

The Religion Of Islam



A Survey Of The Origins And Beliefs Of Islam

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The Religion Of Islam

The Origins Of Islam

INTRODUCTION

1. Recent events in the Middle East and the U.S. has brought the religion of Islam to the public eye and generated much interest...
 - a. The hostage crisis in Iran in the late 1970s
 - b. The war with Iraq in the early 1990s
 - c. The attack on the World Twin Towers and the Pentagon in 2001
 - d. The U.S. war against international terrorism in response
 - e. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict over the past fifty years

2. The increasing popularity of Islam has also caught the attention of many...
 - a. It is estimated there were **1.6 billion** (one-fourth of the world population) Muslims in 1998
 - b. Many live in the Arab world (120 million)
 - c. Many more live in countries such as Iran, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, China, remnants of the USSR, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Sudan
 - d. It is **the world's fastest growing religion...**
 - 1) It has grown 235% from 1935 to 1983 ("Christianity" - 47%)
 - 2) An estimated 10 million Muslims reside in the United States (1996)
 - 3) 34,000 Americans have converted to Islam following the events of September 11 (the highest rate of conversion since Islam arrived in America)

-- **Islamic Web** (<http://islamicweb.com/begin/statistics.htm>)

3. Such growth can be attributed to a number of different factors...
 - a. High birth rates
 - b. Militant and evangelistic fervor
 - c. Independence of Islamic countries
 - d. Wealth (oil)
 - e. Education in other countries

4. Christians need to become more familiar with Islam...
 - a. To better understand world events, our neighbors, and in some cases, our enemies
 - b. To be able to share the gospel of Christ with those who in many cases know the Bible better than many professing "Christians"

[In view of the need to understand the religion of Islam, let's take a brief look at the origins of Islam...]

I. THE BEGINNING OF ISLAM

A. MUSLIMS POINT TO ABRAHAM, MOSES, DAVID, JESUS...

1. They believe Abraham (together with his son Ishmael) founded, in what is now **Mecca**, the first temple in the world for the worship of a single God (whose name in Arabic is **Allah**)

2. That Moses, David, Jesus, and others were prophets sent from Allah
 - a. That God delivered the Torah to Moses, but it was corrupted by the Jews
 - b. That God delivered the Gospel to Jesus, but it was distorted by the apostles
3. “Muslims believe in all Messengers of Allah without any discrimination among them, as every known nation has a Warner or messenger from Allah. They were chosen by God to teach humanity and deliver His Divine message. The **Qur’an** mentions the name of some of them including Jews including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Elias, Jonah, John the Baptist, and Jesus (peace be upon them).” - **IslamicWeb.com**
4. “Muslims believe in all original scriptures and revelations of Allah, accepting them as the guiding light that the messengers received to show their respective people the right path to Him. However, some of these books and revelations had been lost or corrupted before the revelation of the Qur’an. The only authentic and complete book of Allah in existence today is the Qur’an, which has been preserved as it was revealed to prophet Muhammad through Angel Gabriel in its pristine, pure form.” - **ibid.**

B. THE ROLE OF MUHAMMAD...

1. “In Islam there can be no confusion or doubt that Muhammad was a man, and only a man, chosen by the Creator to fulfill a divine mission as a prophet. Muhammad's mission was literally to ‘read’ what Allah had ordered and ordained, nothing more. The Prophet received his revelations from God, sometimes in solitude, sometimes in the presence of others. Words flowed from his mouth in a way that others described as inspired. This was Muhammad’s *wahy* (divine inspiration or revelation). Muslims believe that the Qur’an is the Word of Allah expressed through the revelations to the Prophet.” - **Introduction To Islam, M. Cherif Bassiouni (<http://www.mideasti.org/library/islam/introislam.htm>)**
2. “The history of the Prophet, his deeds and sayings, were at first memorized by his companions and passed on as oral record. They were first comprehensively recorded by the historian Ishaq ibn Yasar (ca. 768). Later the deeds and sayings of the Prophet (the *hadith*), the circumstances surrounding their occurrence, and the evidence of those who first witnessed and reported them to others were recorded by a number of scholars.” - **ibid.**

[Muslims thus believe that Islam goes back even to Adam, Noah, and Abraham. They base this on the proclamations of Muhammad. Because of the significance of Muhammad and his successors to Islam, it is beneficial to have at least a basic understanding of...]

II. THE EARLY HISTORY OF ISLAM

A. THE LIFE OF MUHAMMAD...

1. **570** - Born into the leading tribe **Quraysh** of the town of **Mecca**
 - a. Father dies before his birth, his mother dies when he was six years old
 - b. Raised by his grandfather, then **his uncle Abu Talib**
 - c. Name means “highly praised,” and many have taken name since
2. As a youth, he travels with trading caravans and is exposed to many teachings, including Judaism and Christianity
3. **595** - At age 25, he marries a widow named **Khadija** fifteen years his senior, who becomes a devoted companion

4. **610** - Claims to receive the first revelations of the Qur'an from the angel **Gabriel**...
 - a. In a cave on the summit of **Mt. Hira**, where he often went to pray and fast
 - b. Commissioned to be the Messenger of God, to reveal the word of Allah
 - c. A process involving a series of revelations lasting the rest of his life (23 yrs)
 - d. Illiterate, he recited while others wrote words
5. **612** - Begins teaching in a religiously volatile atmosphere
 - a. Pagans influenced by idolatry did not like his monotheism
 - b. Jews and Christians balked at his claim of revelations
 - c. He converts his wife, his cousin Ali, and friend Abu Bakr (successor)
 - d. In three years, forty people accept Islam
 - e. Relations with his tribe (the **Quraysh**) become tense; persecution of Muslims begins
 - f. In **615** he encourages 80 Muslims to emigrate to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) for safety
6. **616** - Persecution of Muslims in Mecca intensifies
 - a. A ban against marrying or trading with the Muslims lasts two years, causing food shortages
 - b. Shortly after the ban is lifted, his beloved wife Khadija dies
 - c. In **619** his uncle and protector Abu Talib dies, exposing Muhammad to great risk
7. **620** - Arabs from Yathrib (**Medina**) make contact
 - a. The envoys convert to Islam; pledge not to fight the Muslims
 - b. Invite Muhammad to come to Yathrib and lead their *ummah* (community)
8. **621** - The events of *al-Israa* and *al-Miraaj* supposedly take place
 - a. *al-Israa* - Gabriel takes Muhammad to **Jerusalem** and back in one night
 - 1) From the **Kabah** in Mecca to what is now known as **The Dome Of The Rock**
 - 2) Muhammad meets Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and others
 - b. *al-Miraaj* - Muhammad taken to the heavens to see the signs of God
8. **622** - Muhammad and seventy families flee to Yathrib (**Medina**) (250 miles N)
 - a. Leaders of the tribe of **Quraysh** plot to kill him; Gabriel warns Muhammad to flee
 - b. Called **hijrah** ("the Night of Migration"); this marks the beginning of the Muslim era
 - c. Residents of Mecca view the hijrah as a defection; vow revenge
9. **624** - Two major developments occur
 - a. The change of *qiblah* (direction of prayer); toward Mecca instead of Jerusalem
 - 1) Muhammad tells the congregation to turn around and pray toward Mecca
 - 2) This began to distinguish them from Judaism and Christianity
 - b. The adoption of *ghazu* (raid), raiding caravans for booty to support families
 - 1) Muhammad leads a band to intercept the largest Meccan caravan for that year
 - 2) This leads to the Battle of Badr, in which Muslims defeat a large Meccan army
10. **625** - The Battle of Uhud, outside Medina
 - a. Army of Mecca defeats the Muslims
 - b. Jewish tribes of Qaynuqah and Nadir expelled from Medina for collaborating with Mecca
 - c. In **626** he began to take several wives; favorite is **Aisha** (daughter of Abu Bakr)
11. **627** - The Battle of the Trench
 - a. Muslims (3000) defeat a much larger Meccan army (10,000)
 - b. Followed by the massacre of 700 men of the Jewish tribe of Qurayzah, their women and children sold as slaves
 - 1) For their support of the Meccans against the Muslims, perceived as betrayal

