Muhammad was born in the city of Mecca in 570 CE. It is believed that as a young adult Muhammad worked as a camel driver. He traveled the Arabian Peninsula with his uncle, making contact with various cultures and religions, including Judaism and Christianity. Contact with these monotheistic religions was influential to him. Idol worship was important in Mecca, rather than monotheism. The Ka'bah itself housed many idols.

Muhammad married a rich woman and for 15 years, he lived a life of luxury. But riches did not satisfy Muhammad. As the gap between the rich and the poor widened, Muhammad began to question his life and the world around him.

Muslims believe that one night, the angel Gabriel appeared before Muhammad. The angel said, "Oh, Muhammad, you are the messenger of God.” It is also said that Gabriel brought him to heaven to meet the prophets Abraham, Moses, & Jesus.

There was opposition to Muhammad and his small group of followers. Mecca’s ruling families insulted him and threatened violence. In 622, Muhammad fled Mecca to the city of Medina after hearing of a plot to assassinate him.

Muhammad arrived in Medina as the new leader, bearing tremendous responsibilities. While receiving communication from God and teaching his followers, he had to protect Islam from opposition and find peaceful solutions to local feuds.

With his community established in Medina and his followers growing, Muhammad began raiding caravans bound for Mecca. These kinds of raids were not uncommon at the time, and they provided food and supplies for the Muslims. This angered the Meccans, and a series of battles followed.

Finally, in 629 CE, Mecca submitted to the Muslims. Muhammad entered the city and headed directly to the Ka'bah. After circling it seven times, he smashed the stone idols. He spoke of the oneness of God, or Allah, and proclaimed himself a prophet. From that moment until the present, the Ka'bah became the principal holy place for Muslims.

By 630 CE, Islam was the dominant religion in Mecca. Muhammad then set out to conquer the Arabian Peninsula. Some tribes were easily converted while others were met by force. The crusade was successful, and Islam spread to the Arabian Sea to as far north as Syria.

Muhammad died in Medina on June 8, 632 CE, at the age of sixty-one. Although he had married two wives since the death of Khadijah, he had yet to father a son, leaving the question of successor in the hands of his followers.