

The Chapel Ministry



CLEARCREEK
CHAPEL

Islam: The Exposure of Evil

Chapel Elders

*S*avoring the *S*upremacy of *G*od
*S*tudying the *W*ord of *G*od
*S*haping the *P*eople of *G*od
*S*preaching the *G*ospel of *G*od

Contents

Introduction	1
Problem: The Concern with Islam	3
History: The Spread of Islam	13
Religion: The Claim of Islam	19
Salvation: The Conversion of Muslims	29
Outlines	0

© 2003 by Russ Kennedy
All rights reserved worldwide

Revision # 1 as of March 7, 2003
Doc: Document3

Introduction

Problem: The Concern with Islam

Ephesians 4:11-20

Introduction The events of the last year and half have catapulted Islam into the forefront of our consciousness. Despite the media attempts portray the terrorists as radicals and aberrations of Islam, many people today are deeply concerned. Are we in real danger? Is Islam generally aiming to conquer the world and bring it under Islamic Law?

First, let me say that I have studied Islam in college, taking a course in the Qur'an (Koran) and Islamic history. I have read a great deal of the Qur'an. Over the last year, I have read a number of books and visited most of the major sites that represent mainstream Islam. And finally, I have been enormously helped by Tony Payne's book, *Islam in our Backyard*. There are two things that are abundantly clear:

- There is a major attempt by Islam to represent itself to the non-Islamic west as something very different from the way it represents itself to Islamic peoples.
- The popular media is not only buying into that representation, but is softening it even further. For example, there has been a successful drive to avoid associating the Washington snipers with Islam – yet he clearly is a Muslim.

It is our responsibility to equip you for ministry. Part of this is to equip you to think clearly and to respond Biblically to the worldviews we face. We want to understand them to some degree and be prepared to preach the gospel to its adherents in ways that are meaningful. We want our evangelism to be a real engagement with the lost where they believe and want.

Its Practical Cause

As we consider all the topics to preach on and to deal with, what kinds of concerns bring us to this topic?

Growth of Islam

We are witnessing an explosive growth of Islam.

Numerical Growth

Islam is growing in sheer numbers. "Moslems are the world's fastest-growing group..." (The Population Reference Bureau, USA Today). "...Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the country." (Geraldine Baum; Newsday Religion Writer, Newsday). "Islam, the fastest-growing religion in the United States..." (Ari L. Goldman, New York Times).

Estimates of the total number of Muslims in the world vary greatly:

- 0.700 billion or more, Barnes & Noble Encyclopedia 1993
- 0.817 billion, The Universal Almanac (1996)
- 0.951 billion, The Cambridge Factfinder (1993)

- 1.100 billion, The World Almanac (1997)
- 1.200 billion, CAIR (Council on American-Islamic relations)

At a level of 1.2 billion, they represent about 22% of the world's population. They are the second largest religion in the world. Only Christianity is larger, with 33% of the world's inhabitants. Islam is growing about 2.9% per year. This is faster than the total world population which increases about 2.3% annually. It is thus attracting a progressively larger percentage of the world's population.

Nobody knows the number of Muslims in the U.S. This is a political hot-potato. Some non-Muslims have accused Muslims of exaggerated their numbers in order to obtain more political clout. Some Muslims have accused non-Muslims of releasing false, low numbers in order to "marginalize" Islam. In religion, as in war, truth is often the first casualty. Estimates of the number of Muslims in North America range from a little over one million adults to seven million adults and children. One cause of the disagreement appears to be related to the percentage of Muslim immigrants (1) Who have abandoned Islam since they arrived in the US, or (2) Who still consider themselves to be Muslims, but who do not participate in mosque activities.

My own observation of the statistical charts is that the number depends quite a lot on who is doing the collecting. Anti-Islamic groups tend to show low counts and Islamic groups large numbers.

International Growth

If there is no real numerical growth, there is certainly growth into previously non-Muslim countries. Some of this is a bit misleading. The Sudan is often brought forward as a country into which Islam has spread in the last 20 years. However, Islam was the dominant religion across most of North and Central Africa up until the great missions movements of the 1700 and 1800's. Some of the modern spread of Islam is simply a retaking of areas previously conquered or controlled. With the relocation of many Moslem peoples from Islamic countries into Western countries, Islam has spread by virtue of the spread of its adherents. Britain and Europe have large Muslim populations, many of them 2nd and 3rd generation Moslems. England now could almost be classified religiously as Moslem.

Cross-cultural Growth

While many question the real numerical growth, there is certainly a spread into previously non-Muslim cultures. Islam has reached into most of the western cultures and has had some impact there. Many of us here can remember when the Mosques along I-75 were built – the one near Cincinnati and one near Lima. If you travel into cities with high Muslim populations, you will see TV and newspaper adverts aimed at the Moslem audience. With the need to distance themselves from the terrorists, many Moslems in the west have worked harder at integrating into western culture, being more careful about their dress and speaking Arabic in public.

Acceptance of Islam

With Islam being identified with terrorism all over the world, why should its spread concern us?

Pluralism in the World

First, because the west has adopted a two story view of reality. The lower story involves measurable and verifiable ideas in the real world. Since it is observable and verifiable, it is in this level that we have reason and truth. The upper story involves what we think of as religious ideas. These ideas are not measurable nor verifiable, so they are above (or in some view, below) reason and thus are faith-systems. They cannot be shown to be true.

The consequence is that dissent from accepted scientific, social and psychological theories becomes an attack on truth. When we assert that our “religious” beliefs involve truth, and not only truth, but absolute truth, that is viewed as non-sense. Since religion as truth cannot be known, then no particular religion can be true – it is only believed. Thus no religion has the right to assert that it is the only true religion. While no religion may be true, any religion may be believed. If one is convinced of and believes in Christianity – well and good. If one is convinced of and believes in Islam – just as well and good.

This is what is called tolerance or pluralism. The problem is that this is a massive shift in what historically tolerance and pluralism meant. Freedom in America meant that no single religion could govern in such a way as to outlaw any other religion. All religions were to be permitted. But that was only so that there would be religious freedom. It was almost universally held by all our forefathers that one of the religions was true and the rest were false. And it was understood that people live out and practice what they believe to be true.

Now comes a significant problem. And we will spend more time on this in two weeks. The west believes that religion and politics must not govern one another. Religion may affect politics. Politics is to protect, but not control religion. However, Islam does not believe this. Religion and the rule of law are one and the same – what we think of governance they believe exists to either protect Moslems until they are in control and then to enforce Islamic Law when they gain control. This means that for a true Moslem, all wars are religious. While for a westerner, wars should not be about religion, but about freedom, economics, safety or territorial defense or expansion.

Here is our dilemma. The west wants to accept Islam as a religion that is to be accepted and tolerated as having equal footing among all the second story religions. But Islam rejects this notion. The west will probably need to learn to treat Islam just like it treated communism – as a worldview that intends to conquer and enslave. Therefore, it is to be opposed by all western nations, not on the basis of Christianity, but on the basis of freedom.

Universalism in the Church

We also are seeing the acceptance of Islam in certain spheres in the church. At the 9-11 Memorial, we witnessed a number of religions all sharing the platform with an opportunity to pray to their god. Since Islamic terrorism has been a serious issue, many church and para-church groups have become more visible and vocal in their universalism. The most popular and widely accepted view is what has been known in history as the Doctrine of Holy Pagans.