- 2) It did not lead to hostility toward Jews in general
12. **628** - Treaty of Hudaibiyyah
 - a. Peace is made between Medina and Mecca
 - b. Muhammad now the most powerful man in Arabia
 13. **630** - Meccans violate the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah
 - a. Muhammad marches on Mecca with a large army of Muslims and their allies
 - b. Mecca concedes defeat without a fight
 - c. Muhammad takes the city without bloodshed; no one forced to convert to Islam
 - d. He destroys the idols around the **Kabah** (believed to have been built by Adam, rebuilt by Abraham and Ishmael), rededicating it to Allah, and gives the old pagan rites of the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) an Islamic significance
 14. **632** - Muhammad dies; Abu Bakr elected as his *khalifah* (representative)
 - a. Virtually all the tribes of Arabia had joined the *ummah* (Muslim community) either as converted Muslims or Confederates
 - b. Single-handedly, Muhammad had brought peace to war-torn Arabia
- Adapted from the chronology in **Islam - A Short History**, by **Karen Armstrong**, also helpful was the **Biography Of Prophet Muhammad**, by **Dr. A. Zahoor and Dr. Z. Haq** (<http://users.erols.com/zenithco/muhammad.html>)

B. AFTER THE DEATH OF MUHAMMAD...

1. **632-34** - The caliphate of **Abu Bakr**, Muhammad's close friend and early follower, whose rule was chiefly preoccupied by the wars of *riddah* (apostasy)
 - a. Usamah leads expedition to Syria. Battles of Zu Qissa and Abraq. Battles of Buzakha, Zafar and Naqra. Campaigns against Bani Tamim and Musailima, the Liar.
 - b. Campaigns in Bahrain, Oman, Mahrah Yemen, and Hadramaut. Raids in Iraq. Battles of Kazima, Mazar, Walaja, Ulleis, Hirah, Anbar, Ein at tamr, Daumatul Jandal and Firaz.
 - c. Battles of Basra, Damascus and Ajnadin. Death of Abu Bakr.
2. **634-44** - The caliphate of **Umar ibn al-Katthab**, another associate of Muhammad who preserved the unity of the *ummah* by extending the *ghazu* (raids) to neighboring countries
 - a. Battles of Namaraq and Saqatia
 - b. Battle of Bridge. Battle of Buwaib. Conquest of Damascus. Battle of Fahl.
 - c. Battle of Yermuk. Battle of Qadsiyia. Conquest of Madain.
 - d. Conquest of Syria. Fall of Jerusalem (**638**). Battle of Jalula.
 - e. Conquest of Jazirah. Conquest of Khuizistan. Advance into Egypt.
 - f. Capture of the post of Caesaria in Syria. Conquest of Shustar and Jande Sabur in Persia. Battle of Babylon in Egypt. Battle of Nihawand. Conquest Of Alexandria in Egypt.
 - g. Battle of Rayy in Persia. Conquest of Egypt. Conquest of Azarbaijan and Tabaristan (Russia).
 - h. Conquest of Fars, Kerman, Sistan, Mekran and Kharan.
 - i. Martyrdom of Umar (assassinated by a Persian prisoner of war in a mosque of Medina)
3. **644-56** - The caliphate of **Uthman ibn Affan**, another associate of Muhammad who continued the *ghazu*
 - a. Campaigns in Khurasan, Armeain and Asia Minor.
 - b. Campaigns in North Africa. Conquest of the island of Cypress.

- c. Campaigns against the Byzantines.
 - d. Naval battle of the Masts against the Byzantines.
 - e. Discontentment and disaffection against the rule of Uthman.
 - f. Martyrdom of Uthman (assassinated by discontented Muslim soldiers who proclaim Ali ibn Abi Talib as the new caliph)
4. **656-660** - The caliphate of **Ali ibn Abi Talib**, cousin of Muhammad. A five year civil war ensues, known as the first *fitnah* (time of temptation)
- a. Battle of the Camel. Aisha, Muhammad's wife and others lead a rebellion against Ali for not avenging Uthman's murder. They are defeated.
 - b. In Syria the opposition is led by Uthman's kinsman Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan
 - c. An attempt to arbitrate leads to Muawwiyyah deposing Ali and proclaiming himself caliph in Jerusalem
 - d. Ali is murdered by a Kharajite extremist. Ali's supporters acclaim his son Hasan as the next caliph, but he abdicates and Muawiyah becomes caliph who starts what becomes known as the **Umayyad dynasty** (moving the capital from Medina to Damascus)
- Adapted from the chronology in **Islam - A Short History, by Karen Armstrong**; also from the chronology at **Islamic Web** (<http://islamicweb.com/history/chronology.htm>)

CONCLUSION

1. This has been a brief look at the first generation of Muslims in the period of Muhammad and the first thirty years after his death
2. The first four successors to Muhammad are known as the **Rashidun** ("rightly guided" caliphs)...
 - a. They were companions of the prophet Muhammad
 - b. "...their period of rule would be just as formative as that of the Prophet himself. Muslims would define themselves and their theology according to the way they assess the turbulent, glorious and tragic events of these years." - **Karen Armstrong, ibid.**

-- **The importance of knowing the history of Muhammad's life, and that of his immediate successors, will become apparent in a later study**
3. In view of such a turbulent and violent history, can Islam truly be a religion of peace...?
 - a. Its adherents say "Yes!", and most Muslims today are very peaceful
 - b. "The word '**Islam**' is derived from the same root as the words *salaam* (peace) and *silm* (the condition of peace). Islam means to abandon oneself in peace. A Muslim, consequently, is one who in peace gives or surrenders himself or herself to God. Islam means accepting the faith freely—heart, mind, and soul. Surrendering to Islam, as a result, means giving oneself to belief without reservation, accepting the tenets of faith, and following both the letter and the spirit of the Qur'an's prescriptions." - **Introduction To Islam, M. Cherif Bassiouni** (<http://www.mideasti.org/library/islam/introislam.htm>)
 - c. Yet there are elements of Islam as proclaimed by Muhammad that cause many non-Muslims to wonder

In our next study, we will take a look the holy book of Islam, the Qur'an...

The Religion Of Islam

The Qur'an

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous study, we briefly surveyed the origins of the religion of Islam...
 - a. Muslims believe it is the original religion, going all the way back to Adam
 - b. They believe Muhammad is the last of a long line of prophets, including Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus
 - c. Due to the efforts of Muhammad and his successors, Islam quickly spread from Arabia
2. In 610 A.D., Muhammad claimed to receive his first revelation from the angel **Gabriel**...
 - a. In a cave on the summit of **Mt. Hira**, where he often went to pray and fast
 - b. He was commissioned to be the Messenger of God, to reveal the word of Allah
 - c. A process involving a series of revelations lasting the rest of his life (23 yrs)
 - d. Illiterate, he recited while others wrote the words

[The “revelations” of Muhammad are written and preserved in what is called the **Qur'an** (or **Koran**), the holy book of Islam...]

