

CHRISTIANITY & ISLAM

(Part 1)

BIBLICAL INTRODUCTION:

About 4,000 years ago, the patriarch Abraham cried out to God: *“If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!”* He did this in response to God’s revelation to him that his wife Sarah would have a son to the degree that she would be the *“...mother of nations”* and that *“...kings of peoples will come from her.”*

After that heavenly announcement, Abraham fell facedown on the ground in laughter and said to himself: *“Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?”* And then Abraham said to God: *“If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!”*

In response to this fatherly plea, God said to Abraham: *“Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.”*

Then God further promised to Abraham: *“And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year. When He had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him”* (Gen. 17:15-22; c.f. Gen. 25:13-18).

The great question then is this: *“With whom did God make a covenant – Ishmael, Abraham’s first born son? Or with Isaac, Abraham’s second born?”*

This Genesis account clearly says that while God made a *covenant* with Isaac, He definitely gave a great *blessing* to Ishmael.

Therefore, for some 4,000 years the world has been living with the *covenant* and *conflict* between these two half-brothers. And there are now several *billion* of the “sons of Isaac” and the “sons of Ishmael” spread across the world. And directly or indirectly, the rest of the 6 billion people on planet earth are caught up in some way with their conflict!

Today, the spiritual “sons of Ishmael” are known as Muslims, the “people of Islam.”

INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS:

Without question, *Islam is Christianity's greatest spiritual challenge!* Long before the implosion of Marxism and Communism, I had been giving the **WARNING** that Islam was the next major "ism" or ideology that the world in general – and the church in particular, had to deal with.

By its very nature, Islam – like Christianity, is *evangelistic* and *expansionist* to the core. And both are *global* in their *design* and *desire* for the world. Properly understood, Islam has nothing less than *world domination* as its goal. Therefore, it cannot – and will not stop, until it has extended the *Islamic crescent* across the entirety of the globe!

But neither can Christianity rest until she has properly communicated the *message of the cross* to the entire world! We too are under a "Great Commission" to *evangelize* – but not *Christianize*, the world. We too are a *missionary faith*.

Therefore, Christianity *must* also be proactive in sharing the claims of Christ to the 6 billion plus people living on planet earth. We cannot be faithful to the "marching orders" given to us by Jesus Christ unless we are aggressively evangelistic to the core of our being. However, we seek to extend the *message of the cross* in the *spirit of the cross* – or in the *agape love* of Jesus Christ! The *only* force we are ever to use is the *force of love!*

Therefore, authentic Christianity has always sought to "*conquer by love*" rather than "*conquer by force!*" While Islam has generally always extended itself through the "sword of Muhammed," authentic Christianity has always sought to extend itself through the "sword of the Spirit" – which is the Word of God (Eph. 6:17).

So as a result of these two all-encompassing spiritual perspectives, *Christianity and Islam are on an inescapable and unavoidable collision course!* There is an inevitable "spiritual clash" and "cultural conflict" building between the Islamic and Christian worldview – on a worldwide scale! Both cannot *passively* and *peaceably* coexist side-by-side. By their very natures, one *must* supersede and dominate the other. That's because they are *mutually exclusive* in their absolute claims about God...about man...about culture...about the whole of life.

So civilization as we now know it hangs in the balance between these two spiritual behemoths!

Therefore, please carefully and prayerfully consider the following thoughts...

1. Whether you view Islam theologically, historically, culturally, geographically, practically, economically or evangelistically – *Islam is Christianity's chief rival for the loyalty of mankind.*

2. As the *latest* and *youngest World Religion* on the stage of history, Islam is Christianity's most forceful, skillful and articulate theological and intellectual competitor for the souls of mankind.
3. Since Islam is the only World Religion born since the advent of Christianity, its very existence is a challenge to the *finality of the Gospel*. (Time-Line Chart)
4. Also, as a religion with a *universal scope*, Islam clearly claims to have *surpassed* and *superseded* Christianity in every way. So Islam has a decided "superiority complex" when it comes to Christianity.
5. And if we are honest about our perspective, we Christians also have a perspective of spiritual superiority when it comes to Islam. We firmly believe that...
 - Jesus Christ is superior in every way to the Muhammed;
 - the Jehovah God of the Bible is the only true and living God, and not Allah;
 - the Bible is a far superior revelation to the Koran;
 - the spiritual ethics symbolized by the cross of Christ is a greater blessing to mankind than the crescent of Islam.
6. However, even though I firmly believe those assertions, as the teacher of this course I am going to try to be as objective as possible in my presentation of both Christianity and Islam.
7. But in reality, *there is no such thing as total objectivity*. We all have some kind of "rosy tinted glasses" through which we view the world. That personal perspective is called our "World View" – whether or not we have stopped to analyze it.
8. Obviously, *my World View is that of the Judeo-Christian Faith*.
9. So while I make no naïve claims to "total objectivity," will seek to be as fair and objective as possible.
10. I will seek to base my teaching on "historical facts" – not on "subjective opinions." And in the case of both Christianity and Islam, I will let their respective Holy Books speak for themselves. Therefore, I will quote often from the primary sources of the Bible and the Koran.
11. Also, in this course I will not engage in *slander* or *misrepresentation* of the facts. Nor will I seek to "belittle the faith" of sincere Muslims.
12. And since my Master's Degree was in "*Comparative World Religions*," and my Doctor of Ministry was in "*Contemporary Cults*," I have some academic

background for this study. In addition, I have spent the last 40 years traveling the world – much of it in predominantly Muslim countries. So I have had the opportunity to study Islam academically and practically.

