

"THE CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSE TO ISLAM"

Selected Texts

INTRODUCTION

1. Those were tragic events. . .and tragic impressions! The truth is. . .in this culture, when most people hear the word *Islam*, images like you have just seen come to our minds. Before 9/11, few people in our culture knew very much about Islam.

But that changed when 19 Islamic extremists hijacked 4 passenger jets in order to destroy crucial targets in this country. Within just a few days of 9/11, words like *bioterrorism, jihad, martyr, Taliban, and Al-Queda* became common in our culture. There is no question that 9/11 changed the world. It's one reason why one author of several books on Islam, said,

"Islam is not simply a matter of conscience or private belief, it makes imperial demands." (George W. Braswell, Jr.)

2. So how should a Christian to respond to all this? We want to talk about that for a few minutes this morning. Frankly, it's difficult for many Westerners, even Christians, to understand Islam.

eg. Dr. Warren Larson has said that Islam is a "*Socio-cultural and religio-economic political system*"

that permeates all areas of life. Frankly, all of this has led to several misconceptions about Islam.

3. The first is that

MISCONCEPTION #1

All Muslims are Arabs

That's not true. The largest Muslim country in the world is Indonesia, followed by Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. (are Asian)

A second misconception about Islam is that

MISCONCEPTION #2

All Muslims hate Jews and Christians

That's also not true. In fact, the Quran calls Jews and Christians "people of the book." While it's true that radical Muslims may hate Christians, that's certainly not true of all Muslims.

And the third misconception about Islam is that

MISCONCEPTION #3

All Muslims are radical terrorists

Son of Hamas-Mosab Hassan Yousef writes these words

That's also not true. Although some Muslims *are* radicals, some Islamic leaders have recently released statements that denounce terrorism and the killing of innocent civilians.

MISCONCEPTION #4

Islam=peace. It does not..."Islam" = submission

With that in mind, today I want to turn our attention to four insights that will help us demonstrate a Christian response to Islam. If you have your Bibles with you, I invite you to turn to the third chapter of 2 Peter. TAKE A PEN!!

We're involved in a series called "We're Not..."

In a few moments we'll turn our attention to what Peter says about religious characteristics at the end of this period of world history. Many of these characteristics are demonstrated in modern-day Islam. Before we turn our attention to that passage, there are some insights that will help us develop a Christian response to Islam. First, I must. . .

1. UNDERSTAND THE BACKGROUND OF ISLAM

- Most of you know that Islam began with the birth of Mohammad in the late 6th century A.D. Because his father and mother both died, Muhammad was raised by his grandfather and uncle. Eventually, he was employed by a rich widow named Khadija, who was so impressed with him that she married him when she was about 40 years old and he was 25.

Now according to Islamic tradition, when Mohammad was 40, he began to receive revelations from God through the angel, Gabriel. Because of the violence in these visions, Mohammad wasn't even sure of the source at first. He thought they might have been demonic.

Since Mohammad was illiterate, his followers transcribed his oral teachings. In fact, the only miracle that Mohammad claimed was this transcription of the Holy Book of Islam called the Qur'an.

- Eventually, Mohammad challenged the polytheism in the city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. But his leadership was rejected by the people of that city, so he fled to the city of Medina.

The early teachings of Mohammad were essentially peaceful with few negative comments about Christians or Jews. But over time that changed.

He became convinced that he could enforce his beliefs with the sword because he was the prophet of Allah. Mohammad returned to Mecca with ten thousand men and conquered the city. For the next several years, he led his followers into battle which launched the birth of the Islamic Empire throughout sections of the Holy Land.

- Following Mohammad's death, Islam spread rapidly through much of the Middle East and North Africa. The city of Damascus, Syria, became the capital of the Umayyad Dynasty during the first Muslim period.

Islam continued to grow throughout southern Europe until the famous "Battle of Tours" in 732 A.D. where Charles Martel, the grandfather of Charlemagne, defeated the Muslims. That was a turning point in European history! Otherwise, we might all be speaking Arabic today.

- At the end of the eleventh century, Pope Urban 2 issued a call for Crusades to be conducted which would free the Holy Land from the influence of the Muslims.

Frankly, many atrocities were committed during the Crusades which are still remembered by Muslims and Jews today.

Eg. Many Christians really don't understand the negative image of the Crusades in the minds of people who are not Christians. I grew up in a community where the nickname for the local Christian college was "The Crusaders." For years, most Christians had no idea how offensive that was to the rest of the world because of what

happened under the banner of "Christianity." (Billy Graham Crusade)

- The second Muslim period began with the reign of Egyptian Muslims called the Mamluks in the thirteenth century.