I. THE ORIGIN OF THE QUR'AN

A. AS GIVEN TO MUHAMMAD...

1. “The Qur'an (literally, recitation) contains 114 chapters revealed to the Prophet during a period of 23 years from 609 to 632, the year of his death.” - **Introduction To Islam, M. Cherif Bassiouni** (<http://www.mideasti.org/library/islam/introislam.htm>)
2. “The divine revelations were manifested in divine inspiration, which the Prophet sometimes uttered in the presence of his companions.” - **ibid.**

B. AS PRESERVED FOR MUSLIMS...

1. “His words were passed on in the oral tradition of his Arabic culture.” - **ibid.**
2. “They (his adherents) memorized and documented the divine messages delivered to Muhammad on makeshift material, such as palm leaves, fragments of pottery and, according to traditional accounts, on the shoulder-blades of camels.” - **Solomon Nigosian, Islam: The Way Of Submission**
3. “Some forty years after his death they were transcribed in the written form that has been preserved to date without change.” - **Bassiouni, ibid.**

[To appreciate what the Qur'an means to the average Muslim...]

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE QUR'AN

A. TO ISLAM IN GENERAL...

1. “The central article of Islamic faith, from which all else flows, is that God (Allah in Arabic)

- has spoken to mankind in the Qur'an."
2. "The Qur'an (meaning Recitation) is, for Muslims, the final word of God and as such contains His divine message to mankind as revealed to His Prophet Muhammed."
 3. "This divine communication is seen as the final stage in a long series of divine messages conducted through specific messengers or prophets chosen by God, starting with Adam and ending with Muhammad."
 4. "In each case, however, the message was altered and falsified by the perversity of later generations."
 5. "Finally, God revealed His message in a definitive form to the Prophet Muhammad through the archangel Gabriel."
 6. The Qur'an, then, is the infallible message or word of God." - **Nigosian, ibid.**

B. TO MUSLIMS IN PARTICULAR...

1. "You will never understand this power and warmth of religion among us [Muslims] until you can feel in your heart the poetry and music of the noble Qur'an."
2. "Indeed, the chanting of the Qur'an is the primary music of Islam. It is the soul of Islam and is reflected in the speech of all faithful Muslims."
3. "Muslim piety and even scholarship demand memorization and recitation of the Qur'an."
4. "Indeed, the divine injunction is 'Recite the Qur'an' (Qur'an 73:20f). Hence, the pledge of true discipleship lies in recruiting the memory and the voice."
5. "Recitation of the Qur'an in Islam is equivalent to a statement of 'faith' in Christianity. Hence, the primary sign of a true Muslim is recitation of the Qur'an."
6. "Tradition ascribes the following sayings to the Prophet Muhammad, thus serving as a reinforcement to the habit of recitation:
 - a. 'If any man recites the Qur'an and memorizes it, God will cause him to enter Paradise and will grant him the right to intercede successfully for ten people of his household, all of whom deserve Hell Fire.'
 - b. 'The best man among you is he who learns the Qur'an and teaches it.'
 - c. 'Learn the Qur'an, recite it and sleep.'
 - d. 'The most excellent act of worship is the reciting of the Qur'an.'" - **ibid.**

[Without going into great detail, some remarks about...]

III. THE CONTENT OF THE QUR'AN

A. THE DIVISIONS OF THE QUR'AN...

1. "It is...divided into 114 chapters (called *suras*), arranged in order of length from the longest to the shortest, except for a short opening prayer in Chapter 1."
2. "The head of every chapter in the Qur'an (except the ninth, which is considered a continuation of the eighth) is prefixed by the following auspicious statement: 'In the name of the most merciful God.'" - **ibid.**

B. THE LANGUAGE OF THE QUR'AN...

1. "...Muslims insist that the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic (Qur'an 43:1); this divine origin is, according to pious Muslims, inimitable."
2. "...Muslims have deprecated, if not prohibited, any attempts to render the Qur'an in any

- other language than Arabic, since to translate it is tantamount to profaning the sacred language God chose as His instrument of communication.”
3. “Muslims and even non-Muslim scholars of Islam universally acclaim the Qur’an as representative of the purest and most elegant forms of the Arabic language.”
 4. “Among adherents, the unexcelled literary style of Qur’anic Arabic is one of the proofs of its divine origin (Qur’an 12:2)” - **ibid.**

C. THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE QUR’AN...

1. The first *sura* (chapter) is a short prayer of **7 verses**
 - a. Called “*Al Fatihah*” (The Opening)
 - b. Described by Muslims as “the Essence of the (Qur’an)”
2. The second and longest *sura* contains **286 verses**
 - a. Called “*Al Baqarah*” (The Heifer)
 - b. It summarizes much of the whole teaching of the Qur’an
 - c. Among its contents:
 - 1) The story of the creation of man - **2:30-39**
 - 2) The story of Israel - **2:40-86**
 - 3) The story of Moses and Jesus, how revelations given to them were corrupted by those who followed them - **2:87-121**
 - 4) The story of Abraham, how he and Ishmael built the Kabah (the house of Allah) in the city of Mecca - **2:122-141**
 - 5) How the Kabah was now to be the center of universal worship and symbol of Islamic unity - **2:142-167**
 - 6) Ordinances to guide the Islamic *ummah* (community) - **2:168-242**
 - a) With admonitions to faith, kindness, prayer, charity, probity, patience
 - b) Pertaining to food and drink, bequests, fasts, jihad, wine and gambling, treatment of orphans and women, etc.
 - 7) The concept of *jihad* explained in the story of Saul, Goliath, and David, in contrast to the story of Jesus - **2:243-253**
 - 8) A reinforcement that true virtue lies in practical deeds of manliness, kindness, and good faith - **2:254-283**
 - 9) A concluding exhortation to faith, obedience a sense of personal responsibility and prayer - **2:284-286**

-- From **The Holy Qur’an: Text, Translation and Commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p. 16**
 3. The remaining *suras* expound upon similar themes
 - a) Often in response to events (such as war and peace) as they occurred in the course of the life of Muhammad and the Muslim *ummah* - e.g., **Suras 3-5,8-9**
 - b) Often retelling histories of Biblical characters, supposedly correcting corruptions of such stories as held by Jews and Christians - e.g., **Suras 7,10-15,19-22**

CONCLUSION

1. It is difficult for non-Muslims to comprehend how the Qur’an is venerated by Muslims...
 - a. In some countries, children under ten are required to memorize the whole book
 - b. It has been said that the Qur’an as the Word of God is to Muslims what Jesus as the Word of

God is to Christians

2. In this brief introduction and survey of the Qur'an...
 - a. My purpose has not been to debunk, point out weaknesses, contradictions, etc.
 - b. My purpose has been to try to present it as viewed by Muslims
 - In keeping with the principle: Seek first to understand, then to be understood

The better one understands the origin and content of the Qur'an, the more effective they will be to share the gospel to Muslims. The same is true with understanding some of the beliefs and practices of the Islamic faith, which we shall survey in our next study...