13. So I will do my best to clearly and fairly point out the differences between Christianity and Islam – quoting from the Holy Scriptures of both faiths.
14. At times I will “*speak the truth in love*” to our Moslem friends in the hopes that they will take a fresh look at what Christianity *really* teaches...what the Bible *really* says...and most importantly, about what Jesus Christ *really* taught and did!
15. Finally, Islam is a “crash course” in Christian doctrine – just as is the case with a study of Comparative Religion or Contemporary Cults. A study like this forces you to evaluate and think through your own faith at a deeper level. So while I hope that you will learn something about Islam in this course, I hope you will learn even more about your own faith as a Christian!

A WAKE UP CALL:

(To America in general and the Church in particular)

Let me share some *startling* and *sobering statistics* about Islam:

1. Over *1 billion* followers worldwide – and aggressively growing;
2. Islam is second only to Christianity in its ethnic diversity and geographical scope of influence;
3. As we have already seen, by its very nature, *Islam is a political faith with a yearning for global expansion and world domination*;
4. In other words, if Islam reaches its goals – your children and grandchildren will grow up in a “Muslim America”;
5. Islam is the *second largest religion in the world* – following Christianity. And their numbers are rapidly increasing due to high birth rates. So while Islam is

out-growing Christianity *biologically*, Christianity continues to lead Islam *evangelistically*. However, the growth gap is narrowing every year;

6. Muslims compose approximately 20%, or 1/5 of world's population. So 1 in every 5 humans on earth are Muslims;
7. Muslims constitute the largest single block of unreached peoples in the world. 1 out of every 3 unreached people in the world is a Muslim;
8. Over 2,000 mosques and Moslem Training Centers in America – and growing weekly;
9. The State of New Mexico is the site of America's first all-Muslim community, called *Dar al Islam*. It is situated on 1,280 acres and will be an orthodox Sunni community from which they intend to evangelize America;
10. Islam has become the major religion in much of Europe (Great Britain, France, Spain, Germany, etc);
11. Muslims believe – and are working toward the goal, that Europe will become completely Islamic within a few decades. Thus the birthplace of the *Reformation* and the *Modern Missionary Movement* will come under the Islamic crescent.
12. There are between 4 million and 6 million Muslims in America (exact statistics here are not available due to the illegal immigration situation). But that still means that there are now more Moslems in America than Presbyterians, Episcopalians or Assembly of God;
13. Therefore, *Islam has now surpassed Judaism as the second largest religion in America*;
14. Their goal is to make America the "*Judeo-Christian-Islamic Nation*" – and ultimately a totally "*Islamic Caliphate*" or "*Muslim Country*";
15. Islam is the only major world religion that has "converted" significant numbers of people away from Christianity;
16. From the seventh century until now, *the church has steadily lost ground to Islam*. So it is the only religion that has taken significant geographical areas and entire countries from the Christian fold – and kept them:
 - From Morocco to Mesopotamia, countries that were once under the cross are now under the crescent;

- Every major *First Century Church* is under Islam today – and has been for some 1,400 years;
- The “*Seven Churches of Asia*” spoken of in Revelation are all basically under Islamic control today;
- Palestine, the home of Jesus and the early Church, became an early addition to the Caliphate;
- Egypt, the motherland of Christian monasticism and a theological center from Origen to Athanasius, came under the orbit of Mecca;
- North Africa, where all Western theology had its roots through the Latin Fathers like Tertullian, Cyprian and Augustine, was incorporated into the world of Islam;
- Anatolia (Asia Minor), the site of Paul’s early journeys, of the ecumenical councils and of much of the patristic theology, all became provinces of Islam;
- Of the 5 great patriarchates of the ancient church – Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem – only Rome has remained free from the Muslim conquest;
- From Spain to Syria, Christianity has steadily retreated from the lands that gave birth and early nurture to her;
- So except for the Iberian (Spanish-Portuguese peninsula) and Balkan peninsulas, *the church has never taken back lands lost to Islam* (except in Spain through the “Spanish Inquisition” through which Moslems were either killed or expelled from the country);
- Had it not been for Charles “the Hammer” Martel leading his forces to victory over the Muslim invaders in Southern France, Islam might have conquered all of Europe;
- And Islam is Christianity’s greatest missionary competitor today as our major rival for the allegiance of the people of the developing nations in both Asia and Africa;

17. Since Islam is the only world religion born after the advent of Christianity, its very existence is a challenge to the *finality of the Gospel!*

- Next to Judaism, Islam is Christianity’s oldest and most successful spiritual competitor;

- Both Islam and Christianity make total and exclusive claims;
- But because Islam came after Christianity, they feel superior religiously and racially as the final revelation of God to man;

18. The world of Islam stretches from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean across three continents to the Islands of the Pacific – thus being the world’s largest mission field;

19. However, through the centuries, *Muslim people have continued to be the most unresponsive of all to the Christian Gospel;*

20. **Conclusions: *Islam is both the BIGGEST worldwide challenge to the Christian faith – but also the BIGGEST opportunity!*** However...

- Only 1% of Christian resources are directed toward Muslim evangelism – when they are direction *billions* annually to promote Islam;
- Just 6% of the total Christian missionary force is focused on the Islamic world;
- There is only *1 Christian missionary for every 1 million Muslims;*
- There are more missionaries working among the 500,000 residents of Alaska – then to the entire Muslim world;

Closing Prayer...