

Christ and the Sword of Muhammad

Psalms 86:8

Series: Jesus Among The Gods

Woodlands church of Christ, 9/1/2002

Introduction:

Socrates once said that “the unexamined life is not worth living.” Norman Geisler says, “The unexamined faith is not worth believing.” (Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross, p. 10). You’ve likely heard people say, “All religions are basically the same.” Even a comedian once quipped that religion is guilt with different holidays. If all religions point to the same God we got a big problem. We must conclude that he’s either schizophrenic or a liar because they’re vastly different. And religion is just a farce.

Today, we begin a new series called “Jesus Among Other Gods,” a title taken from a book by Ravi Zacharias. I hope to accomplish two things in this series. First, we’re going to examine the major world religions and compare and contrast them to Christianity. By doing this we can do away with the foolish idea that all religions are basically the same. If you’re a Christian you will be forced to examine your own faith. Second, I hope with God’s help to convince you that Jesus is the best and only choice among the other so-called gods.

Today we begin with Islam. September will memorialize the tragic events a year ago and will once again focus American hearts and human hearts around the world on Islam. I’m no expert in it. But today I want to contrast the sword of Mohammad’s Islam and the cross of Jesus’ Christianity.

I. **A BRIEF HISTORY OF ISLAM’S BEGINNING WITH MUHAMMAD**

Islam begins with Muhammad, born @ 570 AD in Mecca in what’s now called Saudi Arabia. Sketchy early life. Some think his father died before his birth and mom when he was six. From that point, Muhammad was raised by his grandparent and then later by an uncle. At 25, he married a wealthy widow named Khadijah who was 40. He soon showed signs of a markedly religious disposition. He’d retire to caves for seclusion and meditation; fasted and dreamed. Dissatisfied with polytheism and superstitions of his native Mecca, he grew convinced of the existence and transcendence of one true God.

Muhammad drew his beliefs/practices from Christian/Jewish Arabian communities. Muhammad’s call occurred when 40. He reported that the angel Gabriel ordered him to read an inscribed tablet. When he hesitated, the angel choked him with a cloth to the point that he thought he was going to die. This happened 2x

‘He pressed me with it a third time so that I thought it was death and said “Read!” I said, “What then shall I read?” – and this I said only to deliver myself from him, lest he should do the same to me again. He said: “Read in the name of thy Lord who created, Who created man of blood coagulated. Read! Thy Lord is most beneficent, Who taught by the pen, Taught that which they knew not unto me” [96:1-5]. So I read it, and he departed from me. And I awoke from my sleep, and it was as though these words were written on my heart.’

Ibn Ishaq quoted in Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross by Norman Geisler, p70

Thus, Muhammad received the first of many verses found now in the Muslim holy book, the Qur’an. Don’t imagine that this was a joyful vision for Muhammad:

Stricken with panic, Muhammad arose and asked himself, “What did I see? Did possession of the devil which I feared all along come to pass?” Muhammad looked to his right and to his left but saw nothing. For a while he stood there trembling with fear and stricken with awe. He feared that the cave might be haunted and that he might run away still unable to explain what he saw. Muhammad Husayn Haykal Answering

Muhammed's wife and her Christian cousin convinced him that he was called to be a prophet by God. Gradually, Muhammad began attracting followers. After a number of years and a series of battles Islam was established in Mecca. Within a century of the death of its founder, the Muslim Empire stretched from Southern France through Spain, North Africa, the Levant and Central Asia to the confines of China; and although Islam has since been virtually expelled from Western Europe and has lost much of its political power elsewhere, it has from time to time made notable advances in Eastern Europe, in Africa, in India, and in Southeast Asia.

Sir Norman Anderson quote from *The Islamic Debate* by Josh McDowell and John Gilchrist, p. 14

Islam has rapidly grown to become the second largest religion in the world, with almost one billion adherents – nearly one in every five persons on earth. In the United States there are presently more Muslims than Methodists.