The Religion Of Islam

The Tenets Of Islam

INTRODUCTION

1. Thus far in this brief introduction to Islam we have reviewed...
 - a. The historical origins of Islam in the life of Muhammad and his early followers
 - b. The origin and importance of the Qur'an in Islam
2. In this study, we shall summarize some of the main tenets of Islam...
 - a. Its beliefs
 - b. Its practices

[We begin this study by reviewing several beliefs as held by Muslims...]

I. FUNDAMENTAL ARTICLES OF FAITH

A. GOD...

1. Islam "is predicated on the belief that there is but one God, Allah, the Creator of the universe and of humankind...Mercy and compassion are his principal qualities."
-- **Introduction To Islam, M. Cherif Bassiouni**
(<http://www.mideasti.org/library/islam/introislam.htm>)
 2. "The first and most essential element in Islamic theology is the doctrine of God (Allah)."
 - a. "True belief demands an uncompromising monotheism."
 - b. Muhammad "accused Christians of being polytheists because of their belief in the Trinity"
- **Solomon Nigosian, Islam: The Way Of Submission**
3. Thus they view Jesus as simply a prophet, not the Son of God - cf. **Qur'an 4:171; 5:73,75**

B. ANGELS...

1. "Angels are frequently mentioned in the Qur'an."
 2. "They are God's messengers who exercise a potent influence on both the life of humans and the life of the universe."
 3. "...angels are said to act as intermediaries asking God to forgive the offenses of believers"
- **Qur'an 40:7**
 4. "At the time of death, the souls of humans are received by angels (**Qur'an 6:93; 8:52; 16:30; 47:29**), who have kept a record of their actions (**Qur'an 6:61; 43:80; 82:10**) and will witness for or against them on the Day of Judgment (**Qur'an 21:103; 13:24; 33:43**)"
- **Nigosian, ibid.**

C. BOOKS (SCRIPTURES)...

1. "One of the central doctrines of Islamic faith is belief in all of God's revealed messages, which now consist of four books: **Torah, Psalms, Gospels, and Qur'an.**"
2. "These four Books are to be regarded as Holy Scriptures, even though the three Books

- preceding the Qur'an include certain human imperfections.”
3. “With the appearance of the Qur'an, the noblest of the Books, these earlier Books, it is believed, were abrogated.”
 4. “...it is an article of faith that the purpose of the Qur'an is to preserve original divine revelations by restoring the eternal truth of God.” (**Qur'an 5:44-48**)
 5. “Since the Qur'an abrogates all earlier Books, its ordinances continue to remain in force until the Day of Judgment...”
- **Nigosian, ibid.**

D. PROPHETS (MESSENGERS)...

1. “To all peoples and in all ages, God sent prophets or messengers to proclaim the Oneness of God and to warn humanity of the future judgment (**Qur'an 10:47; 16:36**).”
 2. The Qur'an mentions many by name: - cf. **Qur'an 6:83-90**
 - a. Most are Old Testament figures (Adam, Enoch, Noah, Lot, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Elijah, Elisha, David, Solomon, Job, Jonah, Ezra)
 - b. Three are from the New Testament (Zacharias, John, Jesus)
 3. “Just as Adam is regarded by Muslims as the first prophet sent by God, so Muhammad is the ‘seal of the prophets’ through whom God reveals His eternal message in its definitive form (**Qur'an 33:40**).”
 4. “Muhammad’s life and death marked the end of prophecy since his prophetic mission satisfied for all time any need or demand for another prophet.”
- **Nigosian, ibid.**

E. THE DAY OF JUDGMENT...

1. “The Last Day, or the final Day of Judgment, occupies a very important place in Qur'an and in the Hadith.”
 2. “The vivid description of the events leading up to the Last Day and the elaborate portrayal of the final judgment are very similar to the book of Revelation...” - cf. **Qur'an 81:1-14; 82:1-19; 69:13-37**
 3. “...Islamic doctrine associates the coming of ‘The Guided One’ (*Mahdi*) with signs that foreshadow the Last Day.”
 - a. “Some Sunni Muslims believe that an individual from the family of the Prophet Muhammad will appear and reign for seven years to make the religion of Islam triumphant throughout the world before the end comes.”
 - b. “Most Sunni scholars, however, identify this Messianic figure with the prophet Jesus.”
 4. “...Muslims believe that on the Last Day, the graves will be open, the dead will resurrect, and a judgment will be pronounced on every individual according to his or her deeds.”
- **Nigosian, ibid.**

[Taking a look now at some of the religious practices of those who are Muslims, Islam is perhaps most noted for what is called...]

II. THE FIVE PILLARS (RELIGIOUS DUTIES)

A. THE CREED OF ISLAM (SHEHADA)...

1. This is the profession of faith in Islam: “There is no other god but God; and Muhammad is

- the Prophet of God” (*la ilaha ill’Allah, Muhammad rasul Allah*)
2. Professing this creed is sufficient to make one a convert to Islam, provided the following conditions are met:
 - a. To repeat it aloud
 - b. To understand it perfectly
 - c. To believe it in the heart
 - d. To profess it till death
 - e. To recite it correctly
 - f. To declare it without hesitation
- **Nigosian, ibid.**

B. PRAYERS (SALAT)...

1. “The next most important religious duty after the profession of faith is prayer.”
 2. “Qur’anic texts prescribe only three prayers a day, but Islamic tradition requires five: at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, evening, and night.”
 3. “Muslims may not waive the obligation to pray five times daily even if they are sick or on a journey.”
 - a. “The sick are to pray in bed and, if necessary, lying down.”
 - b. “Travelers are enjoined to pray at dawn, to combine noon with mid-afternoon prayer, and evening prayer with prayers that follow nightfall, thus praying three times daily.”
 4. “Prayers may be said either in private or in public worship.”
 5. “All public or ritual prayers must be preceded by ritual purification both of the individual and the place. Ablutions (*wudu’* or *ghusl*) secure bodily purity.”
 - a. “...Muslims wash their foreheads, hands, and feet before they pray...”
 - b. “If no water is available, then hands and feet may be wiped with fine, clean sand.”
 - c. “Muslims pray on a mat or rug in token of purity secured for the spot or place.”
 - d. “Shoes or sandals are removed before devotees step on their prayer rugs.”
 6. “...a worshipper prays facing in the direction of Mecca (*qibla*), a direction which is indicated in mosques by a niche in the wall (*mihrab*).”
 7. “One day a week is set aside as a day of public prayer (Friday)...Muslim women do not attend public prayers, although some mosques have a room or section set aside for them.”
 8. “Prayer is the heart and essence of Islam. Any Muslim who willfully avoids prayer is considered to have forsaken Islam.”
- **Nigosian, ibid.**

C. RELIGIOUS TAX (ZAKAT)...

1. “The third duties of a Muslim is to give alms to the poor as an outward sign of true piety.”
 2. “There are two kinds of almsgiving: legal (*zakat*) and voluntary (*sadaqa*).”
 3. “In Muslim canon law legal alms are assessed at one-fortieth (2.5%) of an individual’s income in kind or money.”
 4. “Legal almsgiving is now more or less defunct, because many Muslim states follow western systems of taxation.”
- **Nigosian, ibid.**

D. FASTING (SIYAM)...

1. “The fourth duty of a Muslim is to fast during the twenty-nine days of the ninth month of the