This idea teaches that the unevangelized who have had no knowledge of Christ and have never had an opportunity to hear the gospel, may be saved. If in their religious systems, they focus on the attributes of their god that correspond or are the same as the attributes of the God of the Bible, they are in fact worshipping the God of the Bible. Thus, a pagan who knows not the true God, is accepted in heaven because he has worshipped what he has known with a sincere heart and rejected what is false.

Usually, this position is adopted because the person or group is unable to reconcile in their own mind that the majority of people who are lost have never heard and had no opportunity to believe the gospel. A number of well known people have held this position including C.S. Lewis and in the present day, Dr. Tony Evans.

The practical implication is two-fold:

- It means that a Moslem who rejects the elements of Islam that are false and focuses on the elements that are true to the God of heaven, will be accepted in heaven for their faith. The Turk who enters Narnia in the last book is an example of this error.
- It means that person who worships Allah may actually be worshipping God.

We believe that the Bible teaches the following:

- All who are saved are justified by faith in Jesus Christ. No one believing in a religion that rejects the deity and humanity, the holy life, saving death and bodily resurrection of Jesus is justified before God. (Romans 1:16; Ephesians 2:1-9, John 1:12-13; Romans 9-11).
- All religions are the result, not of movement towards God, but of rebellion against God. Romans 1-2 clearly teaches that man is suppressing, supplanting and speculating the revelation of God out of a heart that believes lies and pursues lusts. God has so arranged history, geography and the rise and fall of nations so as to make the way for the gospel to whom He has ordained.
- We must proclaim the gospel to every people group (Matthew 28:16-20). We must do so because God has ordained that the going forth of the gospel is how He calls the elect to Himself (Romans 1; 9-11). Not one of His chosen will fail to hear and believe (John 15).

- All believers in and followers of Allah who die without repenting, believing the gospel and bowing the Lord God, will be under the wrath of God and will suffer eternal, conscious punishment in hell. (Romans 1-2; Revelation 20:11-15)

Brothers and sisters, this last point is why the rest of the gospel is good news. It is good news that God has provided a sure and secure, a full and final salvation to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ as Redeemer and bows to Him as sovereign Ruler (Rom. 10:9-10)

Oppression by Islam

Why should the apparent spread of Islam be of concern to us? Aren't they just another religion, like Mormonism? Statements like that reflect a misunderstanding of the very nature and claims of Islam. We will take a whole message to explain simply and clearly what Islam teaches. Just for now, let me explain three important results of what Islam teaches that lead us to be concerned about oppression by Islam.

Religious Intolerance

Islam does not believe and teach in religious tolerance when it is in political control. Islam operates in two modes: as a minority and as a majority. As a minority it espouses religious tolerance so that it can exist and be accepted within the culture. Once it attains majority status and gains governance, it will suppress other religions and deny them free and open practice. In no Islamic country today is there religious freedom. The result is the suppression and persecution of other religions.

Cultural Uniformity

Islam teaches that culture is to be controlled by law, and specifically by Islamic law. Thus, every aspect of public life is to be governed by the Qur'an and its interpretations and applications. With some variations for technology and local custom, Islam has rules and regulations for every aspect of life. Where Islamic law governs, the cultures tend to look the same. The effect is cultural uniformity instead of diversity.

Political Militancy

Islam believes that it is the one and only true religion. Since in Islam, religion and politics are one and the same, seamless, then religious expansion means political control. Wherever Islam gains enough popular consensus and believing adherents, there will be an attempt to gain political and governmental control. Further, it is simply undeniable fact of history that Islam has, in many parts of the world, spread by armed conquest.

As I say all this, I know that you are acquainted individual Muslims who neither believe this about their own religion nor practice it themselves. Further, you can go onto most English Islam web sties and find all of the above clearly denied

backed by quotes from the Qur'an. While there are varying interpretations and applications of Islam in different parts of the world as well as the two different modes of Islam, I am convinced that there is a concerted effort to soft-pedal Islam in the west while it is still in the minority. If you want to see Islam in the majority, go onto Islamic web sites written in Arabic aimed for an Islamic audience. The question and answer sections of these sites are very interesting for how they interpret and apply Islamic doctrine and law to everyday living.

While we reach out to and evangelize Moslem people, we oppose Islam as a worldview. I suggest that we cannot treat Islam like we do any other religion. Doing so will eventually lead to our demise. In my own view, the free governments of the west need to oppose Islam *just as we opposed Communism*. Yes, both were godless. But you do not have to be religious to oppose tyranny and oppression. You just have to love freedom. Understand this, to say that we as a country are opposed to Islamic regimes but are not opposed to Islamic religion may make perfect sense to us, but it is not how Islam thinks of itself. Tyranny must be opposed, whether it comes to us in scientific garb, economic garb or religious garb. It is still tyranny. It must be defeated.

Our Biblical Context

So how are Christians to respond?

Biblical Description of our World

First, we need a real understanding of who we are in this world now. The Scriptures define and describe our world and how we as Christians are to live in it.

As a Foreign Land

1 Peter tells us that we are living as aliens and strangers in a foreign land. Here we reside as ambassadors, representing our King. We have our citizenship in heaven. We are to live now with these truths in mind, particularly that our King is coming from heaven for us and will bring an end to all earthly kingdoms.

As a Rebellious Province

We not only live in a foreign land, but it is at war with our King. It is a fallen, rebellious place whose citizens, by and large, hate the King, His rule and word. We cannot and should not expect that this place is a place of comfort and peace. It is a place where we stand and suffer for our King.

As a Spiritual Battleground

Finally, this place, while full of earthly wars and human terrorists and great movements of nations and powers, this place is focus of a great spiritual battle. It is here that Satan intends, foolishly so, to establish his dark rule and reign and attempt to hold his own against God. The visible aspects of this

spiritual battle are seen in the long and vast movements of religions, philosophies, sciences and powers in history.

If we understand this, then we will be much better equipped to live and walk as children of Light and hold up the great light of the gospel in this darkness.

Biblical Doctrines for our World

Second, we need to reaffirm a cluster of truths as the answer to false religions, and particularly, Islam.

Sufficiency of Scripture

While we think of the sufficiency of Scripture most often in terms of our use of it in evangelism and discipleship, outreach and counseling, we must affirm our reliance on it as truth. The Bible is truth. It is truth objectively, outside of and apart from anyone believing it. Because it is truth, we believe it. Thus, we must bring our thoughts, wants, decisions and emotions into submission to what it declares. There are no other truly Holy Books.

Distinctives of God

We must also assert the Biblicalness and the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity. Coming from a so-called monotheistic religion, a Moslem must assent to and believe that there is only one God, Yahweh, the God of the Bible who is three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Uniqueness of Christ

We must also assert the uniqueness of Christ – His eternal deity and his incarnation. We must respond and correct the idea that Jesus is merely a good teacher or even a great prophet. Jesus claimed to be God and that claim was understood by all around Him. Either Jesus was who He said He is, or He is a liar or a lunatic. There is no middle ground. Further, we must assert the verifiable historical fact of His crucifixion and the witnesses and truth of His bodily resurrection and ascension.

