

MESSAGE ON ISLAM

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"God and Allah; Are They the Same?"

John 14:6-7

January 15, 2012

INTRODUCTION:

A pastor tells the story of walking into the church building one Sunday morning and as he was passing the restrooms on his way to the worship center; out of the Women's Restroom came one of the most stylish woman of the church. She acknowledged his presence and turned to head toward the Worship Center as well. As she walked several feet in front of the pastor he was able to see that she had inadvertently tucked her dress into the back of her panty hose unawares. At that point this "man of the cloth" had a decision to make: either he could tell the classy woman; or he could laugh; or he could choose not to tell her. You see, in this world we have a lot of very important choices to make. That is true about our choices of religion as well.

We have a new vocabulary since 9/11. We have added words such as **Islam, Mohammad, Allah, Jihad, Taliban, and al Qaeda**. For most Americans before 9/11 these were distant irrelevant words, if not outright unknown words. The Terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 has changed all that and has brought the religion of Islam to front page news status for the past 10 years. The world's leaders have bent over backward to make sure the world understands that this is not about Islam, that Islam and terrorism are not in any way related. I find the comments of Salmon Rushdie, a Muslim sentenced to death by Muslim clerics over his 1988 book, "The Satanic Verses" very interesting. **Rushdie said, "The trouble with this...disclaimer is that it isn't true. If this isn't about Islam why the worldwide Muslim demonstrations in support of Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda?"** [as quoted in "Israel My Glory" (March/April 2002) p. 7] In commenting on the terrorist attacks on the USA, Franklin Graham, the son of evangelist Billy Graham, said of

Islam, "I don't believe this is a wonderful, peaceful religion. When you read the Koran and you read the verses from the Koran, it instructs the killing of the infidel, for those that are non-Muslim." He went on to say, "It wasn't Methodists flying into those buildings, it wasn't Lutherans, it was an attack on this country by people of the Islamic faith." [as quoted by Andrew Webb. "A More Realistic Assessment of Islam." PCA News.com]. In like fashion **Chuck Colson** has commented, "**The Truth is that bin Laden and his followers did not hijack Islam; they simply took it seriously.**"

A few years ago one of the major denominations met in Columbus to debate, of all things, whether or not Jesus Christ is the one true Savior of the world. Is he the universal Savior or might there be several? What about the other world religions and their claims? Some people wonder if perhaps there are not many paths to God? If you asked the average American today what the difference was between the major world religions, they would probably mumble something about all religions being pretty much the same. People assume that all religions have nearly the same moral teachings and ideals. They might have different names for God, but it is the same God. These religions, many people believe, may travel different roads, but they all lead to God. As long as you believe in something, as long as you believe in God, it really doesn't matter what form your belief takes. The truth is that these religions are all very different and even contradict each other at crucial points. What this means is that we are left with two options: either none of them are true, or one of them is true and the others are not.

George Barna does a great deal of research in religious circles. In surveys taken over a decade ago (1996 and 1997), he found some amazing facts. Most Americans, including many professing Christians, believe that people are inherently good and that their primary purpose is to enjoy life as much as possible. 38% believed that it doesn't matter what religious faith you follow because they all teach the same lessons. 44% believed that all people will experience the same outcome after death, regardless of their religious beliefs. 55% believed that if a person is generally good or does enough good things for others during their life, that they will earn a place in heaven. [Contributed by: Martin Wiles - Sermon Central - Illustrations]

"Anyone who claims that all religions are the same betrays not only an ignorance of

all religions but also a caricatured view of even the best-known ones. Every religion at its core is exclusive." [Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message*, p. 7]

There are many voices shouting at us from many different directions today. It is important to know something about them in order to be able to discern one shout from another so that we might be discerning in our search for truth. Bill Hybels, after interviewing people from the different religions said: "You need to know that the law of non-contradiction says that positions that are different from one another cannot be equally true. You've got to figure out what you believe and where you're going to drive that stake in the ground and say, 'On the evidence, on the search that I've done, this is what I believe. This is what I'll stake my life and my eternity on.'" One of the professors at seminary use to ask his students after they had given their translation of a scripture from Greek to English, "Well, brother, would you swing out over Hell on that translation." That is exactly the point. This is not just a preference of philosophies. It is not just an intellectual quest. Your life and eternity are at stake. You need to make a careful decision. So what are the real differences between the Moslem faith and Christianity?

