks the beginning of the **Islamic calendar**

From Migration to Conflict:

Caravan Raids and Major Battles, 622–630

A GROWING
MOVEMENT.
A CHANGING
ARABIA.



- 1 Caravan raids begin after the Hijra.**
Muslims target Meccan caravans to weaken Quraysh's economic power.
- 2 624 — Battle of Badr.**
A major Muslim victory against the Meccans.
- 3 625 — Battle of Uhud.**
A setback for the Muslims, though the community survives.
- 4 627 — Battle of the Trench (Ahzab).**
A Meccan-led coalition besieges Medina but fails.
- 5 628 — Treaty of Hudaibiyyah.**
A temporary truce that provides a period of stability and greater recognition for Muhammad.
- 6 Muslim power in Arabia continues to grow.**
Alliances, conversions, and military successes increase Islam's influence across the peninsula.

Why it matters:

Between the Hijra and the conquest of Mecca, Muhammad's movement developed from a persecuted community into a significant military and political power.

Conquest of Mecca- 630 AD

- Muhammad returns to Mecca with a large Muslim force, and Mecca surrenders with limited resistance
- The Kaaba is cleansed of idols, and the sanctuary is rededicated to the worship of one God
- Former enemies are largely pardoned, and Mecca becomes the religious center of Islam
- The conquest secured Muhammad's control of Mecca and established the Kaaba as the central sanctuary of Islam.
- Within two years, most of Arabia had come under Muslim rule

The Death of Muhammad — 632

The End of a Prophet, the Beginning of a New Phase

LEGACY.
LEADERSHIP.
EXPANSION.

“Muhammad died in Medina in the year 632, leaving a community united, but facing the question of who would lead next.”

MEDINA
c. 632



Died in Medina (632)

Muhammad died on June 8, 632, at the age of about 63, after a brief illness.



Left a United Community

Islam had expanded across much of Arabia, with Mecca and the major tribes under Muslim control.



No Clear Succession Plan

Muhammad did not leave a specific, universally accepted successor.



Dispute over Leadership

Debate led to the selection of Abu Bakr as the first caliph, beginning the Rashidun Caliphate.



A Lasting Legacy

Muhammad's teachings, example, and the Qur'an became the foundation for the continued spread of Islam.



Expansion Continues

Within a few years, Muslim armies moved beyond Arabia into the Middle East and beyond.

Why it matters:

Muhammad's death marked the end of prophetic leadership but the beginning of Islam's rapid expansion under the caliphs.