Biblical Courage in our World

What will these two spheres of thought and truth give us? They will give us courage and confidence in this world. If Islam (or any other “ism”) conquers and Christians are persecuted, then we will need two great trusts to sustain us.

The Providence of God

We must trust the wise, good and sovereign providences of our God. What He chooses to bring about in the rise and fall of ideas and nations is moving along the trajectory of His decrees, His purposes and providence. We have to rest in that.

The Provisions from God

We must trust that God will provide all we need. He will give grace to the humble and hope to the meek. He will sustain our souls and never let us slip from His great saving grip. We may prosper or suffer; be full or hunger; increase or decrease; live in freedom or slavery but His own will never slip into hell nor be separated from His great love. And if we live full until we die or die in martyrdom, we will still see Him face to face and it will be worth it all.

Our Practical Course

We will take the next 3 Sunday Evenings to explain and expose Islam.

Our primary aims are:

- To inform you in the midst of so much media misinformation.
- To equip you for confident and courageous proclamation of the gospel.
- To warn you to hold fast and hold forth to the truth once delivered to the saints.
- To fuel hope in God who will bring His sovereign will to pass for our good and His ultimate glory.

Carnage - Islam's History

Pastor Dale will teach on the history of Islam. Many people do not realize that Islam ruled a great deal of the world until the triumph of the west in northern Spain in the 1600's. He will show us the development of Islam.

Claims - Islam's Teachings

I will show you the doctrines of Islam. We will overview what Islam teaches and how it formulates its worldview. I would strongly encourage you not to be intimidated by this topic. I studied Islam in college and have read a great deal of the Koran. Further, Tony Payne's *Islam in Your Backyard* has been an enormous help in laying out simply what Islam believes and teaches.

Conversion - Moslem Conversion

Pastor Dan will help you with how to present the gospel to a Muslim. This will help us with our evangelism. Here is where the unique and verifiable claims of Christianity must be upheld and communicated.

Conclusion

Let me give you some things to reflect on this week:

- Do not give way to fear or to hate. Love God and love your Moslem neighbor. Trust that God knows what He is doing and is moving towards the goal of His purposes.
- Think carefully and clearly with your Bibles. In a day of theological compromise, we stand firm lest we sink.
- Teach your children that it is both possible and Biblical to love people and hate their ideas. I can be gracious and loving and merciful to those whose religion would compel their leadership to martyr me. And the most merciful loving thing I can do is to call them to repent and trust, to believe and bow to the Jesus, the King.
- Use caution in the sources you rely on to inform yourself in these areas. I would suggest that unless you have a compelling reason to surf the Islamic sites, don't. Error is dangerously contagious.
- Pray for our leaders that they will, under God, do all they can that will allow us to live quiet and peaceable lives in all holiness. And if not, may we submit and suffer and shine for the love and glory of God.

Notes

History: The Spread of Islam

Titus 1:10-16; 2:11-3:8

Introduction

First of all we must provide a couple of disclaimers. First of all, this presentation is in no way a comprehensive treatment of the history of Islam. To do so would require a multi-volume work of immense detail. Even the “abbreviated” histories that exist contain more detail that can be delivered in a short discourse as planned for this evening. The most difficult part in the preparation of this “lesson” was the selection of a theme and the decisions as to what to include. Secondly, I am confessedly not an Islamic scholar, and this presentation does not represent the fruit of many years of involvement and reflection. It does represent an attempt to distill materials regarding the history and development of Islam that comes from several sources that are available to all. The four most prominent include both evangelical and non-evangelical authors.

Muhammad

...the Merchant

The late 6th and early 7th centuries held a world in many ways very different from our own and in many ways still the same. By this time in Christian history, Christianity had passed from being a “troublesome sect” to being the official religion of an empire. This “tolerance” had even advanced to the point of it being illegal to claim any religion save Christianity. This even in the minds of the least historical of us is a far cry from the picture of Christianity painted for us in the New Testament.

The Old Persian Empire still held some sway in that part of the world and espoused a religion known as Zoroastrianism. Named after its founder and “chief prophet” Zoroaster (a Greek adaptation of his Persian name) it came into prominence in the post-exilic Biblical period and reached its peak in the restoration of this empire during the Roman period of the world of the Mediterranean.

The land of the desert of Arabia was occupied by nomadic farmers and merchants who were “Arabic” and by descent were related to Abraham (and the Jews) through Ishmael. Their religion was thoroughly pagan and involved the worship of ancestors, personalized natural forces, and the use of charms and magical thoughts in its cultus. The culture was organized by clans and because the economy was difficult it was common “courtesy” to conduct raids on neighboring clans to plunder their goods. Mecca was however, a thriving trade city situated on a route from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean for spice trade to the farther East. Mecca also contained a shrine, the Ka’ba, a cube-shaped building that housed several idols and source of pilgrimage for many local clans and a great economic anchor for the city.

It was into this culture that Mohammad ibn ‘Abd Allah was born. His family was poor merchants and his mother and father died when he was a child. Muhammad was raised in his uncle’s family who seemed to have some influence in the city even though he was poor. He married an older widow whose family seemed to be more established in the city. Muhammad himself was apparently dissatisfied with much of the Arab culture and lifestyle. He met with some men who periodically went out into the hillsides to pray and meditate-- sometimes for an entire month.

...the Mystic

It was during one of these excursions that Mohammad claimed to have been visited by the angel Gabriel to be chosen to receive God’s final warning to mankind and to “share” this message. Mohammad, being illiterate, recited his revelations to his wife and family who in turned believed his experience and embraced his new-found faith. This initial vision was in the year of 610 and is celebrated as the “Night of Power.” Over the next 22 years Mohammad would have further encounters with God through Gabriel and the Qur’an, (the recitations) were completed.

After three years of privately practicing his new faith, Mohammad was instructed to publicly preach his message of the “oneness” of God and the support of the poor. He was met with considerable opposition that eventually led to his fleeing to the neighboring city of Yathrub now known as Medina (from Madinat al-Nabi, the city of the prophet) in 622 (known as the Hijra).

Karen Armstrong quotes an Islamic source and describes Mohammad’s revelatory experience: “Never once did I receive a revelation, without thinking that my soul had been torn away from me.” She goes on to say: In the early days, the impact was so frightening that his whole body was convulsed; he would often sweat profusely, even on a cool day, experience a great heaviness, or hear strange sounds and voices.”

...the Muslim

In Medina Mohammad was able to wisely end some civil strife and became well respected. But the tradition of pillage and plunder continued even for Mohammad and his followers. Medina was known for its cross-clan cooperation that was unheard of in its day. After several unsuccessful skirmishes, eventually his influence grew to such that he was able to return to Mecca as victor in a non-violent conquest in 629. He evidently displayed a charisma and leadership ability that caused many to seek his counsel and support. His religious ideals crossed the traditional clan borders and unified the Arabs in development of community the *ummah* . By Muhammad’s death in 632, he and his followers were in control of most of the Arabian peninsula with his followers in submission (*islam*) to his teachings.

