

Manawatu Christian Apologetics Society

DEFENDING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IN THE MANAWATU

Very! Brief Overview of Islam

- History
- The Spread of Islam
- Islam's Revelation
- Definitions & Facts
- Beliefs
- The Five Pillars
- Sects
- Witnessing to Muslims
- Final thoughts
- Resources

- Rob Ward



First question:

Why should be interested in Islam?

- One in five people alive today consider themselves part of this religion
- They are entering the West in large numbers
- They are evangelicals!!!
- They need Christ - many are becoming His followers

History

- **Islam began with the Prophet Mohammad (capital doesn't mean I endorse his prophethood)**
- **Muhammad: born in 570AD in wealthy merchant town of Mecca; father died before he was born; mother died when he was 6; was brought up by uncle.**
- **Lived a normal life, sacrificed to deities, married at 25 to a rich 40 year old woman (Khadijah) who was in charge of many caravans.**
- **At age 40 (610AD), Muhammad was meditating in some caves around Mecca. Angel Gabriel appears to him.**
- **He destroys idols and starts to preach.**
- **Many opposed him (think of polytheistic society as in Artemus of Ephesus).**
- **Revelations continue from 610AD-632AD.**
- **Mohammad dies 632AD in Medina;**

Early spread of Islam

From: <http://coursedocs.slcc.edu/huma/1100/spread%20of%20islam.jpg>

Islam's Revelation

- **The Quran is about the same length as the New Testament and is divided up into 114 Surahs (chapters) and ayahs (verses).**
- **Dictation theory: 'Non heretical' Muslims believe a copy of the Quran has always existed in heaven.**
 - **Quran is an exact duplicate of heavenly book.**
 - **Revelation was given to Muhammad via the angel Gabriel (Sura 74:2) and through visions.**
 - **This is unlike the Bible which is the Word of God in the word of (many) men.**
- **Hadiths – sayings of Muhammad – thousands of them.**

Surah 1, *AL-FATIHA* (*The Opening*)

Praise be to Allah

The Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds;

Most Gracious, Most Merciful;

Master of the Day of Judgment.

Thee do we worship,

And Thine aid we seek.

Show us the straight way,

The way of those on whom

Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace,

Those whose (portion)

Is not wrath,

And who go not astray.

(Qur'an 1:1-7)

The first Surah is used daily by Muslims as a prayer and has a similar place in Islam to the Lord's Prayer in the life of the Christian. (Patrick Sookhdeo, *A Christian's Pocket Guide to Islam*, p.26,27)

Definition & Facts

- **Like Christianity and Judaism, Islam is a 'religion of the book'.**
- **'Quran' (means 'reading' or 'recitation') is the very holy book for Muslims. They will wash and be purified before touching it.**
- **The word 'Islam' means 'surrender' or 'submission'.**
- **'Allah' means 'God' in Arabic.**
- **A 'Muslim' is an adherent to Islam just as a Christian is an adherent to Christianity. Thus a Muslim is one who surrenders their life to Allah. ('Moslem' is not preferred).**
- **'Muhammadeans' is considered an insult as it suggests Muslims are followers of the prophet Muhammad rather than Allah.**

Beliefs

- **Belief in one God 'Allah;**
- **Uncompromisingly monotheistic – only unpardonable sin is *shirk* or the associating or joining of other gods to the one God. The 'one-ness' of Allah is an extremely important doctrine in Islam (doctrine of Tawhid).**
- **Syllogism: God cannot die; Jesus died on cross; therefore Jesus is not God.**
- **Islam rejects the centrality and necessity of the death and resurrection of Jesus for salvation.**
- **Islam rejects reliability of Christian Bible – viewed as inferior to Quran and is corrupted.**
- **NT comforter points to Muhammad.**
- **Salvation is through works. Scales: good works weighed against bad works.**

The Five Pillars

These are held by all schools and divisions of Islam. They are compulsory for entry into heaven.

1. Profession of belief: *“These if no God but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of God.”*
2. Prayer 5 times a day; facing Mecca; Allahu Akbar (God is Great)
3. Alms Giving (zakat): giving to the poor
4. Ramadan: month of fasting
5. Hajj: pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in your lifetime
- (6. Jihad: This is not universally accepted. 5 Pillars is the norm.)

Sects

- **2 Major sects (plus one): Sunnis, Shi'ites (plus Sufis)**
- **Sunnis and Shi'ites tend to hate each other. This is a large part of the problem in Iraq but goes back a long time (>1000 years)**
- **Sunnis (90%) (Iraqi student: 50% chance of being Sunni)**
 - **Largest sect; Acknowledge first 4 caliphs as Muhammad's rightful successors and further successors by election**
- **Shi'ites (10%) (Iranian student: about 100% chance of being Shia)**
 - **Follow the bloodline of Muhammad thus supremacy of Ali**
 - **Most are in Iran; 50% of Iraqis are Shia (3:1 population diff. Between Iran and Iraq)**
- **Sufis (Mystics)**
 - **Aim to have personal experience with God (in altered state of consciousness)**

Witnessing to Muslims

- **Build genuine relationships with Muslims; Tracts not terribly helpful; Muslims have much baggage against Christians.**
- **Learn to ask thought provoking questions: “Are you sure you are going to heaven? How?”**
- **Read the Koran: Gives great insight into their thinking and also earns you 'the right' to ask them to read the Bible.**
- **Present your faith candidly and in love: Talk about your relationship with Christ; share your testimony.**
- **Pray with your Muslim friends: Prayer is one of the five pillars.**

(The above come from Dr. Timothy Tennent)

- **From other materials I have used, it seems that several things are necessary to successfully witness to or evangelize Muslims: (i) read the Qu'ran; (ii) befriend them; (iii) learn the doctrine of the trinity as many will be quick to attack this perceived area of weakness (remember Tawhid); (iv) learn some of the basic materials (as in this talk); (v) learn a few basic arguments/weaknesses in their beliefs; (vi) listen to a debate or two to see where scholars are 'locking horns'. James White and Shabir Ally will be doing a debate very soon and you be be able to buy the MP3s online for about \$3 USD.**

Final Thoughts

- **It should be no surprise that many Islamic beliefs are similar to Christian beliefs since Muhammad drew from sources including Christians, Jews and various Biblical texts.**
- **It seems Christians are almost oblivious to the happenings in the Islamic world (James White comment).**
- **Islam will soon have to pass through the 'door of enlightenment' that Christianity passed through several hundred years ago. This will involve severe scrutiny of the Quran and other Islamic beliefs. It has begun, esp. in the UK!**
- **The church (that is us) needs to be prepared to interact with these people. As such, we need to understand the basics of where the Muslim is 'coming from'.**

Resources

- **There are loads of books available**
 - **Sproul and Geisler have written books with former Muslim Abdul Saleeb**
 - **Many books available within MCAS**
- **Many websites**
 - **www.answeringislam.org**
 - **www.bethinking.com (UCCF in UK)**
 - **www.aomin.org (James White)**

Resources

- **GreatBibleTeaching.com**
DVD has two full lecture series by scholar **Dr. Timothy Tennent**
- **www.bethinking.org**
in UK has excellent cutting-edge scholarly lectures

