

# Lesson 3 Islam After Muhammad's Death

## MAIN IDEAS

**Belief Systems** The leaders following Muhammad continued to spread the Prophet's message.

**Culture** The caliphs who expanded the Muslim Empire showed tolerance to those they conquered.

**Government** The issue of how to choose leaders divided the Muslim community.

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## New Muslim Leaders Emerge

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** Who were the leaders who spread Islam after Muhammad's death?

### After Muhammad's Death

- Muhammad had not named a successor nor taught how to choose one
- Panic swept through Muslim community
- Abu Bakr, Muhammad's father-in-law, trusted friend, was made leader

### Abu Bakr Succeeds Muhammad

- Abu Bakr became first **caliph**—successor—in 632
- Some clans abandoned Islam, refused to pay taxes
- Abu Bakr used military to reunite Muslims began conquest of Iraq, Syria

### REVIEW QUESTION

What difficulties did Muslims face after Muhammad's death?

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## “Rightly Guided” Caliphs

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How did the caliphs who expanded the Muslim Empire treat those they conquered?

### Caliphs Expand the Muslim Empire

- Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali were Muhammad’s friends, “rightly guided”
  - used Qur’an, Muhammad’s actions to guide them
  - formed caliphate rule
- Umar’s armies conquered Syria, lower Egypt, part of Persian territory
- Uthman and Ali continued expansion of Muslim territory
  - completed conquest of Persia
  - empire stretched from Southwest Asia into Northern Africa by 661
  - increased size of Muslim empire nearly four times

### Reasons for Success

- Muslim armies skilled, disciplined, energized by faith in Allah
- Armies of Byzantine, Persian empires exhausted by years of fighting
  - both also persecuted the peoples they conquered
- Tolerant Muslims viewed as liberators

### Muslims Rule

- Cultural blending, conversion to Islam defined Muslim-ruled areas
- Christians, Jews treated well; some hold official positions

### REVIEW QUESTION

Why were the caliphs tolerant of the people they conquered?

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# A Split in Islam

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How did the issue of choosing leaders divide the Muslims?

## Umayyads Seize Power

- In 656, Caliph Uthman was murdered by rebels; civil war broke out
- Muhammad’s cousin Ali took over, was murdered in 661
- Family known as Umayyads established hereditary dynasty
  - one family ruled by inheritance, caliphs no longer elected
- Many Muslims upset that Umayyads abandoned simple life of caliphs

## Muslim Community Splits

- Most Muslims wanted peace, accepted Umayyads’ dynastic rule
- Other Muslims believed caliph should always be related to Muhammad
- Permanent split in Islam
  - **Shi’a**—“party” of Ali (or Shiites), wanted elected caliph system
  - **Sunnis**—group who accepted rule of Umayyads
- Split eventually caused caliphate rule to collapse

## REVIEW QUESTION

How did leadership issues divide the Muslim community?

## Lesson Summary

- The Muslim community faced a difficult job in choosing a successor after Muhammad died.
- The Muslim Empire rapidly expanded under the “rightly guided” caliphs.
- Conflict over the caliphate caused a split in the Muslim community in the mid-seventh century.

## Why It Matters Now. . .

The division between Sunnis and Shiites continues to cause conflict in the Muslim world today.