Conquest

...and Caliphs

Here is where we could go on forever. Muhammad and his followers saw their religion as *the* truth from God and *the* answer to the world's (at least the Arab's) problems and sought to inculcate this truth even by force if necessary. This was not much different to the "religious" wars they had seen between the Christian empire and the Persians and the oppression of the Jews as well. Islam as a political force very quickly took control of Palestine and Jerusalem and then overcame the Persian empire. The successors of Muhammad were his closest friends and relatives (he had no male heir). These men were known as caliphs (successors) and continued the expansion of Islam's influence. Eventually his nephew Ali was caliph and there is to this day a sect that feels that Ali was the rightful successor and the power of the caliphate belongs to a descendent of Muhammad. These are known as Shi'a Ali or Shi'ites, the other main sect are Sunnis (*al aw sunni*, the people of custom).

...and Culture

Eventually the Islamic world included many other cultures other than Arabs and developed a complex central government to continue its rule. Eventually they built a new city as the center of Islamic community, Baghdad. While the Romans were struggling with the Germanic "barbarians" in Europe, Muslims were building a rich and glorious empire in the east. Baghdad was soon one of the greatest cities in the world.

Trade, shipping, architecture, science and the arts all flourished in the Islamic empire. The entire Mediterranean was under Islamic control as well as India. Several different dynasties held control and sometimes various parts of the empire seemed to rule themselves. Arabs, Turks, Persians, and many other ethnic peoples "embraced" this religion and rule.

...and Cause

Islam continued in its interesting blend of religion and politics with its defense of the Holy Land against the Crusaders in the 1100's, and its incorporation of the Mongols after their conquest under Genghis Kahn in the 1200's. Many factions and rifts occurred but eventually the Muslims gained control of all but central Europe. The Ottomans, descendants of Osman I, had organized the Turks, now the dominant ethnic group among the Muslims and had taken the city of Constantinople in 1453. At the time it was considered a symbolic victory indication God's vindication of the Islamic quest.

Revolution

...to Resist

The Ottomans played a significant role in the development of European history and found themselves as allies of the Germans in the WWI. The old Middle Eastern empire had lasted around 600 years and the Ottomans had continued 600 years more. The defeat of the Germans led to a distribution of the lands of the Turks but eventually they were able to regroup and to establish their political independence once again. But this time a more Western secular government was established, in Turkey even with the adoption of Latin as the official language for a time. The country was still nominally Islam but was attempting to resist the marginalization that seemed to be facing those cultures that refused to “advance.” This same movement occurred for a time in Egypt, Lebanon, and Iran.

...to Reform

However, not all Muslims desired the Westernization of their culture and significant calls for true “religious reform” continued to ring out. In the mid 1700’s an influential Muslim scholar Muhammad ibn Abd Al-Wahhab began a movement that denounced nearly all other Muslims as idolators and infidels because of their lack of commitment to the Qur’an. His movement eventually gained alliance with Muhammad ibn Saud whose descendents captured and ruled the Arabian peninsula and established Saudi Arabia. Because of their oil-wealth, Wahhabis or Salafis have influenced much of the Muslim world through their support of education.

Some who are descendents of the Shi’a, those Muslims who stood for Ali as the successor of Muhammad came to power in Iran and have also led a reform for Quranic law and religious leadership.

...to Reclaim

In this stew, is the re-unification of the Arab-Muslim world. Not all are in agreement with each other but are aligned more closely than they are with the economies and cultures of the West. They recognize their current positions as “the oppressed” and “the poor” and wish to reclaim the glory of the Moslem world of yesteryear. For many Moslems history is more than just a story of the past but the record of insults and wrongs that need correcting (therefore the need to correct the sin of Ali not being Muhammad’s successor.) Islam is a growing and influential world-view that needs to be understood from the viewpoint of Evangelical Christianity.

Conclusion

Let's reread our Biblical text... From this text we see that all of us whether Western or Middle Eastern stand under the hand of God's judgment. Our religious banner is one of rebel and infidel, whether we are culturally Muslim, Christian, Jew, Hindu or Buddhist. Whether we were born in Africa, Asia, Europe or North America, our peace is found because of God's great mercy. The kindness and grace extended to us is because of the work of his Son in his dying for our sins. That is the message of love and we should be zealous for submission to good deeds that bring peace and the message of grace to those around us. Our story should be his story the drama of redemption and our submission to Him as our Savior and King!

Notes

Religion: The Claim of Islam

Colossians 1:9-23

Introduction Imagine someone said to you, “With accuracy and integrity, describe the whole of Christian thought.” An accurate representation would require you to think carefully about what is essential to Christianity, where it comes from, how it is understood, how it is splintered and how it governs different groups. And you have to do it in 30-45 minutes.

Well, this is my challenge tonight. It would be impossible to accurately represent Islam as a whole in such a way that any branch of it would wholly agree. But, I have chosen to try to familiarize you with the core essentials of the Islamic Religion and then help you to be able to interact intelligently with Moslems from its various sects and spheres. Two things that you will note in my own way of expressing all this. I will never refer to the Qur'an as a Holy Book. I will not refer to Islamic theologians: they may be Islamic scholars or Islamists, but they are not theologians for they are not thinking of the true God.

So, let us bow before the true God of heaven, Yahweh, Elohim, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Jesus, the Lord Christ and ask that the Divine, Holy Spirit will help us to understand, fuel compassion and frame our convictions.

The Source of Islamic Doctrine

Where does Islam derive its doctrine and practice from?

The Qur'an

The Qur'an is the final authoritative source for Islamic thought and practice. It was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel. He received most of it in visions and ecstatic states. He recited them to trained rememberers.

The Qur'an was written down in short proverbs or verses, grouped by Surahs or chapters. They were organized from longest to shortest. The proverbs are often enigmatic and yielding of more than one interpretation.

The Qur'an therefore is perfect, without error and the full disclosure of Allah. Yet, it is full of contradictions and inconsistencies that cannot be explained by historical development. Much of Islamic philosophy and thought is an interaction with the texts.

The Hadith

Due to the organization and enigmatic nature of the Qur'an, after the prophet's death, there began a compilation of the prophet's sayings and examples. These are known as the Hadith and the Sunnah.

The Hadith is the foundational and authoritative interpretive tool for understanding the Qur'an. It is a collection of narrations from the life of Muhammad. This collection, made over 300 years, provides the prophet's own commentary on the

Qur'an. There are volumes of the Hadith which attempt to interpret, explain, synthesize and apply the Qur'an. The authoritative Hadith is the one compiled by Sahih Bukhari who lived between 810-870. Much that we recognize as the practice of Islam arises from the Hadith. Just a note, many Islamists will discuss the Hadith and include the Sunnah as a distinct part, rather than as a separate item.

Nearly every aspect of a Moslem's life is guided by the Hadith. Some of the sayings of the prophet are so culturally bound it is hard to see how it applies in modern life. Further, there are statements made that simply are not true to fact. This forces Islamists to distinguish between the Qur'an as perfect and the Hadith as being true at the point of its giving.

The Shari'ah

The Shari'ah is the foundational Islamic Law governing life and practice. It is developed from the Sunnah. The Sunnah is a collection of examples from the life of Muhammad as to how he understood and practiced the Qur'an. It gives a biographical sketch of Muhammad. It provides what we might think of as case law, actual examples to be thought about and applied in practical life. It includes, for the more scrupulous of Moslems, that extending the left hand to shake is an insult and the forbidding of breads made with lard.

The Shari'ah governs the life of an individual Moslem. It will be the guide for Moslem community life and will be preached in the Mosque and enforced where possible. Many strict Moslems will be deeply offended by the insults defined by the Shari'ah (Sunnah) even when they well know an infidel is offering no insult.

