

What is Eid?

Eid is an Islamic name meaning 'Festival' or 'Celebration', and is celebrated throughout the world by all Muslims. It is equivalent to Christians celebrating Christmas.

There are two Eids celebrated every year, one is called *Eid ul-Fitr* and the other called *Eid ul-Adha*. The main difference being, the first is celebrated after Ramadan, the month of fasting, and the other is celebrated about two and a half months from the end of Ramadan, and is a festival of sacrifice.

Eid ul-Fitr



Eid ul-Fitr is a celebration held by Muslims to mark the end of Ramadan and to thank Allah for the strength he gave them to get through this traditional period of fasting. *Eid ul-Fitr* lasts three days, and it is sometimes called "Lesser Eid" to contrast it with *Eid ul-Adha*, or "Greater Eid," another major celebration for Muslims. Visitors to nations with large Muslim populations are often caught up in the celebrations, with shouts of *Eid mubarak*, meaning "blessed Eid," ringing in the streets.

Ramadan is a very significant time for Muslims, taking place during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims observe a strict fast and participate in pious activities such as charitable giving and peace-making. It is a time of intense spiritual renewal for those who observe it. Ramadan officially ends when the crescent moon of the 10th month in the Islamic calendar is sighted, marking the start of *Eid ul-Fitr*.

In Arabic *Eid* means "festival," and *Fitr* means "breaking the fast," so *Eid ul-Fitr* is literally a festival for breaking the fast. After the intense fasting of Ramadan, Muslims take *Eid* as an opportunity to have fun, celebrate their faith, and enjoy the company of friends and family. The festival may also get quite chaotic, with fireworks, and distributions of presents to friends and neighbours, along with music and dancing.

For *Eid ul-Fitr*, families cleanse themselves in the morning, eat a small meal, and then attend prayer at a mosque. By tradition, celebrants offer alms to the mosque for distribution to the poor before the start of Eid prayers; these alms are known as *Zakat ul-Fitr*. After prayer and a sermon, the festivities of *Eid ul-Fitr* begin, with celebrants typically visiting each other in their finest clothes to exchange gifts and commemorate friendship. Eid is also a traditional time for forgiveness and reconciliations.

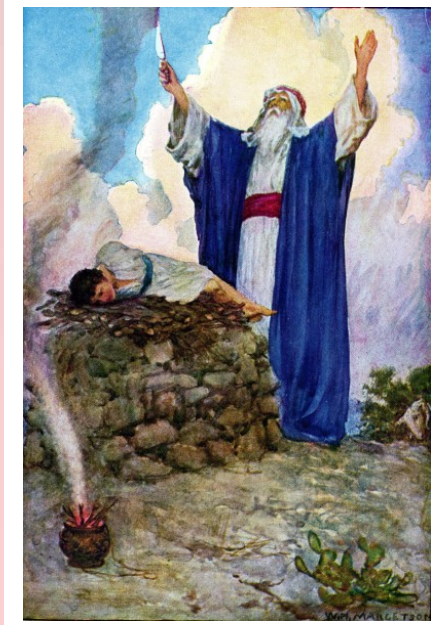
Eid ul-Adha

During the celebration of *Eid ul-Adha*, Muslims commemorate and remember Abraham's (Ibrahim's) readiness to obey Allah and sacrifice his son. On the first morning of *Eid ul-Adha*, Muslims around the world attend morning prayers at their local mosques. Prayers are followed by visits with family and friends, and the exchange of greetings and gifts. At some point, members of the family will visit a local farm or otherwise will make arrangements for the slaughter of an animal. The meat is distributed during the days of the holiday or shortly thereafter.

The Qur'an describes Abraham as follows:

"Surely Abraham was an example, obedient to Allah, by nature upright, and he was not of the polytheists. He was grateful for Our bounties. We chose him and guided him unto a right path. We gave him good in this world, and in the next he will most surely be among the righteous." (Qur'an 16:120-121)

To some Islamic people, this son is always Ishmael. That comes as a surprise to Christians and Jews who believe God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.



Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son (Genesis 22:1-2, 9-13).

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death. (Hebrews 11:17-19)

In other Islamic sects, it is not specified which son Abraham was asked to sacrifice. Animal sacrifice is an important part of the feast. This sacrifice of generally sheep or goats is shared with family, friends and the needy.

The second important aspect of the *Eid ul-Adha* is that it is the end of the Hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca for the year. Those who have made the Hajj that year may celebrate the Eid ul-Adha with particular joy. The Hajj is jihad, strife to become more obedient to Allah's will. Thus to have completed a jihad right before the Eid ul-Adha is cause for great happiness.