1. Sincere and Devout

Muslims are sincere and devout but that is not enough. Muslims generally are among the most serious and devout people on the earth. Many of them have completely memorized the Koran. They pray at least five times a day. They fast for one month every year (during Ramadan, from sunrise to sunset). But salvation is something which must be earned. It is not graciously given by Allah. Islam does have a high standard of morality called the "straight path," which must be strictly maintained. Women are regarded as possible temptations which would lead men away from the path, so women must be modest to the point of being veiled and wearing clothing that completely covers them.

While the overwhelming majority of Arabs are Moslem, most Moslems are not Arab. Although Islam had its origins in the Middle East, the four largest populations of Muslims are Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world today (there are over 1.2 billion Moslems in the world). There are 11,000 converts to Islam each year in the United States (Newsweek,

Oct. 30, 1995) and 90% of them are among the Black population.

Islam like Judaism traces its lineage to the patriarch Abraham. The Arabs, however, trace their lineage to the firstborn son of Abraham by Hagar, Ishmael. The Jews trace their lineage to Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah who had been promised by God. The war in the Middle East today can be traced back to this Biblical story of who really is the rightful son of Abraham. The truth about the Middle East is that the Palestinians and surrounding Muslim nations will never make a genuine and lasting peace with Israel. They don't want peace - they never wanted peace - they want Israel, all of it.

The word Islam, meaning submission, says much about the attitude of the followers of Islam.

2. Belief in God.

It is good thing to believe in God, but it is not enough. True Christianity worships the eternally self-existent God who spoke the world into being. Islam worship a god named Allah who is not eternal and who created nothing. This is a problem even in this country, there are some who think that because they believe in the existence of God, they are alright. Over the years I have met a lot of people who assume because they simply believed in a god that it was enough. The Bible speaks directly to this supposition when it says in James 2:19,

"You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!" ---James 2:19

Acknowledging the existent of a god is not the same as trust in "the" God for salvation. Muslims believe that Allah is their god. The word Allah is derived from al-ilah which had become the general name for whatever god was considered the highest of all their gods at the time. During the days of Muhammad, each Arab tribe used the word Allah to refer to its own particular high god. Before Islam began, the moon god was the central focus of prayer and worship at Kabah. Interestingly the moon god was worshiped by praying toward Mecca several times a day, making an annual pilgrimage to the Kabah which was the temple of the Moon god, running around the Kabah seven times, touching a black stone set in the wall of the Kabah and gathering on Fridays for prayer and giving of alms to the poor.

These were all part of the pagan rites practiced by the Arabs long before Muhammad was born and they still serve as "the five pillars" of Islam practiced today.

3. Relationship with God

We are not trying to appease an angry God; we are learning how to fall in love with our Creator, Redeemer and Friend. It is interesting that in the Koran there are no miracles performed by Mohammed or anyone else. There is not a single mention of the love of Allah for the world or the people in it. There are many, many laws and strict warnings of the penalty of not keeping the laws. The concept of having a relationship with Allah is not found anywhere in the Koran. But Christians understand that Christianity is not about moral laws or religious practices — it is about a relationship with a living Savior, Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul wrote:

"What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellow-ship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead" ---Philippians 3:8-11

It is this relationship with Christ that is the center of our faith. The early church ministered in an age of religious pluralism but preached a message of salvation through faith in Christ alone.