The Shari'ah will also be expected to govern a Moslem nation. The logic is inescapable where there is no distinction between religion and culture. So, Islamic governments will be expected to enforce the Shari'ah as much as possible. Certainly, there are all sorts of variations in the interpretations and applications in a national setting, but conservative Imam's will preach, exhort and call for as strict an interpretation and enforcement as possible. This will particularly be so in either a marginally Islamic nation or in one compromising with western culture.

The Imam and Ijma

The final layer of Islamic thought is in the Imam and Ijma. These two sources of binding interpretation and application are the result of the great split in Islam. This split has come down in through history creating two very different groups of Moslems following different leadership and each claiming to be the true faith.

For one sect of Muslims, there is a single, authoritative leader who holds the office of Imam. He is supposed to be the direct descendent of one of the early Caliphs and is appointed by succession. The Imam would function in this branch of Islam much like the Pope does in Catholicism. He is its spiritual leader and can make pronouncements that are binding on all Shi'ite Muslims.

The other major sect of Muslims rely on the Ijma to interpret and apply Islamic law to local settings. The Ijma is that which is decided or is the deciding by consensus of the local community of Muslims. Usually this is accomplished by meetings of Muslim clerics whose deliberations represent the opinions of their

respective Mosques or communities. The effect of this in Sunni Muslims is that different Sunni communities may have very different local practices. Thus many Sunni communities in Africa accept and practice female circumcision, a practice rejected by almost all western Sunni Muslims.

The Structure of Islamic Thought

A brief overview of key and common Islamic doctrines will be helpful. As in all summaries, there is much that will be left out. The point here is to try to show how Islamic thought is structured by their core beliefs.

Allah

Allah is their word for the one and only Divine Being. Allah is their god. As a monotheistic religion, Allah's attributes are borrowed from Yahweh's. Allah is to be submitted to and obeyed without question. He is the only true god and there is no other. All peoples are to acknowledge him, either by conversion or by forced submission.

I refer you to the material in *Unveiling Islam* by Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Fethi Caner, p.108-117. There they discuss the nature and names of Allah as drawn from the Qur'an and the Hadith.

Unity

Absolutely fundamental to Islam is the doctrine of unity, the absolute oneness of Allah and the real oneness of all Moslem people. The most important of these is the oneness of Allah. Their false god is not only a single god (therefore they technically oppose polytheism and idolatry) but is the only god. It is hard for the average, pluralistic westerner and sometimes even some Christians to understand the emotions connected to this idea.

Secondly, there is the oneness of all true Muslims. They are connected to one another through their submission to Allah and belief in Muhammad. Since the Hadith and Shari'ah proscribe every facet of Muslim life, Muslims all over the world have a visible, shared culture and lifestyle. Muslims are gathered in local communities/congregations called *umma*. Again, this concept is so important to understand how our encouraging of many separate Islamic states in the Mid East is perceived as an attack on Islam, on its power as a unified whole.

Muhammad

Muhammad is revered as the final mediator of the revelation of Allah. To him and through him, Allah gave the Qur'an. His words and deeds as recorded in the Sunnah and Hadith establish the definitive interpretation and application of the Qur'an. His life as a perfect model of Islam including the exemptions granted to him by Allah to do what is normally forbidden, all point to his office as the great prophet. Muslim's will generally venerate Muhammad and defend him with a passion and emotion that will seem strange to us. Yet the reality was that he may have been demon possessed, had bizarre episodes that we would label as being bi-polar, and seizures. He was as enigmatic as the revelations he gave. He could love with single minded loyalty his first wife and then violate the Qur'an by hav-

ing more than 4 wives including consummating his marriage when one wife was 9 years old.

Salvation

Islam is a religion of works. While the doctrine of salvation in Islam is convoluted and confusing, one thing is certain – the merit of the person who professes and practices Islam is what gains entrance into paradise. What is interesting is that Allah accepts the good works only because of his supposed mercy, not because the good works are meritorious on their own. So a true Muslim's hope and confidence, his eternal security is grounded in the mercy of Allah who accepts the good works offered.

Clearly, in their system of false religion, infidels – those who deny Islam and the unfaithful – those who are not faithful to the Islam they profess – will all be consigned to hell. Those who confess Islam, the first good work and then carry out the five pillars will have their good works accepted by the mercy of God.

Paradise

Paradise is the state of blessedness and place of pleasures attained after one's death. In the Qur'an it is mostly described as a lush tropical place of waters, riches and sexual pleasures. Paradise is simply the opposite of the terrible hardships and deprivation of desert and nomadic life. Paradise is assured to martyrs, particularly to those who die in a jihad.

The Five Pillars

Islam has five fundamental religious rites. These are called, *The Five Pillars*. These are the major rallying points and are simply to be believed, never questioned or challenged. To criticize or deny the five pillars is to commit treason and blasphemy, punishable by death.

***Shahada* – The Creed**

This is the foundational affirmation required of every Muslim. It simply states that Allah is the true god and Muhammad is his messenger. It must be memorized and repeated in Arabic. It is repeated in the ears of newborns, repeated at prayers through their lives and at every significant event and hopefully, at their death.

***Salat* – The Prayers**

Five calls to prayer are required of all Muslims. These are carefully defined in content and form. They are to be prayed at the prescribed times, laying prostrate on ones face facing Mecca if possible. It is not communication with a personal God; there is no such thing in Islam. It is an expression of complete submission and humiliation before Allah. Few Muslims actually practice the rigors of these prayers, particularly in the west. The *salat* is also practiced in the Mosque and in other times of ordered worship.

Ramadan – The Fast

Islamic fasting the abstinence from eating, drinking, smoking and sex for 1 hour before sunrise to sunset for one lunar month called Ramadan, or the western month of February. While fasting at other times and on other occasions is both required and allowed, the Ramadan fast is required of all the faithful.

Zakat – The Almsgivings

Islamic giving to the poor is a foundational tenant of the faith. Islamic charity and support of the faith, its mosques and causes is required of all Muslims. In much of the Islamic world, the sharing of wealth as a fundamental of the faith has turned many Islamic states into socialist counties. Saudi Arabia is a prime example of this.

Hajj – Pilgrimage

All Muslims, at least once in their life, should make the pilgrimage to Mecca. This is more than just a trip to a city, but a long series of steps and stops that follow the flight of Muhammad and culminate in the worship in an ecstatic worship at the Kaaba in Mecca and kissing of the Black Stone there.

Jihad

Jihad is the Islamic word for the struggle against evil, or *holy war*. At the individual level, this is the struggle against one's own evil and against evil in one's own surroundings. This use of the word in the Qur'an and in the Hadith/Sunnah is very minimal. Jihad has historically and publicly almost exclusively used to refer to the war against the infidels, the evil unbelievers. Jihad is the confrontation or war that defends or expands the good of Islam versus the evil of unbelief. A *Fatwa* is a jihad declared against a particular enemy, the *akafir*.