Norman Geisler, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross*, p. 9

Sir Norman Anderson quote from *The Islamic Debate* by Josh McDowell and John Gilchrist, pp. 14-15

II. BASIC MUSLIM BELIEFS

A. Muslim people **believe in God that they call Allah`**

1. The terms God and Allah have essentially the same meaning. Allah is the Arabic word for God or "Divine One." Arab Christians call God, Allah. The core belief concerning Allah is this:

• **Allah is absolutely ONE.**

Islam, reaction against polytheistic background. There were monotheists (those professing faith in only one God), but they were in the minority until Muhammad came along. Here are some quotes from the Qur'an describing Allah's absolute "oneness." Say: **He is God, The One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, Nor is He begotten; And there is none Like unto Him. Sura 112** Muslims reject the idea of Jesus Christ being God's only begotten Son. This is largely because they don't understand what we mean when we use such terminology. There's a mistaken notion among many Muslims that we believe in God the Father, God the Mother, and God the Son. Christianity is monotheistic, but they see it as tri-theism – 3 gods. The Qur'an makes this abundantly clear: **God truly will not forgive the joining other gods with himself. Other sins He will forgive to whom He will: but he who joineth gods with God, hath erred with far-gone error. Sura 4:116**

• **Allah is absolute WILL.**

The Qur'an: "**all our thoughts, words, and deeds, whether good or evil, were foreseen, foreordained, determined and decreed from all eternity, and that everything that happens takes place according to what has been written for it. Sura 6:18** *Allah is the only being in the universe who really acts.* Everything has been totally predetermined. Extreme predestination. There's a real sense of fatalism among orthodox Muslims. Good or evil, it all comes from Allah. He may decide to lead you to good works or draw you into terrible sin. It doesn't matter. What Allah decrees is right. Sura 37:94 of the Qur'an concludes that "**All other things are passive. Allah alone is active.**" This theology of the Muslims might help you to understand how the extremists could so callously murder innocent men, women and children. Because of the Qur'an's attitude toward sin, many orthodox Muslim theologians have traditionally adapted a nominalistic view of ethics. An act is not intrinsically right or wrong. It is only right when God specifically declares it to be such according to his will.

Norman Geisler, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross*, p. 44

• **Allah is absolutely UNKNOWABLE.**

God, you can't really know him. You can identify his actions. This means that Islam is actually a kind of agnosticism. An agnostic is someone who believes that there is a god out there somewhere, but they can't or won't try to identify him. Allah is absolutely unknowable by human beings.

How can a person worship someone about which he can know nothing? Even in Islam, one is supposed to submit to God. But how can we fall in love with someone whom we know nothing about?

Norman Geisler, Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross, p. 139

So you see, the god of the Muslim is far different from the God of the Bible. There is also a striking contrast between Islam and Christianities view of humanity.

B. Humanity, in Islam, is ...

- a. Viewed as weak and forgetful, but not SINFUL. The Qur'an mentions Adam as does the Bible, but rather than commit a sin, Adam just made mistake. No designation of "lost/saved". Since no one needs to be saved, there's no need for a Savior. In fact, some of the more liberal wings of Islam believe that good works outweigh bad deeds to make Paradise.

C. Salvation

1. Used loosely because Muslims don't understand it as Christians do, Heaven, according to the Qur'an comes to those who EARN it!

- a. **To those who believe And do deeds of righteousness Hath God promised forgiveness And a great reward. Sura 5:10**

b. Six doctrines of Islam: a

- i. Allah is the one true God;
- ii. Angels;
- iii. The Qur'an is the most recent and final revelation of God to man. It's also supercedes all the rest;
- iv. Allah has called prophets including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, but Muhammad was the final and greatest of these;
- v. There will be a final resurrection and judgment of the dead based on works;
- vi. The decrees of Allah – he determines the fate of all people.

c. **Five pillars of the faith** which all Muslims must perform:

