

Islam: From God Or Man? #1

Introduction. The Lord warned of false prophets who would come in sheep's clothing but inwardly would be ravening wolves (Matthew 7:15). Peter and John both warned of false prophets among the world (2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1-6). There is perhaps no greater false prophet who has had more impact in our world than the so-called prophet Muhammad and his religion which he started, Islam.

Islam is a driving force behind about 50 nations in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Thirty-five countries now have populations that are at least 80 percent Muslim. There are 1.3 billion followers of Islam in the world. Islam is now the second-largest religion in Europe and the third-largest in the U.S., comprising about ten million Muslims.

Over the next three weeks, we are going to study Islam to see how it compares to the Bible. This lesson will introduce us to Islam by examining its history, the articles of faith, and the five pillars.

I. *The History Of Islam*

- A. Islam, which began in Mecca, claimed to be the revelation of God (Allah) through the angel Gabriel to a man named Muhammad. Muhammad was born in approximately A.D. 570-571. He was born to the powerful tribe of the Quraish in Mecca. His father's name was Abdullah. His mother's name was Aminah.
- B. Muhammad married a wealthy widow named Khadijah when he was twenty-five and she was forty. Having married the wealthy Khadijah, Muhammad now became a gentleman of leisure and somewhat of a philosopher. He would spend his hours in meditation and one of his frequent places of seclusion was a cave on Mount Nur. It was while in this cave, during the month of the Ramadan, a pagan festival, that he received his first visit from Gabriel and recited the verses found in Qur'an 96:1-5.
- C. At first, Muhammad shared his new revelations with only his family and close friends. Then Muhammad is believed to have received instructions from Allah to go public with his message and openly condemn the paganism and idolatry of Mecca. This open condemnation of idolatry became an economic threat to the prosperity of Mecca, and as a consequence, organized opposition to Muhammad and Islam began (cf. Acts 19:27). Muhammad continued to proclaim his message, and his following slowly grew. At one point, in 621, a group of delegates from Medina responded to his call and made a covenant with Muhammad and declared themselves to be Muslims. A year later, in 622, about seventy people from Medina made a similar declaration and pledged to fight to protect Muhammad against any and all odds. This

pledge from some who were leaders of Medina was a turning point for Islam. He fled from Mecca in 622, and his flight, called the Hegira, supplies the date from which the Muhammadan calendar is reckoned.

1. In Mecca Muhammad was weak, struggling to be accepted, and often mocked and ridiculed. He tried to appeal to the people of Mecca by being compassionate and loving. His teachings condemned violence, injustice, and the neglect of the poor. However, after he moved to Medina and his followers grew in strength and number, he became a relentless warrior, intent on spreading his religion by the sword.
2. To justify this sudden change in the Qur'an's mood from peaceful to militant, conciliatory to confrontational, Muhammad claimed that it was God who told him to do so. It was God who abrogated the peaceful verses and replaced them by harsh ones. However, the truth of the matter is that Muhammad became strong enough to move from the stage of weakness to the stage of "jihad," or holy war.

D. As Muhammad established himself as religious, political, and military leader, Islam began spread through intimidation and force. Entire tribes and cities were "converted" under threat of war or by conquest. James Arlandson wrote an article entitled, Muhammad's (Non) Assassination of (Non) Victims, and in this article he provides the dates and names of several individuals whom Muhammad killed because of their resistance to Islam:

1. March 624: Al-Nadr bin al-Harith.
2. March 624: Uqba bin Abu Muayt.
3. March 624: Amsa bin Marwan.
4. April 624: Abu Afak.
5. September 624: Kab bin al-Ashraf.
6. September 624: Ibn Sunayna.

E. Success led to greater success. In the year 630, eight years after he had been forced to leave Mecca, Muhammad returned with such an overwhelming force that the Meccans did not resist. Muhammad's forces destroyed all the idols of Mecca, and declared the Kaaba to be the place of worship for Allah. He succeeded in bringing under his religion and authority the scattered Arabian tribes, and returned as a conqueror to Mecca. Historians agree that there is a big difference between Mohammed's personality in Mecca and his personality after his migration to Medina, as is evidenced by the Qur'an.

F. When he died in 632, he was the accepted prophet and ruler throughout Arabia. Islam spread as a social, political, and religious system and by force of arms. That was its philosophy in the beginning, and it is still the philosophy of Islam today.

- G. When Muhammad died, he failed to name his successor. This failure resulted in a major division of Islam into the majority Sunnite branch (85%) and the minority Shiite branch (15%). These divisions disagree as to the legitimate successor of Muhammad and over who offers the most accurate representation of Islamic faith.
- H. His religion is named Islam, which means "submission" to the will of God. The followers of Islam are called "Muslims," which means, "one who submits." Interestingly enough, the name "Mohammedan" is never used by them.

