

ISLAM



Empire of Faith

3 x 55



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Between the fall of Rome and the European voyages of discovery, no event was more significant than the rise of Islam. Within the span of a few centuries, the Islamic empires blossomed, projecting their power from Africa to the East Indies, and from Spain to India. Inspired by the words of a prophet, and led by Caliphs and Sultans, this political and religious expansion has not been equaled in speed, geographic size, and endurance before or since. Increasingly, scholars and historians are recognizing the profound impact that Islamic civilization has had on the face of Western culture and the course of world history. Islam was the conduit for the intellectual legacies of Greece, Egypt, and China—a crucible for man's cultural advancement. Its geographic and cultural breadth brought immeasurable advances in literature, the arts, science, and medicine to a Western world still ensconced in the Middle Ages. Islam was a defining force against which the West pushed—in war, trade, and religion.

Islam: Empire of Faith tells the spectacular story of the great sweep of Islamic power and faith during its first 1,000 years—from the birth of the prophet Muhammad to the peak of the Ottoman Empire under the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent. Evocative reenactments and a remarkable exposition of Islamic art, artifacts, and architecture are combined with interviews of scholars from around the world to recount the rise and glory of early Islamic civilization. It is the epic story of a cultural empire that dominated a millennium, encompassed half the world, and shaped history.

The Messenger introduces the dramatic story of the rise of Islam with the extraordinary life of the prophet Muhammad and his simple but revolutionary message. This episode covers the revelation and early writing of the Koran, the creation of the first Mosque, the persecution suffered by the first Muslims and the major battles fought by Muhammad and his followers to establish the new religion. The rapid religious, cultural, and political expansion of Islam overwhelms the empires of Persia and Byzantium, creating a new empire larger than Rome.

The Awakening examines the flowering of Islam into one of the great civilizations in history. Culture and goods flow freely throughout a large empire. Islamic principles and influence are spread further, affecting the intellectual development of the West. Arabic becomes the language of learning, and achievements in art, architecture, science, and medicine flourish. This episode also tells the story of the Crusades and describes the recapture of Jerusalem by Saladin the Great. The episode ends with the devastating invasion of Islamic lands by the Mongols.

The Ottomans reveals the dramatic transformation of Islam resulting from the Mongol invasion. Nomads enlisted by Muslims to fight the Mongols stake their own claims, and become known as Ottomans. The Ottomans transform the Islamic world, creating a new empire that expands westward into Christian territories. Suleiman the Magnificent shapes the Ottomans into a military powerhouse and an empire of extreme wealth and sophistication, which threatens the great power centers of Europe and the empire of the Persian Safavids to the east, before falling victim to enemies from within.

CREDITS

Produced and Directed by Robert Gardner

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