

## **The History of Islam**

This Missions Fest, we are seeking to remove some of the mystery that surrounds the Islamic religion, primarily so that you will have a greater understanding of the people in the Muslim religion so that you can be a more effective witness for the gospel. I also realize that at the same time, the more that you understand about the Islamic religion, the more you will learn of their quest for total world domination. While many of the followers are themselves peaceful, fun-loving, family-loving people who can be friends and good neighbors, there is a dark side to Islam that cannot be denied. This dark side is seen in its violent history and present day jihads. There is no denying it. But, the aspect of the dark side is this religions inability to truly change a heart. It is a tradition. It is a culture. It is an identity. It is an entire way of life that permeates every single detail of life for the followers who are highly dedicated. And for those who are culturally Muslim it is still a way of life. It is controlling. Islam has no concept of separation of church and state. This is perhaps one of the biggest obstacles to our understanding of Islam. In our culture, we are quite used to everyone being an American and everyone experiencing that identity as the mutually identifying theme. We work for the common good of our lives and our country and we leave it up to each person to figure out what they believe, if anything about the life to come. That is why, for many Americans of yesterday's generation, real life was Monday-Saturday, and religion was an hour or two on Sunday.

The Islamic religion, therefore, is difficult for a traditional westerner to grasp. We tend to think of religion as being something that is more of a spiritual nature, but the Islamic religion is not primarily spiritual, as much as it is legal. There is a subset in the Islamic religion known as the "Sufi" that comprise a sort of "New-Age" Muslim group, who tend to be mystical and spiritual in that sense and who are horrified at the violence that is done in the name of Islam, but they do not certainly define the religion as a whole. In order to understand Islam, you have to understand the Koran. But, that is a major problem, since the Koran speaks of so many things that contradict one another that it is impossible to fully understand.

But, the one thing that is clear is that Islam is a religion of laws. These strict codes are given by Allah, through the prophet Mohammed to formulate all of life since these laws are his will for all mankind. The entire structure (system) does not provide for mercy, grace, forgiveness, but law. Obedience or dishonor; Submission or shame; Surrender or death. There is no personal relationship to Allah, just obedience to his laws so that you don't go to hell, or face the shame of community leaders. And yet, no one really knows if they have ever obeyed the laws enough, unless of course you die in a Jihad, then it is said that you will go straight to paradise.

But I will say this. Islam understands something about its design that some Christians do not understand about Christianity, and that is this. Islam is not something that you attend once a week or a couple of times per month. Pure Islam controls everything about you. It is all consuming. And because it is a religion of law, there is no conversion that comes from the heart, but a surrender that comes from fear. This religion is so empty of grace and mercy, so it is not advanced by seeking to capture the hearts of people as much as it

is advanced through any means possible, like manipulation, bondage, control, threat, persecution, violence, etc. and it pushes you to help bring everything around you under the control of Islam by any means possible. Whenever a country is controlled by Islam, its courts function under Sharia law. Therefore, the state is to advance, by war if necessary, the influence of Islam, and is to punish, by death, if necessary, those who break the laws. It, therefore promises order, control, submission and structure. Some people are willing to accept anything to have some semblance of order, control and structure. But Islam relies upon laws, shame, threats and extreme social and family punishment to keep people in line and yet, all of these are powerless to give anyone a heart true love for God.

Tonight, I want to give you a bit of history of Islam in order to aid your understanding, as well as speak a bit about the differences in beliefs and then touch on the Crusades of the Middle Ages, since these wars often come up in Christian/Muslim conversations. To some, Islam is one of the great religions of the world, which like all religions is a quest for God. In fact, we are supposed to believe that all religions are a quest for God and that we are all heading to the same destination but taking different roads to get there. That is patently false. (History is the record of Actions that come from values that are driven by Beliefs) For example, we believe that lying is sin. We value truth because we believe that God is truth. We hold to this because God has revealed himself as truth. Therefore, anything that is contrary to his nature and purpose is sin. In the Islamic religion, it is perfectly acceptable to lie to an infidel. (By the way, an infidel is anyone who is not a Muslim) This is why it is so difficult to have reasonable conversations about the differing beliefs with Muslims because it is perfectly acceptable for them to lie to you about what they really believe, in an effort to either convert you, or gain influence over you, or infiltrate your setting in order overthrow the current powers that be. All values drive behavior and values are based fundamentally upon one's belief in and about God. God in the Muslim religion is called Allah. The problem with Allah is not the name. The problem is what they believe about Allah. What they do not realize is that Allah is a god made in the image of man. He is the ultimate man in Muhammad's eyes. He has all power, makes all laws, and is to be obeyed by all. I am not an expert on Islam. So, what I am about to say, I say with hesitancy and not with certainty. But, as I have studied Muhammad's life and beliefs, I have asked the question, what drove this man? My thesis is simply this. Islam is not a quest for God; it is the attempt to recover dignity and worth apart from Christ but at the expense of others, particularly woman and girls. But, let's go back to how it all began.