It is important to understand that the animal sacrifice itself, as practiced by Muslims, has nothing to do with atoning for our sins or using the blood to wash ourselves from sin:

"It is not their meat nor their blood that reaches Allah; it is your piety that reaches Him." (Qur'an 22:37)

But there is one sacrifice for sins that has been made: once for all. And that is God the Father's sacrifice of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ necessary?

God created us in His own image to be His friend and to experience a full life assured of his love, abundant and eternal. But this friendship was broken when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's commandment in the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned death entered the human race.

The wages of sin is death (Romans 3:23a). But God was also merciful. He instituted the first sacrifice. Genesis 3:21 tells us: The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. Since then sacrifices were necessary to atone for sin. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. (Hebrews 9:22)

But for how long would people have to keep making sacrifices for sin? It is impossible to stop sinning as we are all born with a sinful nature: "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away." (Isaiah 64:6)

But God had planned a way to reconcile us to Himself just as He covered Adam and Eve's nakedness and provided a substitute so that Abraham would not have to sacrifice his son, Isaac. God sent Jesus Christ, his only Son, to give His own life, shedding His own blood. There was no other way to eradicate the effect of sin except by blood. This shedding of blood indicated that the penalty for sin had been paid; a life had been sacrificed for the lives of all who have sinned. Jesus Christ's willing submission to the death on the cross paid the price for our sins and made a way by which we could have a relationship with God again.

He [Jesus] did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God (Hebrews 9:12-14).

Abraham spoke prophetically when he said:

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together (Genesis 22:6-8).

Thousands of years later God demonstrated His own love toward us by sacrificing His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ for us. Jesus came to give Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. He made peace possible between each of us and God. As Lamb of God He conquered our worst enemy, sin. Through Him, God offers reconciliation to any who will believe in Jesus and receive Him as Lord.

Eternal Life—God's Greatest Gift

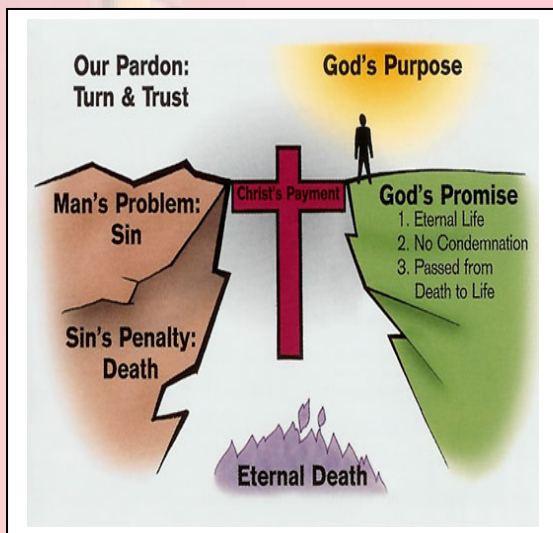
The Lord Jesus Christ was born to suffer and die for all the sins of mankind. His sacrifice was the payment for all our sins, and is the only way we can make it into Heaven. It is a free gift of Jesus Christ: "For by grace are you saved through faith; and not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9).

'Grace' means a free gift, or undeserved favour. You can't earn Heaven—no one is good enough. Only Jesus, Who is fully God and fully man, has ever lived a perfect life. When we receive the gift of salvation, He imputes his righteousness to us. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23) To accept His forgiveness, turn to Christ to save you from your sins: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." (Acts 16:31) He gave his life for you. There is no other way to Heaven: "Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father, except through me." (John 14:6)

A Choice for You

This year while you're celebrating Eid, remember why Jesus came: to be the sacrificial lamb on our behalf. If you simply repent (turn from your sins) and put your faith in Jesus Christ as the one who took your punishment, He will save you from hell and give you abundant life forever. Jesus offers the greatest gift anyone could ever ask for. All you need to do is humbly accept it. We don't have to offer anymore sacrifices as Jesus Christ has done it already for us by becoming that sacrifice.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Jesus Christ], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation. (Colossians 1:19-21)



For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord... (Acts 3:19)

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

Is there any reason why you shouldn't cross over to God's side and be certain of eternal life? Will you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour today?

What to Pray?

Dear God, I am a sinner and need forgiveness. I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ shed His precious blood and died for my sin. I am willing to turn from sin. I now invite Christ to come into my heart and life as my personal Saviour.

If you have trusted Jesus as your Saviour, you have just begun a wonderful new life with Him. Now:

- Read your bible everyday to get to know the Lord Jesus Christ better.
- Talk to God in prayer every day.
- Be baptised, worship, fellowship and serve with other Christians in a church where Christ is preached and the Bible is the final authority.
- Tell others about the Lord Jesus Christ.



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