- Islamic lunar calendar (the month of *Ramadan*).”
2. “...during the day Muslims abstain from food, drink, and sexual intercourse; but these proscriptions are lifted between sunset and sunrise.”
 - a. “All adult male and female Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset.”
 - b. “Only children, the sick, nursing or pregnant mothers, the aged and travelers are exempt, though anyone exempted by reason of temporary disability or circumstances is expected to make up an equivalent period of fasting.”
 - c. “The end of each daytime abstention is celebrated joyfully after sunset.”
 3. “Those who observe the fast faithfully and in a spirit of sincere repentance are assured of a remission of sins.”
 - a. “Voluntary fasts at various times during the year other than the month of Ramadan are also considered as meritorious acts...”
 - b. “None, however, other than Ramadan, may last any more than three consecutive days.”
- **Nigosian, ibid.**

E. PILGRIMAGE (HAJJ)...

1. “The fifth prescribed religious duty of every Muslim is to make a pilgrimage to the holy shrine of **Ka’ba** in **Mecca**.”
 2. “It is an obligation to be fulfilled at least once in a lifetime by every adult who is sane, healthy, financially capable of supporting his family during his absence, and able to underwrite the expenses of the journey.”
 3. “The pilgrimage...can be performed only on specified days (the seventh to the tenth) in the last month (*Dhu’l Hijja*, the twelfth month) of the Islamic calendar.”
 4. “A cross-section of Muslims from all walks of life and of varying color, race and nationality realize their equality before God as they meet on common ground at least once a year.”
- **Nigosian, ibid.**

CONCLUSION

1. This brief survey certainly does not address all the tenets of Islam...
 - a. We have not covered many other observances and festivals held by Muslims
 - b. There are many other aspects of their moral and social behavior (e.g., their abstinence from gambling, drinking, and pork, etc.)-- Our purpose has been to introduce the more noticeable features of Islam
2. There are two aspects of Islam that I would like for us to look at more closely...
 - a. The meaning and implementation of *jihad* (struggle)
 - b. The concept and political ramifications of *ummah* (Islamic community)

These I hope to examine more closely in the context of a question that people often ask: “**Is Islam A Religion Of Peace?**”, which we shall do in our next study...

The Religion Of Islam

Is Islam A Religion Of Peace?

INTRODUCTION

1. The main tenets of Islam can be very appealing...
 - a. A call to believe in one God, the God of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus
 - b. A call to repentance and submission to the will of God
 - c. A call to holy living, involving diligent prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage
2. Yet the early history of Islam and recent events have many people wondering...
 - a. Is Islam a religion of peace?
 - b. Does Islam allow people to live together in harmony regardless of race, class or beliefs?
3. Most Muslims say they are for living together in peace and harmony...
 - a. Especially those living in countries where Muslims are in the minority
 - b. Yet one might ask, "Is this because of Islam, or in spite of Islam?"
 - c. Would there be calls for peace and tolerance if Muslims were the majority?

[There are several things to consider as one seeks to provide an answer to such questions. First, let's take a look at...]

I. THE OBJECTIVES OF ISLAM

A. TO MAKE ISLAM THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION...

1. **Islam is claimed to be the true religion**
 - a. "The Religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His Will)" - **Qur'an 3:19**
 - b. "Generally this statement is understood to mean that the true religion in the sight of God is Islam and that Islam alone is the way of life acceptable with Allah." - **S. Abul A'La Maududi, The Religion Of Truth**
 2. **It is to be proclaimed over all other religions**
 - a. "It is He Who hath sent His Messenger with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, to proclaim it over all religion, even though the Pagans may detest (it)."- **Qur'an 9:33**
 - b. "We have not sent thee but as a universal (Messenger) to men, giving them glad tidings, and warning them (against sin), but most men understand not." - **Qur'an 34:28**
 3. **It is meant to be accepted by all**
 - a. "Allah's Revelation, through the Holy Prophet, was not meant for one faith or tribe, one race or set of people. It was meant for all mankind, to whom, if they turn to Allah, it is a Message of the glad tidings of His Mercy, and if they do not turn to Him, it is a warning against sin the inevitable Punishment." - **Abdullah Yusuf Ali, commenting on Qur'an 34:28**
 - b. "But those who reject Faith and belie Our Signs, -- they shall be Companions of Hellfire." - **Qur'an 5:86**
- **Of course, at this point the same can be said of Christianity; but there is more...**

B. TO CREATE ISLAMIC POLITICAL STATES...

1. "...in Islam there is no division or distinction between what in the West is called 'Church and State'. In fact westerners refer to the Islamic form of government as a theocracy."
 2. "Thus contemporary political-religious groups focus on social, political, and economic aspects of Muslim societies. They oppose the secular state and instead call for the establishment of a 'Muslim State'. " - **Introduction To Islam, M. Cherif Bassiouni** (<http://www.mideasti.org/library/islam/introislam.htm>)
 3. "Islamic law differs from western legal systems in at least two major respects: scope and value."
 - a. "Western systems of law govern one's relationship to the state and to fellow beings. The scope of Islamic law is much wider, since it regulates one's relationship with God and conscience, in addition to the state and to fellow-beings. In this sense, Islamic law is a comprehensive code of behavior that embraces both private and public acts."
 - b. "Western legal systems adapt to the changing circumstances of contemporary society. Islamic law, however, is conceived as the immutable embodiment of divine will, imposed by God upon Islamic society. The process of interpretation and adaptation of Islamic law is held to have been completed in the past with the crystallization of the legal manuals." - **Solomon Nigosian, Islam: The Way Of Submission**
 4. Islam is not content to be practiced as a personal religion; its goal is to create...
 - a. The ideal *ummah* (Muslim community)
 - b. Political states with all citizens required to submit to *Shari'ia* (Islamic law)
- **It is this aspect of Islam that creates the potential for great conflict among nations**

[Christians view the kingdom of God as spiritual (**Jn 18:36; Ro 14:17**), where Christians can live under any form of human government (cf. **1 Pe 2:12-17**). Islam, however, will not be satisfied until all governments and peoples conform to Islamic law. Accomplishing this goal includes...]

II. THE CONCEPT OF JIHAD

A. AS REVEALED IN THE QUR'AN...

1. The term "*jihad*", often translated **holy war**, literally means **struggle**
 2. When studied chronologically, the Qur'an concept of war appears to evolve:
 - a. Stage one: no retaliation (in Mecca)
 - b. Stage two: defensive fighting permitted (first instruction in Medina)
 - c. Stage three: defensive fighting commanded (revised instruction in Medina)
 - d. Stage four: offensive war commanded to kill pagans and humble Christians and Jews (after conquering Mecca)
- **cf. Richard P. Bailey, Jihad: The Teaching of Islam From Its Primary Sources - The Qur'an and Hadith** (<http://answering-islam.org/Quran/Themes/jihad.html>)
3. This may help us understand why there is diversity of opinions among Muslims as to the meaning and application of *jihad* today; especially when the **Qur'an** contains words as these:
 - a. "Let those who would exchange the life of this world for the hereafter, fight for the cause of God; whether he dies or triumphs, We shall richly reward him. ... The true believers fight for the cause of God, but the infidels fight for the devil. Fight then against

the friends of Satan ...” (Qur’an 4:74,76)