In our context, if I were to mention Mohammed Ali, most of you would think of a boxer, in the days of my youth who, originally known as Cassius Clay, changed his name to Mohammed Ali after his conversion to Islam and went on to become the world heavy-weight boxing champion of the world. He chose this name because it combines two of the major figures of the Islamic religion: Mohammed, the man who claimed to be a prophet of God who is the founder of this religion and Ali, his son-in-law who was also skilled in debate and war.

I am going to limit most of my comments to Mohammed, although Ali was interesting. He was born around A.D. 570 on the city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. His father died before he was born and his mother died while he was a child. He was "raised" by his uncle and grandfather, but it was the streets that gave him his real education. It is possible that he never really learned to read. Mecca was a rather small city, but it was extremely wealthy. Traders lived there and there was an enormous amount of trade traffic that passed through. The result of this was a city that was extremely divided between the rich and the poor. You either made money or you died. There was very little middle ground. The poor lived under the power of the rich and were treated like the poor are generally treated where there is no gospel.

Caravanning was a dangerous business. In addition to that, the people were characterized and organized by their tribes which often fought against each other. Since many of the men were involved in the dangerous trade business, there were plenty of men who died, who left widows. One such widow, Khadija hired Muhammad to run her caravanning business. He was good at this, and she, 40 years of age, asked him, 25 years of age to marry her. Although her family was opposed, the wedding happened and for a while seemed like things were working out. She bore him 4 daughters and 2 sons. The most famous child of this marriage was the daughter Fatima (not to be confused with Lady Fatima, the RC view that Mary appeared to 3 poor children in Fatima, Portugal), who married Ali (a key figure in Muslim history).

Muhammad now had money. In fact, by the time he reached 40 years of age, he really no longer had to work but could hire people to do his work, which freed him to do whatever he wanted. Like most humans, he struggled to answer the 4 basic questions of life. 1) Where did I come from? 2) What went wrong? 3) What can be done about it? 4) What happens after I die?

He was deeply troubled about how finite his own life was, his own guilt, the sin and injustice and personal chaos around him. He had been poor and did not forget it. It bothered him to see how the poor were treated. He was also Arab and was proud of it, but the Arabs as a whole were trapped in this corner of the world on land that was not particularly appealing. Muhammad used to spend hours at a time in a cave, contemplating these matters. It was during one such time of meditation, during the month of Ramadan (9<sup>th</sup> month in the Islamic calendar) in the year 610 that he reported that he heard the voice of the angel Gabriel. He was afraid that he was hallucinating or that he was under the influence of an evil spirit. He asked for counsel and was told that he must be a prophet. This was when he began to claim that he had received a message from God. Now, he had to share this message and seek to convert others to follow this message. The gist of his message oriented around morality, idolatry, and community responsibility. But, it would evolve.

Initially, his wife believed him. But, the powerful leaders in Mecca were not so quick to follow since they were threatened by his message, particularly as it related to how they treated the poor. But, as long as his uncle was alive, Muhammad enjoyed protection. By

614 he had 39 followers. However, 5 years later, his wife stopped supporting him as did his uncle and things started going sideways.

Muhammad eventually left Mecca. He had been invited to a city called Yathrib that sprung up around an oasis. The people had heard about his wisdom and fairness and asked him to come and be their leader. Muhammad and his followers left Mecca in 622 and went to Yathrib, and when he did, Muhammad moved from being relatively unknown to becoming an influential leader. He was 52. He became the judge, the arbitrator and managed many cases that were brought to him. His influence is seen in the fact that the city eventually changed its name to Medina al-Nabi (the city of the prophet) or Medina, for short.

His position enabled him to reconstruct a society upon his way of living. He set the standards for how newcomers were to be integrated into the community. He also set about to convert the people to the religion that he was starting, that was supposedly the religion that God had wanted all along, but was ignored or rejected by the Jews and Christians. Since Medina did not have the wealth that Mecca had, his message was not as much of a threat. It was also helpful for unity, which facilitated progress, so the people were more agreeable to it. The Jews however, were not so sympathetic. Eventually, the Jews were expelled. Some in Medina were mediocre in their acceptance of him which led to conflict there as well, but he was able to overcome this. In order to hold these people together, Muhammad developed rituals and holidays. There is a great deal of influence from the OT that is seen in these, but they are done for different purposes.

