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# 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 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.



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## **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.

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## Notes