

WORLDVIEW/RELIGION ANALYSIS

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WORLDVIEW/RELIGION ANALYSIS

Islam: Introduction

Today's society is filled with many worldviews and religions other than Christianity. Islam is one of the many alternative religions from which to choose. Islam claims to supersede Judaism and Christianity.¹ Islam also happens to be classified as both a cult and a world religion.²

Although Islam is a monotheistic religion and identifies itself with many characters found in the Bible, it radically differs from biblical Christianity.³ In order to engage Muslims with the gospel, one must have a basic understanding of Islam's tenets, be able to identify the flaws of this belief system, and be prepared to give a reasonable defense of the Christian faith.

Islam: Basic Understanding of Islam

Islam was founded by Muhammed in the 6th century during a time when many new religions were being introduced. At the age of forty, after spending time praying and meditating in a cave near Mount Hira, Muhammed fell asleep.⁴ He was suddenly awakened by a voice from

¹ Phil Roberts. "Islam." <http://www.4truth.net/fourtruthpbworld.aspx?pageid=8589953003>, 1-6. (March 20, 2012). 1. Hereafter cited as NAMB.

² *TPEA*, 280.

³ Ergun Caner and Ed Hindson (eds.) *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*. (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2008). 280. Hereafter cited as TPEA.

⁴ Efraim Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism: A History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006). 10. Hereafter cited as IIAH.

heaven, presumably that of the angel Gabriel, telling him that he was the Messenger of God.⁵ Having received this revelation, Muhammed was informed by Gabriel “that the world had abandoned true worship and that he was chosen by God, as a prophet, to bring the final message to the world.”⁶ Although Islam today is somewhat complex, the original message Muhammed received was very simple. Muhammed was told to inform the world that all religions were corrupt, that everyone was to worship the one true God, Allah, and that everyone was to adhere to the words of Allah as given by Muhammed.⁷ As time progressed, Muhammed received more revelation. Although he was illiterate, he relied on others to record the messages he received in written form.⁸ While living in Mecca, Muhammed was forced to flee due to military tensions. However, over the proceeding years he achieved numerous military victories and eventually returned to Mecca in A.D. 630.⁹ Mecca is considered the birthplace of Islam.

There are several tenants foundational to the religion of Islam. Like other Middle Eastern religions, Islam is strictly monotheistic. Allah is the one true god to be worshipped. Islam adheres to one sacred text, the Qur’an. For Muslims, this is the “perfect word of God.”¹⁰ The Qur’an was compiled by the final prophet Muhammed as he received the revelation from God, through the angel Gabriel.

⁵ *IIAH, 10.*

⁶ *TPEA, 278.*

⁷ *TPEA, 278.*

⁸ *TPEA, 278.*

⁹ *NAMB, 1.*

¹⁰ *NAMB, 1.*

The religion of Islam is founded on what is known as the five pillars. Every Muslim must willingly surrender to Allah and adhere to the five pillars. This is the basis of life and discipline.¹¹ The five pillars include conforming to the creed. The creed must be recited by Muslims, which states “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammed is his final prophet.”¹² The second pillar requires Muslims to offer prayers five times a day, while facing Mecca.¹³ The giving of Alms is the third pillar and requires Muslims to give “two and one-half percent of one’s capital wealth” to the poor.¹⁴ The fourth pillar requires Muslims to participate in a fast from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan.¹⁵ The fifth pillar states that Muslims must “journey as a pilgrim to Mecca at least once in their lifetime.”¹⁶ The five pillars are the means through which Muslims experience life. For Muslims, adherence to and participation in the five pillars is basis of faith, hope, and salvation.¹⁷ Many other doctrines are similar to that of biblical Christianity. However, upon close examination, one can quickly see that the parallels are similar only in name. Although not exhaustive, three major flaws are worth noting.

Islam: Flaws of Islam

¹¹ *NAMB, 1.*

¹² *TPEA, 278.*

¹³ *TPEA, 278.*

¹⁴ *NAMB, 2.*

¹⁵ *NAMB, 2.*

¹⁶ *TPEA, 278.*

¹⁷ *NAMB, 1.*

One flaw that must be pointed out is the view Muslims hold concerning God. According to Charles Colson, "Islam's worldview sees God as remote, utterly transcendent."¹⁸ This is a stark contrast from biblical Christianity. The God of the Bible is not transcendent and non-personal. The Bible says, "God is love" (I John 4:8; John 3:16). He desires that humanity turn to Him, for He is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). God loves all of humanity including those who embrace Islam. He desires for them to embrace Biblical truth.

A second flaw of Islam includes its misunderstanding of sin. Contrary to biblical Christianity, Islam believes that "humans are born good but are corrupted by non-Islamic cultures."¹⁹ These non-Islamic cultures specifically include anyone who embraces biblical Christianity. Humans are not naturally born good, but have been corrupted by sin. The Bible explains, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). This includes Muslims and all of humanity. God displayed His love by sending His Son, Jesus Christ to die for the sins of mankind and to buy back that which was lost (John 3:16).

A third flaw that distinguishes Islam from Christianity is its view of salvation. Like many other man made religions, Islam holds a works based view of salvation. Muslims achieve salvation by performing goods works and adhering to the five pillars. According to Colson for Muslims, "the best hope of salvation is to eliminate non-Muslim influences and to advance

¹⁸ Charles W. Colson. "*Drawing the battle lines: we need to be informed and discerning about the Islamic worldview.*" Christianity Today 46, no. 1 (January 7, 2002): 80. (March 20, 2012). 80. Hereafter cites as DTBL.

¹⁹ DTBL, 80.

Islam.”²⁰ Nothing could be further from the truth when it comes to a biblical view of salvation. No amount of good works will ever profit one salvation. The Bible says it is “by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Many additional flaws could be pointed out as to how Islam drastically differs from biblical Christianity. Identifying these three flaws will serve as a platform and help one offer a reasonable defense of the Christian faith to Muslims.

Islam: Methods for Evangelism

When it comes to evangelizing people of other religions, a few basics must be mentioned. The first step is to be grounded in ones own Christian faith. Have a clear understanding of the basic Christian doctrines including the doctrine of God, sin, salvation, the Trinity, and the deity of Christ. A genuine love, not only for the individual, but more importantly for their soul must be displayed. People can quickly tell whether someone is simply trying to covert them, as opposed to showing genuine love. It is of vital importance to have a listening ear. Christians are often quick to explain all that is wrong with other religions, including Islam rather than first listening to the individual to gain understanding of their religion. Taking the time to listen will aid in establishing a relationship. The relationship is often an easily overlooked element. Having taken the time to listen, be sure to give a clear presentation of the gospel. Roberts explains, “Share the plan of salvation with the Muslim and point out that salvation is a gift and not to be earned.”²¹ Depending on the conversation, if the Holy Spirit is at work, and if the Muslim is receptive, one could extend an opportunity for them to place their trust and faith in Jesus Christ and receive Him as Savior.

²⁰ *DTBL*, 80.

²¹ *NAMB*, 6.

Islam: Conclusion

Whether it is a family member, your co-worker, or a neighbor across the street, “Christians must take their place, prepared to defend winsomely and lovingly the great kingdom truths that offer love and hope to all humankind.”²² What will your response be when you find out your friend has embraced Islam and is now a Muslim? What will your response be when they ask, “Why are you a Christian?” Will you plead the fifth and remain silent? With a basic understanding of Islam, knowledge of the many flaws of this belief system, and some principles of evangelism, one should take a bold firm stance and “be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (I Peter 3:15). Take advantage of the next opportunity to be a witness for the Lord.

²² *DTBL*, 80.

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