Muhammad had more ambitious goals. He wanted to see the Arabian Peninsula all unite around Islam, but he needed money to advance his cause. So, he returned to his roots of his people and began attacking and pillaging caravans. This, as you can imagine was not accepted too well by others. This resulted in a showdown in 624 between an army from Mecca and Muhammad's followers from Medina. Out numbered 3-1, Muhammad was successful. Had his lost this battle, the Islamic religion may never have been heard of again. But, with his victory, even though not a major battle (less than 2000 soldiers involved) it was enough to elicit respect and Arabs from the area began to support his cause. In 625 another battle was fought with Mecca and this time Muhammad lost. Then in 627 the city of Medina was completely surrounded by the enemy but, somehow did not fall. Even though Mecca was successful on these two encounters, the tide was shifting. Their caravans were being plundered on a regular basis and more and more nomadic Bedouins were joining Muhammad. He would have to be reckoned with. So, the leaders of Mecca established peace with Muhammad. He was permitted to come back to the city in order to pray and both sides agreed to a truce for 10 years. Muhammad did indeed come back to Mecca and prayed, but he brought an army with him a few months later. He secured the surrender of the city and set up in Mecca what he did in Medina. Having secured Mecca under his control, he was able to unite and dominate life on the Arabian Peninsula. Within around 3 years (632) he died. His followers zealously began to spread the Islamic way of life (religion) to other regions like Syria, Iraq, Iran and Egypt. Initially there was a struggle and controversy over who would succeed Muhammad. Abu Bakr won that struggle, although there is a large faction who believes that he swindled the

leadership away from Ali. Those who follow Abu Bakr are the Sunni and those who believe that Ali was the rightful successor are the Shia. There appears to be no reconciliation of the two. They only unite to fight greater enemies, like the infidels.

Today, 1.2 – 1.6 billion people are under the control of Islam. Who, among those are true believers? It is hard to say. This will be discussed this Sunday AM during the ABF hour, but Islam forces surrender. If they gain power, and for them it is a means to power, then those who are under them either submit, are expelled, enslaved or die. George W. Bush was either ignorant, deceitful, naïve, or simply hopeful when he said that America was not in a war against Islam, and that Islam is basically a peaceful religion. It never was, and even its more peaceful followers cannot deny the violence that is endemic to it.

This is one of the clear differences between Islam and Christianity. When someone commits murder, or violence in the name of Christ, that person is called out, and exposed as being an imposter. When someone murders, kidnaps, rapes, and pillages in the name of Muhammad, its leaders are basically silent. Why? There are fundamental differences, starting with the foundation for belief.

Islam and Christianity are incompatible because they each appeal to a different source of authority. According to Islamic belief, all previous forms of revelation, including the Bible were either lost or corrupted. The Qur'an is God's final word to humanity and is now the only authentic, authoritative and reliable information from God because it is the only information that has not been messed with. The problem with this teaching is that Qur'an itself does not teach this. The Qur'an says many very complimentary things about the Bible.

Sura 5:68 "Say, O People of the Book! [Jews and Christians] Ye have no ground to stand upon unless you stand fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord."

There are several others like this because Muhammad wanted to appeal to the Jews and to the Christians and say that he is like one of them. He is a monotheist. He is in their line. We all agree on the essentials. We are against idolatry and immorality. But Muhammad was not educated and was ignorant about what was really in the Bible. Had he known he would have realized that asking people to embrace the Bible would mean that they would have to reject him as a false prophet. When Muslims are asked about this, they have come with a theory to explain it. They claim that the Bible used to be okay, and it was okay when Muhammad said this, but it has since been corrupted so that what it is now is no longer compatible.

Islam and Christianity are incompatible because they each view God differently. For one, Christians view God as a Father and call him so because that is how he presents himself and it is how we are taught by Christ to pray to him. This is also consistent with our view that upon faith in Christ, we are adopted into the family of God. This is very offensive to Muslims because this sounds as if God has children. Muslims agree that God is one, that God is just, sovereign, he rules and he forgives. However, they do not agree that he is a

Father, or that he has children. One of the prayers that millions of Muslims pray every day goes “Say He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him.”

To talk about God being a Father implies that God had sexual relations. Of course, we would say that we do not believe that. But, that is not how they hear it nor understand it. So, you can see how Muslims have no concept of God as a Shepherd, a wounded husband (Hosea) who goes after his unfaithful wife, nor how Christ is a bridegroom. We have many tender images of God that help fill out our understanding of him in a way that does not deny his absolute sovereign rule. But, Islam does not allow for anything other than God is master and we are servants. There is no intimacy between man and God. This absence in the Islamic religion is one of their great deficiencies. That is why Islam can only advance by the sword, it cannot capture the heart.