Regardless of the present popular Political Correctness police and the full-court press by both pluralists and Islamists, jihad refers primarily if not exclusively to some level of religious war. If the whole earth is the property of Allah, then it makes perfect sense to conquer it for Allah. If Islamic religion-culture is being threatened by western culture/commerce/depravity, then jihad is an aggressive defense against its demise. Without question, terrorists like Bin Laden can accurately quote and authoritatively apply both the Qur'an and Hadith to justify their actions. While they might be in a minority at present, they certainly stand in a long tradition of Islamic history, law and warfare.

In talking with a Muslim who loves peace, it is important to challenge the idea of Islam as a religion of peace while not accusing them of being a war-mongering terrorist. It is best to point out that they are simply inconsistent with what their religion teaches and in the end, demands.

Law

Islamic Law simply governs all of life and when possible by national law. I am emphasizing this because this is very difficult for us as westerners to get this in our heads. Intolerance of other religions, particular ones that reject Islam outright and challenge Islamic doctrine, is the universal practice of Islamic states. One Is-

Islamic scholar has written, “There can be neither peace nor co-existence between the Islamic religion and non-Islamic social and political institutions. ...When the Islamic movement is strong enough it must take power and create an Islamic republic.”¹ Make no mistake that Islam requires and demands that once it is a majority or is in power, Islamic law must be enforced at all levels. Thus, Salmon Rushdie, who has been tried and convicted of treason, is under an irrevocable death sentence with a present \$2 million dollar reward for his execution (murder).

The Streams of Islamic Development

Over their long history, Muslims have divided over their understanding of Islam. This has given rise to our present situation of having 3 major Islamic sects and other minor ones. I am arranging them on a continuum from mystic to liberal.

Sufis

The Sufis are the mystics of Islam. They are a very definite and extreme conservative minority who often not even recognized by other Islamic sects. Some westerners are familiar with the Whirling Dervishes as Sufi mysticism.

Shi'ites

The Shi'ites are the conservatives of Islam. The original split involved following an authoritative leadership and has further developed into a much more strict interpretation and application of Islam. The Islam that is violent has been cultivated mostly within the Shi'ite sects.

Sunnis

The Sunnis are the moderates of Islam. The majority of Muslims are Sunnis with current estimates place at around 90%. They tend to have conservative interpretations and moderate to liberal applications of Islam. The Sunnis tend to accept jihad yet reject terrorism.

Secularists

The secularists are the liberals of Islam. While they want to be Islamic and worship Allah, they reject Islamic law as binding on them. Most secularists want to live as either moderns or westerners while still worshipping Allah and being recognized as Muslims, in the faith. Many of the Muslims you will meet will either be Sunni or Secularist – most will claim to be Sunni and will live like secularists.

Sects

Islam is also filled with minor sects. Among these are the Wahhabis, a very strict sect that has declared jihad against all other sects as corrupting Islam. Another of the minor sect is the black Nation of Islam which exists almost exclusively in the United States.

¹ Cited in Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1997, p.269.

The Spheres of Islamic Domination

Islamic thought recognizes two modes of Islamic practice and life. Understand that these are generally thought of phases with a desire and drive to move from the first to the second mode.

Mecca Mode

The first is the Mecca mode in which Muslims live as a minority in non-Islamic cultures and nations. This corresponds to Muhammad's practice while he lived in Mecca. In this mode, Muslims are to recognize religious tolerance, to win converts and to influence society through the cultural and political structures in place. They are to be passive and to simply live out their Muslim faith without trying to give offense. In the west, all Muslims are living in this mode. This is why most you will encounter will denounce terrorism and Islamic extremes. They will often be very moral, family centered, religious and scrupulous in their behavior.

Medina Mode

The second mode is the Medina Mode in which Muslims live as a majority in an Islamic culture or an Islamic nation. This corresponds to Muhammad's practice while he lived in Medina. In this mode, Islam is the only allowed religion and culture. All others may exist, but not visibly. In this mode, it will be dominant and aggressive, enforcing Islamic religion and culture by force of law.

Just as Muhammad moved from Mecca to Medina, it is the desire of Mecca mode Islam to move to Medina mode – to follow the prophet from a minority role to a governing, ruling role.

A Strategy for Christian Response

I want to spend just a moment thinking about a strategy to engage Islam as Christians. This will set the stage for Pastor Dan to talk about Muslim conversion next week.

The God of the Bible

Never under any circumstances should we equate the God of the Bible with Allah. Do not use the term Allah to refer to Yahweh when talking with a Muslim. If necessary, call Him Yahweh to be sure that both you and the Muslim recognize that *you are not talking about the same being*. The God of the Bible is the only one true God, a Trinity and Jesus Christ is His Divine Son, deity and God of very God yet became man. It is wrong and fatal to say that Muslims are ignorantly worshipping the God of the Bible under the name of Allah. No true Muslim who has any knowledge of his religion is thinking of the God of the Bible when they are thinking, talking or praying to Allah.

The Deity of Christ

The idea of the Deity of Christ is repugnant to Moslems. When we assert this, we are asserting that Jesus is the full expression of God and the final revelation of God. He is both God and man. No one who denies the deity of Christ is saved. A Muslim thinks that when we assert the deity of Christ that we are no longer monotheists. This brings me to something that you commonly hear said: Christianity, Judaism and Islam are the three great monotheist religions. Neither Judaism nor Islam recognize this as so – both view New Testament Christians as not being monotheists. Secondly, this statement puts them all on par as religions. Islam and Judaism are false religions. Salvation is not in them. While there are those who claim to be a Messianic Judaism and a Messianic Islam, both are false. Jesus the fulfillment of the Messiah as promised in the Old Testament – but He is King over all His people in the church, Jew and Gentile. The idea of a Messianic Islam is absurd.

The Crucifixion of Christ

Islam denies that Jesus was crucified. It teaches that he was rescued and taken up to paradise. This is the clear teaching of the Qur'an and the Hadith. The Bible and historical record stands against this. Muslims must recognize that either the Qur'an is wrong or the Bible and much historical testimony is wrong.

The Lordship of Christ

What is denied that makes Islam false is their rejection of the Lordship of Christ. He alone is Lord – not Allah, not Muhammad, not the Qur'an, not the Hadith. Yes, we need to be kind. But we have to be clear in our own minds that if we do not tell Muslims the truth, then they will die and go to hell. Stand firm with grace and true love.

Conclusion

- Islam is a false religion
- Islam is a religion of works
- Islam is a religion aiming to dominate and rule
- Moslems often do not know their religion as whole
- Moslems often are very passionate about their beliefs and emotional when opposed
- Any Moslem who believes and bows, calling on the Name of the Lord, will be saved.

Notes

Salvation: The Conversion of Muslims

Luke 6:27-36

Introduction

A Difficult Message

If obedience to tonight's message seems unbearable it will be precisely because it possesses a promise which seems unbelievable. *We will not obey if we do not believe.*

The Bible alone is the inerrant, infallible authority for what we are to believe about God and how he wants us to live. By nature we don't like the thought of absolute authority existing in anyone outside of ourselves. What if tonight God commands me to do something I don't want to do? What if he portrays himself in a way that differs from the way I think he should be? The temptation to repel uncomfortable texts from our hearts may be great tonight. And so, I desire us to read in unison a prayer and a perspective which we are projecting now on the screen. Please stand with me as we read together

L.23:34 – And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”

L.10:3 – Behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

(read and pray together)

Tonight I will preach a passage that is a difficult passage to preach. It is not difficult in the sense of complexity of thought structure. It is not going to be difficult to see the internal outline and its basic message. The problem rests in what it is telling us as a church to believe and do. Tonight's message will be, I think, one of the most difficult commands to obey precisely because it possesses one of the most difficult promises to believe. Both the general command and its empowering promise will be necessary to embrace if God will get the glory and Muslims will get the grace.