This eventually gave way to the rule of the Ottoman's from Turkey who ruled much of the Middle East and Europe for about 400 years. The Ottoman Empire was defeated by British General Allenby at the end of W. W. I.

Today, Islam is one of the fastest-growing religions in the world. About one in five people in the world are Muslims—around 1.2 billion!

Most of the countries of North Africa and the Middle East are controlled by Islamic governments. Today, Islam is the second largest religion in Europe. Most scholars agree that there about six million Muslims living in the United States.

Eg. Large Mosque off I-75 South of Toledo

Now, folks—that's just part of the story. . .

It's not an exaggeration to say that the greatest persecution of Christians in the world today is happening in countries that are lead by Islamic government.

Eg. In fact, I read this week that as many as two million Christians have been killed under Islamic influence in the country of Sudan. Great majority of Christians who are martyred die at the hands of Islamic influence.

Eg. In a few weeks, you can talk with a missionary couple we support about what it's like to serve in a country

controlled by Islamic government. There is so much risk to their lives that I can't show you their photo or even mention their names in this sermon.

That's a little bit of the background of Islam. If we're going to respond properly to what's happening in the world today, we also must. . .

2. UNDERSTAND THE BASICS OF ISLAM

Muslims follow several basic core beliefs, including the idea that there is only one God who is called Allah. Worshipping any other deity is considered blasphemy. Led Mohammad to challenge polytheism of Mecca.

Muslims also believe in angels. According to Islam, each Muslim is accompanied by two angels—one on the right and the other on the left. Each angel is responsible for recording the good and bad deeds of that particular Muslim.

Muslims believe in the Books of God which they identify as the Torah (or the Mosaic Law), the Psalms of David, the Gospels in the New Testament, and--according to Muslims--the only infallible book, the Qur'an.

Muslims also believe in the Prophets of God. There is no exact number of prophets identified, but most Muslims believe in Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus as the predecessors to the sixth and final prophet—Mohammad.

And then, Muslims also believe in judgment by Allah. Whether or not a Muslim goes to Paradise or Hell is

determined by whether that Muslim commits more good deeds than bad deeds in life.

Now, some of you know that those basic beliefs of Islam are lived out in six different practices or "pillars" of Islam.

The first pillar of Islam is the creed that every Muslim must recite which says, "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammad is his messenger." "shahada"

Good Muslims also say prayers five times a day, facing Mecca. A good Muslim will pray at sun-up, noon, in the middle of the afternoon, an hour before sundown, and an hour after sundown. "Salat" "call to prayer"

Muslims believe in giving alms to the poor, called *Zakat*. Muslims are required to give 2½ percent of their income for charitable causes.

A fourth pillar of Islam is fasting during the month of Ramadan, where Muslims abstain from food and water and sex during the daylight hours. This supposedly helps a Muslim develop self-control and reliance on Allah.

A fifth pillar of Islam is the pilgrimage or *Hajj*. Every Muslim is expected to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in life.

And a sixth practice of Islam is an unofficial pillar for Muslims, called *Holy War* or *Jihad*. Now, this Holy War can be something as innocent as struggling to obey God or defeat the forces of evil in your life. Jihad of the tongue and the hand and the heart are all Muslim expressions that

deal with the idea of working out your faith in a practical way.

But extremists also interpret the word *Jihad* as literal warfare against non-Muslims. Eg. Mosab Hassan Yousef writes these words in "Son of Hamas." The Qur'an even teaches that Muslims who die in a Holy War are assured of a place in Paradise with 70 black-eyed virgins. If I'm going to respond properly to Islam, I have to have a basic understanding of these beliefs and practices.

You see, because of the activity of terrorists, many Muslims have expressed embarrassment at how Islam is portrayed. It's not an exaggeration to say that many Muslims are questioning their faith because of the violent acts that have occurred. Millions of Muslims live in fear of violence that could be initiated against them if they become Christ followers. 6 million Muslims every year find Christ. More Muslims coming to faith today than ever before!

So when we come to Peter's comments in II Peter, we are reminded that there is a spiritual conflict in this world. If I'm to respond properly to Islam, I must

3. UNDERSTAND THE BONDAGE OF ISLAM

Islam rejects some very basic ideas of Scripture that are outlined in 2 Peter, Chapter 3. First of all, Islam. . .

- **Rejects the Word of God.**

"I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles." (2 Peter 3:2)

I mentioned earlier that Muslims believe in the Books of Moses, the Psalms, and the Gospels. But they don't accept the rest of the Old Testament Prophets or New Testament Epistles and Revelation.

True Muslims say that they believe in portions of the Old and New Testaments, but they'll also tell you that the Old and New Testaments have been corrupted. But, if God is all-powerful and all-knowing, He would not allow His Word to be corrupted. This book is either the Word of God, or the word of man.