- i. Public recitation of the creed, "There is no God, but Allah and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah."
- ii. Prayer five times a day at rising, noon, mid-afternoon, after sunset and before going to bed. The worshiper recites prescribed prayers and follows the procedure of standing, kneeling, face and hands to the ground while facing Mecca.
- iii. Almsgiving of 1/40th of your income to the poor.
- iv. Fasting from dawn to sunset during the month of Ramadan.
- v. A pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in your life time.
If you do these perfectly, your good deeds will outweigh your bad deeds when you cross the sword shaped bridge over hell. Of course there's the possibility that you haven't done it all perfectly or you might have missed a prayer or a fast so you can do more than the required number sort of like extra credit. Earlier in the history of Islam there was a sixth pillar of the faith. Fundamentalist Shi'ite groups are trying to move Islam back to it. There's another option to ensure your entrance into heaven:
- vi. When all else fails, try JIHAD!
Jihad is holy war. I know that many non-orthodox Muslims have distanced

themselves from this teaching especially since 9/11, but look what the Qur'an says: **Those who have left their homes ... or fought or been slain, - Verily, I blot out from them their iniquities, And admit them into Gardens With rivers flowing beneath; - A reward from the Presence Of God, and From His Presence Is the best of rewards. Sura 31:195; cf. 2:244; 4:95**

It's a get out of hell free card if you fight and die for Allah. And who should they fight?

Fight and slay The Pagans whenever ye find them. Sura 9:5

Fight those who believe not In God nor the Last Day Sura 9:29

Muslims, like all people, want assurance of God's acceptance. The only way you can truly have it and know it according to the Qur'an is fighting, killing and possibly being killed for Allah. Here's the point: **We become what we believe.** The so-called extremists are copying the behavior of Muhammad. Usama Ben Laden is attempting to unite the Muslim world. Muhammad did the same thing with the warring Arabian tribes of his time. To stretch the analogy even further, ***the Muslim becomes like his or her god – uncaring, capricious and arbitrary. There is no right and wrong. The only thing that matters is the will of Allah.***

The Bible speaks to this point too. **We become what we believe.**

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; noses they have, but they do not smell; they have hands, but they do not handle; feet they have, but they do not walk; nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them. Psalm 115:4-8. If we become what we believe then it's important to examine what Christians really believe.

III. THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF JESUS

- A. The God of the Bible is One/substance and THREE/persons.
 - a. Jesus said, 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.'" Mark 12:29. Christianity is monotheistic like Islam, but with a unique understanding of God's nature. We see God as a Tri-unity, a Trinity. There are numerous places in the New Testament that point to Father, Son and Holy Spirit as being God – one in substance, three in revealed persons. Here's one example:
May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2 Cor. 13:14 (also see Matt. 28:19 & 1 Peter 1:1-2)
- B. He created humanity to join Him in an eternal RELATIONSHIP.
 - a. The very design of humanity alludes to this fact. **So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27.**
 - b. We have the capacity to communicate and be in relationship with God. We can truly know him in an experiential way. This is what God wants and it's the thing that our hearts long for. Listen to how one biblical writer put it: **More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Philippians 3:8**
 - c. Humanity is in REBELLION against God. **For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet ...Romans 3:23 (NLT).**

- C. Jesus, God in the flesh, became our BRIDGE back to relationship. ... **now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins. Romans 2:24 (NLT)**
- a. Why did God do this? He is love. It's a part of his nature. Ephesians 2 tells us ... **But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved Ephesians 2:4-5.**
 - b. God doesn't do things and declare them right, He does *things that are right because he is righteous*. He never tempts us to sin. He doesn't arbitrarily choose some for heaven and some for hell. He is love and he desire that all people come to him for forgiveness and healing and an eternal relationship.
 - c. You have the option to CHOOSE. In the Bible and in our daily experience God continually sets this option before us. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life ... Deuteronomy 30:19.

You become what you believe. That's why I choose Jesus. Among the gods no other measures