- b. “The believers who stay at home -- apart from those that suffer a grave impediment -- are not the equals of those who fight for the cause of God with their goods and their persons. God has given those that fight with their goods and their persons a higher rank than those who stay at home ...” (Qur’an 4:95,96)
- c. “Slay the idolaters wherever you find them. ... lie in ambush everywhere for them. If they repent and take to prayer and render the alms levy, allow them to go their way ...” (Qur’an 9:5)
- d. “Those that make war against God and His apostle and spread disorder in the land shall be put to death or crucified or have their hands and feet cut off on alternate sides, or be banished from the land. They shall be held up to shame in this world and sternly punished in the hereafter: except those that repent before you reduce them ...” (Qur’an 5:34,35)
- e. “Make war on them until idolatry shall cease and God’s religion shall reign supreme” (Qur’an 8:39)
- f. “Prophet, rouse the faithful to arms. If there are twenty steadfast men among you, they shall vanquish two hundred; and if there are a hundred, they shall rout a thousand unbelievers, for they are devoid of understanding.” (Qur’an 8:65)
- g. “Fight against such of those to whom the Scriptures were given...and do not embrace the true Faith, until they pay tribute out of hand and are utterly subdued.” (Qur’an 9:29)

B. AS ESPOUSED BY MUSLIMS TODAY...

1. “Jihad, as an Islamic concept, can be on a personal level--inner struggle against evil within oneself; struggle for decency and goodness on the social level; and struggle on the battlefield, if and when necessary.” - **1st Islamic Web** (<http://islamicweb.com>)
2. “Islam permits fighting in self-defense, in defense of religion, or on the part of those who have been expelled forcibly from their homes. It lays down strict rules of combat that include prohibitions against harming civilians and against destroying crops, trees and livestock. As Muslims see it, injustice would be triumphant in the world if good people were not prepared to risk their lives in a righteous cause.” - **ibid.**
3. There is diversity of opinion among Muslims regarding the meaning of *jihad*
 - a. “Some Muslims, like Sufis, promote the conquest of one’s self as ‘the greater holy war’, while they disparage conflict with unbelievers or infidels as ‘the lesser holy war’.”
 - b. “Others put forward the argument that fighting, or holy war, is justified only in self-defense.”
 - c. “Still others, like Zaydi and the Ahmadiyya, reject the idea of fighting or holy war and advocate peaceful negotiation as the most effective means for upholding the principles of Islam.” - **Solomon Nigosian, Islam: The Way Of Submission**
 - d. Of course, there are the extreme Islamic fundamentalists, who make it clear that their concept of *jihad* includes the killing of innocent civilians in an offensive war for God

[When the more radical concept of *jihad* is applied to accomplish the ultimate goal of Islam (creating political Islamic states), there is bound to be war. The question as to whether Islam promotes peace can also be answered by looking at...]

III. THE EXPERIENCE OF ISLAM

A. IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF ISLAM...

1. Muhammad adopted the Arabic custom of *ghazu* (raids), raiding caravans for booty to support families
2. After the death of Muhammad, the first four successors to Muhammad (known as the *Rashidun*, the “rightly guided” caliphs) were men of war...
 - a. **Abu Bakr**, Muhammad’s close friend and early follower, found himself preoccupied with the wars of *riddah* (apostasy)
 - b. **Umar ibn al-Katthab**, another associate of Muhammad, sought to preserve the unity of the *ummah* by extending the *ghazu* (raids) to neighboring countries
 - c. **Uthman ibn Affan**, another associate of Muhammad, continued the *ghazu* (raids)
 - d. **Ali ibn Abi Talib**, cousin of Muhammad, whose rule was marred by a five year civil war known as the first *fitnah* (time of temptation)
3. For the next 300 years, the history of Islam involves...
 - a. Expansion through military conquest
 - b. Civil wars as various Islamic factions struggle for power
 - c. Assassinations, massacres, executions, inquisitions of Muslims by Muslims
4. “People of the Book” (Jews and Christians) were *dhimmis* (protected subjects)...
 - a. Allowed to practice their faith and offered military protection
 - b. But forced to pay a special tribute (*jizya*), and unable to convert Muslims, marry Muslim women, or hold high government office

B. IN MODERN ISLAMIC NATIONS...

1. In every country where *Shari’ia* (Islamic law) is embraced...
 - a. At best, non-Muslims face discrimination, social ostracism, harassment
 - b. At worst, non-Muslims face prison, torture and death for practicing their religion
 - c. Muslims may not convert to another religion, under the threat of death
2. In recent events, we see terrorism against innocent civilians in the name of Islam...
 - a. Approved by many Muslims in Islamic nations
 - b. Condemned weakly if at all by Muslims in non-Islamic nations

CONCLUSION

1. Is Islam a religion of peace? It is difficult to say “yes” in view of...
 - a. **The objectives of Islam**, as held all Muslims
 - b. **The concept of jihad**, as espoused by many Muslims
 - c. **The history of Islam**, as manifested in both the past and present
2. Present-day Muslims appear to be going through an identity crisis...
 - a. Moderates seek to redefine Islam (and *jihad*) as a spiritual struggle for peace
 - b. Extremists seek to define Islam (and *jihad*) as a literal struggle for peace

Which view of Islam will prevail remains to be seen. But the true religion of peace is that proclaimed by the Prince of Peace and His apostles who renounced the use of the sword to further the cause of truth...! - cf. **Jn 18:36; Ro 12:17-21; 2 Co 10:3-5; Ja 3:17-18; 1 Pe 2:11-17**

The Religion Of Islam

A Comparison Of Islam And Christianity

INTRODUCTION

1. In previous studies, we have directed our focus on Islam...
 - a. The beginnings and early history of Islam
 - b. The origin, importance and content of the Qur'an
 - c. The faith and practices of Islam
 - d. The issue as to whether Islam is a religion of peace
2. It may be beneficial to look at Islam in comparison with Christianity...
 - a. What might they have in common?
 - b. How do they differ on fundamental issues?

[In this study, we shall consider what the two religions believe on various issues as we seek to gain a better understanding of Islam. We begin with...]

I. GOD

A. ISLAM...

1. Teaches there is one God - **Qur'an 3:64**
2. Rejects the concept of the Trinity

B. CHRISTIANITY...

1. Teaches there is one God - **1 Co 8:6**
2. Reveals that the Godhead is composed of three distinct personalities - Father, Son, Holy Spirit; one in essence and substance - cf. **Jn 1:1-5; Ph 2:5-8; 2 Jn 9; Mt 28:19**

[Closely related to any concept of God is one's view regarding...]

II. JESUS

A. ISLAM...

1. Considers Jesus a prophet, like Noah, Abraham, Moses (and Muhammad)
2. Rejects the divinity of Jesus, denies his preexistence - **Qur'an 4:171**
3. Believes in the virgin birth, however
4. Does not believe Jesus died on the cross nor was raised from the dead - **Qur'an 4:157**

B. CHRISTIANITY...

1. Declares that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God - **Mt 16:13-18**
2. Teaches the preexistence of Christ - **Jn 1:1-5; Co 1:16-17**
3. Proclaims that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and was raised from the dead

[What one believes regarding Jesus certainly has a bearing on one's understanding of...]