Furthermore, Islam. . .

- **Rejects the Son of God**

"First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this 'coming' he promised?'" (2 Peter 3:3-4a)

Just before Jesus left this earth He said, *"I will come again."*

Even though Muslims believe Jesus was a Prophet of God, they do not believe that Jesus was God in a human body. They don't believe that Jesus died on the cross or that He came back to life or that He will return to this earth.

In his little epistle, John is very clear about this,

". . .but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God." (1 John 4:3a)

What did Jesus say about all this?

"Anyone who has seen me has seen the father."
(John 14:9b)

Jesus said,

"I and the Father are one." (John 10:30)

Islam also. . .

- **Rejects the justice of God**

"The present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men." 2 Peter 3:7

Earlier I told you that good Muslims believe that there is an angel on one shoulder keeping track of the good things we do, and an angel on the other shoulder keeping track of the bad things we do. That's not the way the Bible pictures God's justice. In fact, Paul says to the Romans,

*"There is no one righteous, not even one."
(Romans 3:10)*

He went on to say:

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)

The truth of Scripture is that all of us deserve God's punishment. There's no one good enough to meet God's perfect standard. There's no great scale in the sky that tips one way or the other, depending on our works! That's not the way God's justice is pictured in the Bible. In fact, God's justice demands satisfaction—either we pay—or He pays for us! (Isaiah 53—all our righteous efforts are like filthy rags)

Beyond that, Islam. . .John 3:18- whoever believes in Him is not condemned but whoever does not believe

- **Rejects the forgiveness of God**

"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9

Islam knows nothing about the idea of repentance and forgiveness. Muslims believe that Heaven or Hell will be determined based on how well they've kept the pillars of the faith.

1 Peter 2:24 Jesus bore our sins in His body on the cross

But the Bible teaches that Jesus died for our sins and in our place. The Bible says it like this in I John 1:9:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:9)

I love what Paul wrote to Titus in Titus 3:5:

"He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5)

Trio Song—"There's Nothing Greater Than Grace"

So, Islam rejects the Word of God, the Son of God and the Justice of God and the Forgiveness of God, and it also. . .

- **Rejects a personal relationship with God**

Look down in vs. 14 of this chapter.

"So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him." 2 Peter 3:14

The truth of Scripture is that God invites us to find peace with Him. Paul said it like this to the Romans:

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

In Philippians we read:

"The peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:7)

Eg. I met this week with one man who sat in my office and wept as he described his life. As I listened to his story, I realized he was not only weeping because of some bad decisions he'd made, he was also weeping because he had found the peace of a personal relationship with the God of Heaven who loves him, and gave His life for him in Christ.

Eg. I met with another man this week who told me his spiritual journey over the last four years. He described one event after another how God answered prayer and how meaningful his personal relationship with God had become to him. Islam knows nothing of that.

If I'm going to understand what's happening in my world today, I must not only understand the background of

Islam, and the basics of Islam, and the bondage of Islam, I must also. . .

4. UNDERSTAND THE BRIDGE TO ISLAM

Jesus was once asked, *"What's the greatest commandment?"* Do you know what he said?

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:36-40)

Paul said it like this to the Romans:

"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law." (Romans 13:8)

"Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." (Romans 13:10)

Frankly, Islam doesn't really know anything at all about loving your enemies. Jesus said it like this in Matthew Chapter 5:

"But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:44,45a)

Several years ago, a leading evangelical pastor named Haik was brutally murdered by Islamic extremists in Iran because he told the truth about the persecution of Christians. I want you to notice what one Christian missionary said about that experience in the following video.

I sincerely love all muslims!

CONCLUSION

Years ago, a young woman was picked up for speeding and brought before the judge. The judge said, "Guilty or not guilty?"

She said, "Guilty." He brought down the gavel and fined her \$100 or ten days.

Then an amazing thing took place. The judge stood up, took off his robe, placed it over the back of chair, went down in front and paid the fine. He was a just judge. His daughter had broken the law.

No matter how much he loved his daughter, he had to pay "\$100 or ten days." He loved her enough that he was willing to go down and pay the penalty himself.

This separates Christ from other religious leaders.

That's exactly what God has done for us. In Christ, He demonstrated the full extent of his love. The Bible says "The wages of sin is death," so God had to bring down the gavel.

But as the Just Judge, He came in the form of a man, named Jesus. He died on the Cross to pay the price for your sin and mine. Now He invites all of us to respond, by faith in what He's done, and begin a relationship with Him.

That's the love of God needed by every one of us in this room and every human being on the face of the earth. And when you and I discover that love, God invites us to share His love with others.

Why don't you bow your head with me right now.

"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)