II. ***The Rise Of Militant Islam***

- A. In an article dated March 1, 2005, Kamal Nawash explains that since 1980, the Muslim world has experienced an enormous growth of religious fanaticism and extremism the likes of which Islam has not experienced in its 1,400 years. This movement continues to grow because of the spread of Saudi-created and funded Wahhabi Islam, a sect that used to number no more than one percent of all Muslims. But now because of money and technology, it has spread around the world.
- B. Extremism is also growing because of an ideology called political Islam. The basis of political Islam is the rejection of secularism and the belief that the mosque and the state should be completely intertwined. Unfortunately, history has shown that when politics and religion are completely intertwined, disaster results.
 - 1. Since 9/11, the world has watched in horror as hundreds of school-children were murdered in Russia by Chechen Muslim terrorists. Scores of civilians were murdered by Islamic terrorists in the Madrid train bombings. Many others have been murdered in suicide bombings in buses, restaurants and other public places, dozens have been beheaded on camera, two Russian passenger planes were blown out of the sky, and other atrocities too numerous to mention. All carried out by Muslims.
 - 2. Ibn Warraq, in his book *Why I Am Not A Muslim*, writes, "There may be moderate Muslims, but Islam itself is not moderate. There is no difference between Islam and Islamic fundamentalism: at most there is a difference of degree but not of kind ... Islamic fundamentalism has global aspirations: the submission of the entire world to the all-embracing Shari'a, Islamic Law, a fascist system of dictates designed to control every single act of all individuals."
- C. This, of course, is in great contrast to the teaching of Jesus and the apostles. The Lord told us to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:38-39). Paul taught us that vengeance belongs to God, not man (Romans 12:19).

D. Many Muslims assert that Jesus either wielded a physical sword, or He endorsed a holy war, of sorts (Matthew 10:34). Thus, He is not different from Muhammad -- and the latter prophet is better than Jesus. They say this to defend their prophet from any accusation of violence, but this is completely wrong.

1. It is true that the Roman Emperors, Medieval Crusaders, Protestants, and Catholics have used the sword against unbelievers and each other in the name of the gospel. However, none of them is foundational to the cause of Christ -- only Jesus is, and He never endorses the sword to spread His message.
2. In Matthew 10:34, Jesus does not call for military "jihad." He is simply stating that the gospel may divide a family. History demonstrates that Jesus never wielded a sword against anyone (Matthew 26:52; John 18:36). On the other hand, Muhammad is foundational for Islam, and he indeed endorses using a sword, and he actually swings one on his frequent military raids and wars. Muslims are merely following their leader with a grounding in his Qur'an. They are not misinterpreting or misapplying their "sacred" text, for many of its verses are clear and unambiguous.

III. ***Islamic Articles Of Faith And The Five Pillars***

A. The articles of Islamic faith.

1. Faith in Allah -- Muslims believe there is only one true God and that His name is Allah. His will is supreme.
2. Angels -- Muslims believe that there are multitudes of angels, both good and bad, who are invisible yet constantly dealing with men. For example, the angel Gabriel allegedly transmitted the Qur'an to Muhammad.
3. The Holy Books -- Muslims believe that Allah has given a long series of revelations, including the Old and New Testaments. But these revelations end with the Qur'an, which supersedes and essentially abrogates the others. Muslims claim that the Qur'an is incorruptible whereas the Bible has been corrupted in ages past.
4. The Prophets -- Muslims believe that God has sent inspired prophets to men. Six of the principle prophets are Adam, the chosen of Allah; Noah, the preacher of Allah; Abraham, the friend of Allah; Moses, the speaker of Allah; Jesus, the word of Allah; and Muhammad, the apostle of Allah. Muslims believe that Muhammad is the greatest of all prophets.
5. Predestination -- Muslims believe that all events, whether good or evil, have been foreordained by Allah, consequently in every act they are carrying out Allah's will.

6. The Day of Judgment -- Muslims believe that on this day the good and evil deeds of all people will be placed on a "scale." Those Muslims having sufficient personal merit, righteousness, and the requisite favor of Allah, will go to eternal heaven; all others will go to eternal hell.
- B. The five pillars of Islam.
1. The *shahada* or profession of faith is the sincere recitation of the twofold creed: "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His prophet" (La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadu rasool Allah).
 2. The *salah* or formal prayer must be performed at five points in the day while facing towards the holy city of Mecca.
 3. The *zakah* or alms-giving is the duty of sharing one's wealth out of gratitude for God's favor, according to the uses laid down in the Qur'an.
 4. The *sawm* or fast during the month of Ramadan commemorates the first revelation of the Qur'an that Muhammad received in 610. Although eating is permitted at night, Muslims must fast during the day for an entire month.
 5. The *hajj* or pilgrimage to Mecca is to be performed if at all possible at least once during one's lifetime. Muslims consider the Kaaba -- a small sanctuary near the center of the Great Mosque in Mecca -- to be the most sacred spot on earth.
 - a) Abraham and Ishmael are said to have built the foundations of the Kaaba (Qur'an 2:127). Islamic traditions hold that the Kaaba was first built by the first man, Adam. Abraham and Ishmael rebuilt the Kaaba on the old foundations.
 - b) The Qur'an states that Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his son. The son is not named in the Qur'an (37:99-113) and in early Islam, there was a controversy over the son's identity. However the belief that the son was Ishmael prevailed, and this view continues to be endorsed by Muslim scholars. Consequently, Ishmael is a prophet in Islam and is considered the father of the Arab people (cf. Genesis 17:20).

Conclusion. Islam is not a friend of the gospel. How can Islam promote true peace when it denies the very means God has provided to establish a lasting peace between God and man, and between man and man (Colossians 1:20-22; Ephesians 2:14)? God wants to give you His peace that surpasses human understanding, but we must "submit" to His way of salvation, not Muhammad's. To all who truly believe that Jesus is who He and the prophets said He was, and that He died in your place for your sins, and rose again from the dead -- God is willing to freely give you salvation from the penalty and power of sin, a cleansed conscience, a deep peace, an untouch-

able joy, a new nature, and an eternal home with Him in heaven. Will you come?