A Directed Message

This is what I set out to do tonight.

To Demonstrate

First, I will try to point out that the Muslim is an enemy. I will establish this fact by demonstrating that both the Qur'an (the Muslim's Bible) and the Bible point in this direction.

To Describe

Secondly, I will establish the basic manner by which we as a church are to respond to an enemy. There are three ways to respond to a Muslim. Hate, tolerate or love. We will see the Muslim as the terrorist and desire vengeance, we will see the Muslim as essentially a monotheistic, productive follower of his God and desire to live in peace with him or we will love him with the gospel.

The accent this evening is on how to evangelize a Muslim. We will soon recognize, however, that this message applies to how we are to respond to Catholics, Protestant liberals, devout Buddhists, well-adjusted, unbelieving church goers, moralistic atheists, and the happy-go-lucky pagan who "eats and drinks for tomorrow we die". This message given by Jesus to his disciples applies to all of the church's enemies. And so, I set out to demonstrate from the text tonight a lifestyle consistent with a disciple of Jesus Christ. How is a follower of Jesus suppose to respond to someone who is an enemy of his? What is the essential conduct of a true disciple toward one who is antagonistic to the gospel? What, in other words, does "love your enemy" look like?

These types of questions will be answered from the text this evening. The hope in doing this is to map out a strategy for evangelizing Muslims. This section will be the heart of the message. This section is to shape our prayers and perspectives and practices so that we will be dangerous to the agenda of Islam.

To Define

Lastly, not only do I want to demonstrate that Muslims are enemies of the gospel and enemies of Christians and not only do I desire to map out for us a way of interacting with our enemies but I want to conclude with two observations from the text which will particularly address the vacuum in the Muslim's heart. What is he or she missing by being a devout Muslim? What good news must the Muslim hear in order to escape the wrath of God and enjoy His endless supply of love? We will make these principles clear at the end so that we will be better equipped to love our enemies; both in word and in deed.

So let's get started.

The Muslim

In his book Unveiling Islam, Emir Caner quotes from the Qur'an some staggering doctrines Islam embraces. For example:

- ⊕ “They do blaspheme who say God is one of three...for there is no Allah except one Allah” (surah 5:73)
- ⊕ The similitude of Isa before God is as that of Adam; He created him from dust. (surah 3:59)
- ⊕ “That they said in boast “we killed Chris Isa, the son of Mary”...but they killed him not nor crucified him. (surah 4:157)
- ⊕ “He (the baby) said: “I am the worshiper of Allah...” (surah 19:30)
- ⊕ “Then those whose balance (of good deeds) is heavy, they will be successful. But those whose balance is light, will be those who have lost their souls; in Hell will they abide”. (surah 23:102-3)
- ⊕ “There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah” (the basic creed of Islam).
- ⊕ “Fight those who believe not in Allah nor in the last day...If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted of him” (surah 9:29; 3:85)

So we can say that Islamic doctrine says the following.

- ⊕ The Trinity is blasphemous.
- ⊕ Jesus is a created being.
- ⊕ Jesus was not crucified.
- ⊕ Jesus worshipped Allah of the Qur’an.
- ⊕ Salvation is based on good works.
- ⊕ Strong opposition against those who preach the Christian faith

A Muslim, in accordance with his book (the Qur’an) is antagonistic toward the God of the Holy Scriptures and His followers.

Not only do we witness the fact that a Muslim is an enemy of the Christian faith by noticing what the Qur’an says, we also can see this fact quickly and clearly by noticing what the bible says. The Bible unequivocally states that there is no such thing as neutrality. In Luke 11:23 Jesus said, “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters”. Elsewhere in Luke Jesus is recorded saying, “No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money (cf. L.16:13).

The point is clear.

1. The Qur’an and the actions of Muslims communicate that Islam is not for the Christ of the Bible.
2. The Bible says that the one who is not for Jesus is against Jesus.

3. Therefore Muslims are against Christ and enemies of His disciples.

POINT #1: MUSLIMS ARE ENEMIES OF CHRIST AND HIS DISCIPLES.

The Mission

As one reads the two volume work of Luke (that is, the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts), one gets a clear impression that Jesus was divinely appointed to carry out a specific mission. To understand how our passage is functioning in Luke's overall narrative, it will be helpful for us to see Jesus' mission as it was prophesied, prepared and presented at the beginning of Luke's gospel.

Prophesied

Right from the start of Luke's narrative, we come to a prophecy over Jesus. This prophecy of Simeon is troubling; for it tells the reader that "[Jesus] is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through [Mary's] own soul" (cf. 2:34f). Luke is indicating that Jesus' appointed mission will be productive and it will be persecuted. He will cause some to rise and some to fall. And those who follow him will suffer too.

Prepared

Luke sets out to demonstrate that Jesus has a mission given and sustained by his father in heaven; God Almighty (L.1:46-55; 3:21-4:30). To make this mission clear, it was not only prophesied but it needed a forerunner to prepare the people. John the Baptist set out to be obedient to God by calling for repentance in Israel. John was productive (i.e. people were saying, "What shall we do?" [3:10-14] and John was persecuted (3:20).

Luke makes plain that the mission will be met with resistance and even hostility. The mission will advance only through suffering.

Presented

To cast Jesus' appointed assignment in its proper light, Luke shows that the mission was prophesied, prepared and now presented.

Notice how the people responded to Jesus as he presented his mission (cf. 4:14-30). In 4:22, after he announced his mission by locating himself in the book of Isaiah, the people "marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth". But then he exposed their hardened hearts and intimated God's judgment. And they became enraged. Now, instead of speaking well of him, they desired to kill him (as seen in v.28ff).

Notice also what happens to those who follow him after he presents the mission. In Chapter 5 we see Jesus calling Levi, a tax collector, to follow him. Levi then has a party to which he invited all his sinful friends and Jesus. The religious leaders of the day (i.e. Pharisees) were repulsed by Jesus' compassion and freedom. Note how Luke talks about their disgust in vv.30,33. There is a growing animosity over Jesus and his followers. The Savior is on a mission. And this mission will be opposed vehemently.

The idea Luke makes clear is that those who follow the Christ will suffer from the Christ's enemies.

POINT #2: Association with Jesus is involvement with persecution. (cf. Lk.9:23-26; 10:3; Acts 14:22)

The Manner

According to 6:12, it's in these days; days of growing hostility toward Jesus and His followers, that Jesus calls his 12 Apostles to begin the advancement of the mission. What follows is what we will be focusing on this evening. He desires to instruct his disciples on how they are to respond to this growing resistance to the mission. That is, he will clarify for his followers what to do with a group that hates truth and loves lies (see vv.23c,26b). The manner of the mission is now the subject of concern.

Follow with me as I read from the English Standard Version Luke 6:27-36.