III. SALVATION

A. ISLAM...

1. Salvation comes by works
2. Personal righteousness is weighed against personal sin, which ever is greater determines salvation - **Qur'an 23:101-103**
3. A Muslim can be forgiven by repenting of sin - **Qur'an 39:53-54**
4. Paradise is assured for one who dies as a martyr for Islam
5. One becomes a Muslim by confessing "There is no other god but God; and Muhammad is the Prophet of God" (*la ilaha ill'Allah, Muhammad rasul Allah*) from the heart

B. CHRISTIANITY...

1. Salvation is by grace through an obedient faith - **Ep 2:8-9; Ti 3:4-7**
2. Jesus died on the cross as atonement for our sins - **Ro 3:21-26**
3. He is the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him - **He 5:9**
4. Those whose names are in the Lamb's book of life will be spared condemnation - **Re 20:11-15**
5. One becomes a Christian by:
 - a. Believing that Christ died for your sins - **Jn 8:24; Ro 10:9-10**
 - b. Repenting of your sins - **Ac 2:38; 17:30-31**
 - c. Confessing your faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God - **Mt 10:32,33; Ro 10:9-10**
 - d. Being baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins - **Mt 28:19; Mk 16:16; Ac 2:38; 22:16; Ro 6:3-6; Ga 3:27; Co 2:11-13; Ti 3:5; 1 Pe 3:21**

[Doctrines pertaining to salvation are naturally related to views pertaining to...]

IV. ETERNAL JUDGMENT

A. ISLAM...

1. Believes in a resurrection of the dead and judgment at the Last Day
2. Paradise for the faithful, served by beautiful virgins - **Qur'an 56:1-38**
3. Hell for unbelievers, with eternal torment - **Qur'an 56:39-56**

B. CHRISTIANITY...

1. Believes in a resurrection of the dead and judgment at the Last Day
2. The eternal City, New Jerusalem, in the new heavens and new earth for those whose name is in the Lamb's book of life - **Re 21:1-7,9-27; 22:1-5**
3. The lake of fire for the unbelieving and wicked - **Re 20:15; 21:8**

[What one believes about God, Jesus, salvation and the judgment depends heavily upon what one considers to be...]

V. THE WORD OF GOD

A. ISLAM...

1. Believes in 4 inspired books - the **Torah** (5 books of Moses), **Zabur** (the Psalms), **Injil** (the Gospel), and **Qur'an**
2. The first three have been corrupted; the **Qur'an** provides the final revelation of God's Word

B. CHRISTIANITY...

1. Believes Old and New Testaments contains the revelation of God's Word - **2 Ti 3:16-17**
2. Believes that God's Word cannot be corrupted, but is preserved - **1 Pe 1:23-25; Mt 24:35; Isa 40:8**
3. Believes that revelation of God's Word is fully and finally revealed - **2 Pe 1:3; Ju 3**

[It is of interest to note some of the differences in the two religion regarding...]

VI. PRAYER, FASTING, AND WORSHIP

A. ISLAM...

1. Has set times to offer prayers (five times per day)
2. Has set periods and procedures in which to fast (the month of Ramadan)
3. Places emphasis on ceremonial rituals such as washings, posture in prayer

B. CHRISTIANITY...

1. Calls for fervent and steadfast prayer, with no set times proscribed - **1 Th 5:17; Co 4:2**
2. Has a place for fasting, but left up to the individual - **Mt 6:16-18; Ac 13:2-3; 14:23**
3. Places emphasis upon the spiritual aspect of worship - **Jn 4:23-24; Ep 5:19; Co 3:16**

[A major difference between Islam and Christianity in spreading their faiths involve the issues of...]

VII. WAR AND VENGEANCE

A. ISLAM...

1. Allows war and vengeance for self-defense against persecution
2. Allows use of war in promoting the faith against unbelievers and idolaters

B. CHRISTIANITY...

1. Forbids war and vengeance when persecuted for righteousness' sake - **Mt 5:10-12,38-48**
2. Forbids use of war to promote the cause of Christ and the gospel - **2 Co 10:3-5**

[Some other differences between the two faiths relate to...]

VIII. MORALS

A. ISLAM...

1. Forbids alcohol, gambling - **Qur'an 5:93-94**
2. Forbids eating pork

3. Allows up to four wives, may divorce and remarry them twice - **Qur'an 2:229**

B. CHRISTIANITY...

1. Forbids drunkenness, covetousness, and other “works of the flesh” - **Ga 5:19-21**
2. Allows all foods, if received with thanksgiving and prayer - **1 Ti 4:4-5** (with the exception of drinking blood and eating animals that were strangled, **Ac 15:20,29; 21:25**)
3. Teaches monogamy, divorce only for fornication - **Mt 19:9; 1 Co 7:2**

[Both religions distinguish between the role of men and women, though with important differences...]

IX. TREATMENT OF WOMEN

A. ISLAM...

1. Men have more rights than women - **Qur'an 2:228**
2. Women do not attend public prayers at the Mosque
3. A husband may punish a wife by withholding what is due, and then beat her if necessary - **Qur'an 4:34**

B. CHRISTIANITY...

1. Men and women are fellow heirs of the grace of life - **1 Pe 3:7; Ga 3:28-29**
2. Women do not have leadership roles in the church - **1 Co 11:3; 14:34-37; 2 Ti 2:11-12**
3. Forbids withholding what is due, and requires treating the wife with tenderness and understanding - **1 Co 7:3-5; 1 Pe 3:7**

CONCLUSION

1. This has not been an exhaustive comparison between Islam and Christianity...
 - a. It has been a simple examination at some of the more notable features of comparison
 - b. Undoubtedly, many other similarities and differences could be noted
2. In considering such comparisons, one should note the following caveat...
 - a. Islam is made of many different sects; not all professing Muslims might agree with some of the representations of Islamic beliefs made in this comparison
 - b. In a similar vein, not all professing Christians may agree with what has been offered as that which Christianity teaches

But perhaps this comparison can serve as a starting point in identifying key issues for discussions between Muslims and Christians who seek to better understand one another's faiths....

The Religion Of Islam

Responding To Islam

INTRODUCTION

1. Our study thus far has mostly focused on learning about Islam...
 - a. How it began and its early history
 - b. The origin, importance and content of the *Qur'an*
 - c. Some of the faith and practices of Islam
 - d. Whether or not Islam is a religion of peace
 - e. Some comparisons between what Islam and Christianity teaches

2. In this final study, I wish to offer some thoughts on responding to Islam...
 - a. How Christians might prepare themselves for trying to reach Muslims with the gospel
 - b. What approach to use in seeking to convert a Muslim to Christ

[There may be many effective ways to evangelize Muslims, but I doubt that any will succeed without proper...]

I. PREPARATION FOR RESPONDING TO ISLAM

A. REGARDING OUR CONDUCT...

1. Islam has much to be commended
 - a. Submission to what they perceive to be the Will of God
 - b. Dedication to what they believe is the Word of God
 - c. Personal religious devotion as expressed by prayers, fasting, charity
 2. Christians should certainly equal if not surpass the righteousness of Muslims
 - a. Just as Jesus taught His disciples regarding the scribes and Pharisees - cf. **Mt 5:20**
 - b. Our submission to the Will of God should not be any less - **Mt 6:33**
 - c. Our dedication to the Word of God should be as fervent - **Ja 1:21; 1 Pe 2:2**
 - d. Though not as formal or ritualistic...
 - 1) Our prayers are to be fervent, without ceasing - **Co 4:2; 1 Th 5:17-18**
 - 2) Our fasting to be done to be seen of God, not men - **Mt 6:16-18**
 - 3) Our charity to be abundant - **1 Ti 6:17-19**
 3. We must take the call of pure and nondenominational Christianity seriously
 - a. Christ prayed for unity of believers, to convince the world - **Jn 17:20-21**
 - b. Paul condemned religious division, and so should wee - **1 Co 1:10-13**
- The call to follow Christ will be hindered if Christians are less dedicated to their Lord than Muslims are to their Prophet!**

B. REGARDING OUR ATTITUDES...

1. Much harm has been done in the name of Christ
 - a. As during the Crusades
 - b. Or even today, through misrepresentation of beliefs, or name-calling (e.g., describing

Muslims as “Mohammedans” or even worse, “rag heads”)

2. Paul has listed the proper Christ-like attitudes - **2 Ti 2:24-26; Ga 6:1**
 - a. Must not quarrel, but be gentle
 - b. Must be able to teach, patient
 - c. Must correct in humility, in a spirit of gentleness
- **The gospel of Christ is more likely to be taken seriously when represented by those imbued with the spirit of Christ!**

[With personal piety and graceful demeanor, the Christian is useful for the Master (cf. **2 Ti 2:21**). But when there are so many differences between Islam and Christianity, what approach does one take? Here are some thoughts on the matter...]