One of the great stories of the Old Testament is the story of David and Mephibosheth. This broken and lame son of Jonathan was still alive after Saul and Jonathan’s death. It was customary for new kings in a new dynasty to purge the old dynasty of any family members so that there would be no threats to the throne. When David sent for Mephibosheth, he could only fear for his life, but what happened was so unbelievable. He was not treated as an enemy, but as a son and given a place at the king’s table. This story illustrated for us what Paul speaks about in Romans 8 as adoption. We, who were formerly enemies of God are made to be his children and given a place at his table. This is a dynamic that Muslims do not understand and are impoverished as a people because of it. They do not have a way for the relationship that God made us for, and that was broken by sin to be restored. Adoption is rooted in redemption. They do not understand this either. This is part of why at the very core of Islam, there is obedience, there is surrender, there is sacrifice, but there is very little true restoration, reconciliation, and love. Many Muslims who have converted to Christ have said how attractive this teaching is. It answers a cry of the heart.

Islam and Christianity are therefore incompatible on the very nature of the essence of God. We believe that God is one (monotheism), but that God is comprised of three persons, who function in perfect harmony with each other. This is both biblical, but it also helps us understand why we believe that God is a God of love and has been from eternity past. The Trinity enables God to love, when before creation, there was nothing that had been created for God to love. How could God express love when there was nothing outside of him to love? God did not love himself in the sense of self-love as we think (a very harmful attempt by modern psychology to give people a sense of esteem apart from Christ). For God to be a God of love, he had to have something or someone to love. The Father loved and loves the Son and the Spirit. The Son loved and loves the Father and the Spirit. The Spirit loved and loves the Father and the Son. Muslims believe that Christianity has been seriously corrupted by our notion of the Trinity. There is some evidence in the Qur’an to suggest that Muhammad did not understand the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity and that he was reacting to a false teaching. Actually, this was the case for much of his belief. Much of the Christianity that he reacted to was not true Christianity, but he did not know enough about the Bible to understand that. We are, in the eyes of Muslims, guilty of polytheism because we deny that God is one.

By the way, this is one of the reasons why doctrinal teaching and preaching is so critical for the life of the church. When the Trinity is ignored or is taught as being a non-essential, the entire basis for Christianity is destroyed. At the heart of the gospel is Christ, conceived by the Holy Spirit, becoming the sin-bearer and bearing the wrath of the Father, and offering up his life to the Father in payment for our sin. God alone can save us from God. Without the Trinity, there is no atonement, no propitiation, no basis for forgiveness and no assurance of reconciliation. Every time you pray, you pray to the Father, in the name of the Son (based on the merits of the Son) and through the Spirit.

Islam and sin. According to the Qur'an, God and man are in a master-slave relationship. God created Adam and Eve, they sinned. They repented. God forgave them. And since then, God has sent prophets to all people groups to guide them to the straight path of worshiping one God, doing good deeds, and looking forward to the Day of Judgment, and living in light of the Day of Judgment. Islam does not see man has fallen, or inherently sinful, but born in innocence. Therefore, there is no bad news of original sin, to be addressed by the good news of the gospel. If you sin, it is up to you to save yourself – which you can, by taking action and fixing yourself and your neighborhood. This explains in part why young Islamic men, tend to band together in order to clean up their community, by attacking immoral people and driving them away. Salvation and the death of Christ. God is not viewed as being primarily righteous and holy in that sense, but as being the ultimate law giver and Judge.

Islam and salvation. Islam tends to see sin on a superficial level that is behavior not heart. Therefore, since sin is not that serious, it does not demand a radical solution. Islam believes that salvation is earned through good works and that mankind is basically good. However, there is no assurance of salvation in Islam. This is why Christianity is viewed as being weak. We have a weak savior who died. Christian men are weak because they rely upon someone else to save them. Islam says, “Be a man. Stand on your own two feet. Take responsibility for your destiny and your soul – save yourself.”

Islam and the Death of Christ. Muslims deny that Jesus was God and they deny that he died on the cross. They believe that he was a prophet, though not as great of a prophet as Muhammad. So, when Christians tell Muslims that they need to trust in or believe in Jesus, they say that they already do. They already believe what they need to believe about him. The Qur'an does speak about the Jewish claim that they killed Jesus, though the Qur'an claims that Jesus did not die like that, and that it was a lie. Whatever the Bible may say about this, the Qur'an came 600 years later and trumped it. Allah would never allow his prophet to be humiliated like that. Therefore, the Bible must have been corrupted. We are not saved by someone else's death, but by ourselves.

For a great overview of Islam and the Crusades please see the following link.  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/mayweb-only/52.0.html>