4. Jesus Christ

It is a good thing to believe in Jesus but it's what you believe about Jesus that is important. The greatest tension between Christian and Muslims is the difference between Muhammad and Jesus Christ. To Muslims, Jesus was a prophet but not the Son of God. While Christians understand that Jesus was not a way to God he is the only way to heaven. Jesus said in John 14:6-7 about himself,

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him. ---John 14:6-7

This principle is repeated in Acts 4:12:

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." ---Acts 4:12

Jesus is the only Savior of mankind. Muhammad on the other hand was born into a tribe who was keeper of a pagan shrine housing the sacred black meteorite (Kaabah) at Mecca. Muslims are taught that it was Abraham who received the Kaabah stone from the angel Gabriel and who established the shrine at Mecca. Muhammad received a series of revelations from Allah that culminated in the Qur'an, the Islamic bible. They submit unquestioningly to the teachings of the Koran, the Islamic Bible. The Koran contains divine messages said to be given by the angel Gabriel to Mohammed, a self-proclaimed prophet who lived in the seventh century. There is no room for questions or doubt, only submission. An interesting note about Mohammed is that he was completely illiterate. He could neither read nor write. He dictated what Gabriel told him and his followers wrote it down. Also, Mohammed was given special permission by Allah to have 13 wives. His last wife was six-years-old when she was betrothed to him, and the marriage was consummated when she was nine.

5. Evangelism

True Christianity is spread by love and choice - Islam is spread by sword and force. It is true that some Muslims, like Christians, are willing to die for their faith. Some unfortunately, are also willing to kill for it. In fact the one sure way of earning salvation as a Muslim is to die as a martyr for the faith. They believe that just as Mohammed was whisked immediately to heaven and given several maidens, so will it be done for those who die for the cause of Islam. Those who attacked the World Trade Center and engaged in other acts of terrorism were acting in full accord with the tenets of Islam and the teachings of the Koran. The West, the United States in particular, is seen as corrupting the entire world and worthy of death. The U. S. policy of befriending Israel is particularly seen as harmful to the

Muslim people and their cause. The principle of Jihad, or "holy war" is taught in the Koran as a viable tool for the cause of Islam. Evangelism is not so much by the word as it is with the sword. The followers of Mohammad have been the most violent people in the history of the world, and continue to be so to this day — a fact well attested to in history. Jesus taught that we are to love the sinner. Mohammed taught that the infidel must be killed if he refuses to convert. Whether you stop to realize it or not America is at war. How severe will this war be, how long will it last, how many lives will it cost, what form will it take, those are questions that no one can answer. But make no mistake about it we are fighting for our way of life, we are fighting for survival. We are fighting against people who are willing to kill us any way they can. We are not playing on a level playing field, as was proven in the Gulf war, we are not allowed to give out Bibles in their lands, even to our own troops, yet they are allowed to build Mosques in our country.

One of the saddest things about the Muslim belief system is like many others; they believe that they will either make it to heaven or not based on either their good works outweighing their bad deeds or maybe that God will simply decide to let them in. According to their beliefs there is no way to know whether or not they are going to paradise or not. Can I submit that it is the wrong time to find out you were wrong? But for a Muslim there is no way of knowing until the final judgment.

I am so glad that I can know what the Apostle John wrote for us:

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. ---1 John 5:11-13

So what makes Christianity different? It's very easy: The CHRIST Factor.

I have had people who are not believers (but believe they are well versed in religion) tell me: "There is good and bad in Christianity and Islam; they are so much alike so you might as well just pick one." I respond by reminding them that there is a huge difference between Islam and Christianity. Islam, and all the other world religions are spelled d-o. You've got to do this. You've got to do that. You can't do

this. You've got to do that. Christianity is spelled d-o-n-e. It's been done. The price has been paid. The gift is out there for us. We either receive it or we don't.

Compare Jesus' life and teachings to that of Mohammed:

Jesus: "This is my command: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." --- John 15:12-13

Fight for the sake of God those that fight against you, but do not attack them first. God does not love the aggressors. Slay them wherever you find them.

- Sura 2:190-191