II. APPROACH IN RESPONDING TO ISLAM

A. WE MUST DEFINE THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE...

1. The crucial difference between Christianity and Islam is this:
 - a. **The Christian faith** is based on the testimony of the apostles and first generation Christians
 - 1) All that we know and believe about Jesus is based upon their word - cf. **Jn 17:20**
 - 2) This testimony is found in the pages of the New Testament - cf. **Jn 20:30-31**
 - b. **The Muslim faith** is based on the testimony of the *Rashidun* (“rightly guided” caliphs) and first generation Muslims
 - 1) All that they know and believe about Muhammad is based upon their word
 - 2) They compiled the fragments of the revelations given to Muhammad and put them into the *Qur’an* forty years after his death
 2. Once we admit our respective faiths are based on the testimony of these various witnesses...
 - a. Our task is to examine their lives and teaching, to determine which is the more credible
 - b. We must ask what possible motives could any of these witnesses have for lying, for someone (if not both) is lying
 3. When we compare the lives and deaths of the apostles and first generation Christians with the lives of the first generation Muslims, we see a remarkable contrast...
 - a. There is no reasonable ulterior motive that one can place on the Christians for their willingness to die for their faith; they received no power, fame, or money for their testimony - this gives weight to their testimony as true
 - b. The Muslims, in contrast, spread their religion with the aid of a sword; they gained great wealth and power in the process - this makes their motives suspect and weakens their testimony
- **The fundamental issue is this: Who are we going to believe? The apostles or the *Rashidun*? Who are the more credible witnesses?**

B. WE MUST EXAMINE BOTH THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE QUR’AN...

1. **The key test** is to compare the New Testament with the Qur’an
 - a. To see which presents the higher standard of morality
 - b. While this is somewhat subjective, I believe the fair minded person would agree that the New Testament presents a higher standard of morality
 - c. The *Qur’an* reverts to a standard of morality equal to the Old Testament (even worse)

2. **It basically comes to this:** “faith comes from hearing the Word of God” - **Ro 10:17**
 - a. Muslims believes that if one will read the *Qur’an* objectively, it will convince a sincere person that it is from God
 - b. I contend that if one will read both the New Testament and the *Qur’an* objectively...
 - 1) A sincere person will see that that New Testament presents a higher plane
 - 2) Supported by the lives and death of witnesses who suffered great hardship for no earthly gain
 3. Muslims like to point out slight corruptions of the Bible in some manuscripts or translations
 - a. Yet God has preserved it sufficiently to fulfill its intended task, as promised - **Psa 12:6; Mt 24:35; 1 Pe 1:23-25**
 - b. Which is to present to us the true Word of God, Jesus Christ - cf. **Jn 1:1-5**
 4. Yet read the *suras* of *Qur’an* chronologically, in the order they were “revealed”
 - a. One can see the gradual progression of the Islamic religion
 - b. “Revelations” were received that changed previous “revelations”, to accommodate current circumstances
- **The Word of God (i.e., Bible) has the power to produce faith; the challenge for Muslims is to read it objectively, not for the purpose of trying to prove it wrong!**

CONCLUSION

1. There are many side issues that can easily distract efforts to evangelize Muslims...
 - a. But as with all religious discussions, the key issue is one of authority
 - b. What is our standard of authority in religion, and what evidence supports it as such?-- **Which is why I suggest our focus in approaching Islam be on the credibility of those who gave us the *Qur’an*, and upon the *Qur’an* itself, in comparison with the New Testament and its authors**
2. As stated at the beginning of this study, Christians need to become more familiar with Islam...
 - a. To better understand world events, our neighbors, and in some cases, our enemies
 - b. To be able to share the gospel of Christ with those who in many cases know the Bible better than many professing “Christians”
3. I hope this study has helped in that regard, and also to challenge Christians...
 - a. To consider our own dedication to God
 - b. Are Muslims more dedicated to God than we?

Of course, dedication alone to God does not save, as Paul wrote regarding Israel...

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” (Ro 10:1-4)

Can (should) we not say the same for the followers of Islam...?

The Religion Of Islam

For Your Further Study

For more in-depth studies on the subject of Islam, I found the following books helpful:

- ♦ **Islam - The Way Of Submission** (Solomon Nigosian, Crucible, Great Britain, 1987, 209 pages)

(From the cover) In this new study, intended for both Muslim and non-Muslim readers, Solomon Nigosian encapsulates and portrays the unique spirit of Islam, which pervades every aspect of Muslim life and unites millions of individuals all over the world in a common bond.

- ♦ **Islam - A Short History** (Karen Armstrong, Modern Library Chronicles, New York, 2000, 222 pages)

(From the cover) Islam: A Short History begins with the flight of Muhammad and his family from Medina in the seventh century and the subsequent founding of the first mosques. It recounts the origins of the split between Shii and Sunni Muslims, and the emergence of the Sufi mysticism; the spread of Islam throughout North Africa, the Levant, and Asia; the shattering effect on the Muslim world of the Crusades; the flowering of imperial Islam in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries into the world's greatest and most sophisticated power; and the origins and impact of revolutionary Islam. It concludes with an assessment of Islam today and its challenges.

- ♦ **A Resource For The Study Of Islam** (Ney Rieber, Star Bible Publications, Ft. Worth, TX, 1993, 227 pages)

(From the author's preface) "I began this study to meet the challenges I encountered while teaching the Bible in prisons. As my efforts to learn about Islam progressed, I was continually frustrated by a lack of detailed and dependable material on the subject. Realizing that others might find themselves in the same condition, I determined to make my research and some of my conclusions generally available. Materials are grouped by categories that I personally found reasonable. I hope that you find them logical, also."

You might also find these **online resources** helpful:

- ♦ **Islamic web sites**

1st Islamic Web <http://islamicweb.com/>

A Brief Chronology Of Muslim History <http://islamicweb.com/history/chronology.htm>

Biography Of The Prophet Muhammad <http://users.erols.com/zenithco/muhammad.html>

Introduction To Islam <http://www.mideasti.org/library/islam/introislam.htm>

Jihad Explained <http://www.unn.ac.uk/societies/islamic/jargon/jihad2.htm>

♦ **Non-Islamic web sites**

Answering Islam <http://answering-islam.org/index.html>

Behind The Veil <http://answering-islam.org/BehindVeil/>

Does Islam Promote Peace? <http://answering-islam.org/TWOR/peacepromoting.html>

Jihad <http://answering-islam.org/Quran/Themes/jihad.html>

Textual Variants Of The Qur'an <http://answering-islam.org/Quran/Text/>

The Islamic Agenda And Its Blueprints <http://answering-islam.org/Terrorism/agenda.html>

What Is The Koran? <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/99jan/koran.htm>