Love your enemies

There is a specific reason why Jesus' disciples need these instructions. V.22 tells us that disciples of Christ will be hated. Therefore, they need to know with certainty how they are to act in response to enemies. Concisely put, Jesus says simply "Love your enemies". That is the overarching message for this evening. Islam is vehemently opposed to the gospel. The manner in which we are to carry the message to our enemies is "love". But how is love characterized? When our message is opposed and our lives are harassed or even threatened what does love look like?

In actions

First we can see that love is in actions; v.27. "Do good to those who hate you". Notice that the Bible does not merely tell us to withhold bad from those who hate us. It tells us to take the initiative and "do good" to those who do bad to us.

For a fuller look at this aspect of love see Romans 12:19-21. As Jay Adams said in his book "How to overcome evil", "The Christian is the most violent man on earth. He has orders to subdue the enemy, win the victory for his Lord, and he will stop at nothing to do so; his Lord's name is at stake". Then he qualified these words by saying, "But in [subduing the enemy] he may not use just any sort of weapons or any

strategy that he wishes...God's strategy calls for the use of weapons of righteousness...we are to overcome evil with good".

Recently (that is, post 9/11) we've seen how to overcome evil with evil. For example January 22 of 2002 a report came out from Columbus.

Non-Muslims have offered space, money and other support for worshipers who cannot use the Islamic Center of Columbus after vandals caused more than \$100,000 in damage to the mosque.

Vandals drilled holes in floors of Columbus' oldest mosque, ripped up copies of the Quran and pulled water pipes from walls, saturating floors and ceilings of the three-story building. Mohammed Shareef, president of the Islamic Foundation of Central Ohio, said the building will not be usable for some time.

Just last September seven bullet holes were found in the Cuyahoga Falls Mosque and recently the door of the Kent Mosque was damaged. How are we to respond to our enemies? "Let your light so shine among men that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt.5:16).

When we are faced with opposition, we are to overcome evil with good.

In words

The second way Jesus expresses the command "love your enemies" is in words. We see this in v.28. These are words both to and for our enemies. We are to bless and we are to pray. We are to say words of grace and wisdom and concern to a Muslim. We also are to pray for a Muslim.

Much help can be found in Operation World; a book designed to assist the church in praying for the lost. In it, Patrick Johnstone gives us specific ways we can pray for Muslims. (see www.gmi.org/ow)

In attitude

We next come across another way Jesus exhibits love for enemies; vv.29-30. We are not to take Jesus' words in a crassly literal way. We see Jesus getting slapped in John 18:22ff. He did differently in that case than what he is saying here (if we were to take him in a rigidly literal way). No, Jesus is getting at the attitude of his followers. When we suffer injury, we must not desire retaliation. We must seek the well-being of our abuser. And we must be ready to undergo another injury for the sake of love if need be (cf. 1Pet.2:21ff).

Oh, beloved, we will not be obedient to the manner of the mission if we are so ready to express our grievances through exercising our government-given rights. Why not instead take Paul's words to heart in 1Corinthians when he encouraged those who were taken advantage of, "Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be

defrauded?”. This is the strategy that is mighty. This is the manner of the mission of Jesus Christ. And this is the attitude to which we are called!

Jesus summarizes this section by a general command with a comparison. How are we to measure obedience to the command “love your enemies”? What standard are we to gauge our actions, words and attitude when loving Muslims who are intolerant to the gospel? Jesus said in v.31, “And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them”. When we are mistreated when loving someone for the gospel’s sake, we are to examine our own desire over how we would like to be treated. The standard of our own desire must be brought to bare upon our outreach to the Muslims. If we will stick our necks out and love hostile people (at least hostile in their ideology) we will be persecuted. As Dr. Piper frequently says, “make your self-seeking the measure of your self-giving.

The next section in this paragraph, vv.32-36, describe loving enemies by comparing it not with our own desires but with God’s character and actions. You can see this in v.36. What Jesus is getting at is a strategy for evangelism that cannot be matched.

We’ve noted that Jesus is exhibiting enemy love in actions, in words and in attitude. Now he says that enemy love is like what God does.

By unselective kindness

The nature of loving our enemies is brought out with three illustrations of the way Christians must surpass people of the world. We are to love our enemies not merely our friends. The point with these illustrations is to underscore the importance of unselective kindness. We are not to pre-qualify potential recipients of kindness. We are not merely to be kind to those who are kind to us. This selectivity mirrors what the world does. We must be different; radically different. We are to be like God who “is kind to the ungrateful and the evil”.

To win the heart of a Muslim be kind even when ingratitude and evil are present.

By unbelievable mercy

Finally Jesus draws this thought to a close by illustrating enemy love by paralleling it to God’s unbelievable mercy. Observe this in v.36. He is using God’s character and actions as a standard by which we are to live with our enemies. This angle on his actions is said to be mercy. Recall what Paul said concerning reconciliation in Romans 5:10. “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life”.

We must take our cue from God at this point. When we get daring and move into enemy territory in order to release POW’s by the gospel, we will need to have a

standard that far exceeds natural ways. We are to be merciful as our Father is merciful. Like Father; like son...

Recap

What we've noticed so far is that the Muslim's book; the Qur'an, and the Christian's book; the Bible, both point to the fact that a Muslim is an enemy of Christ and his followers.

We saw that the gospel of Luke starts by making the point that Jesus will be opposed and suffer. And that association with Jesus is involvement with persecution (cf. Lk.9:23-26; 10:3; Acts 14:22). Jesus goes with the gospel to his enemies. His followers must also.

Because his followers will be hated by His enemies, Jesus clarifies the manner of the mission. Simply put, we are to love our enemies. He does not leave it to the imagination of the reader to define this type of love. He talked about how we are to love our enemies

- ⊕ In actions
- ⊕ In words
- ⊕ In attitude
- ⊕ By unselective kindness
- ⊕ By unbelievable mercy

Let us love our enemies...even unto death (cf. Rev.2:10)

In closing let me come back to the opening sentence of this message.

Conclusion

If obedience to tonight's message seems unbearable it will be precisely because it possesses a promise which seems unbelievable.

An unbelievable promise

There is one thing I've left off in expounding this paragraph. This component to obedience must not merely be spoken of. We must have it as our magnetic north, a carrot before the nose, an impulse driving us into difficult ministry. The promise in this passage is overwhelming. And without believing the richness of it, we will not move out in risk-taking, life-changing, God-honoring, enemy-converting deeds.

The unbelievable promise is found in v.35. Listen to it again as I read it aloud. "But love your enemies, and do good and lend expecting nothing in return and your reward will be great and you will be sons of the Most High..."

Look not for earthly reward. Look for heavenly reward!

We will enjoy an unshakable assurance welling up in our hearts that we are sons and daughters of the Most High when we are ridiculed for Christ's sake. The sense of knowing that when all tears stop, when death dies and all evil expires, when toil rests and all unbelief takes flight, we who obey by faith this very command (i.e. love your enemies) will thrill with joy never ending and ever increasing. Oh happy days! Oh happy days!

Jesus says, "rejoice in that day [i.e. of suffering] and leap for joy for behold your reward is great in heaven".

Let us set our sights on more of Christ. Let us attempt to imagine what great reward in heaven is like? Let us picture in the mind's eye a vast vision of the splendor of Christ richly given to the one who walks by faith even into enemy territory?

The marching orders are clear.

1. Believe the unbelievable.
2. Love the unlovable.
3. And let us get ready to suffer with joy!