

MAJOR AREAS OF CONFLICT
(Part 3)

1. CRUSADES:

- a. When we come to a consideration of the “Crusades,” we enter into one of the most hotly contested areas of history! There are good historians who view the events of the Crusades through very different perspectives. And obviously this brief study cannot begin to address or answer all of the political, religious, economic and geographical issues involved. So we will have to “paint with a large brush” in our attempt to get an overview of these “religious wars” and how they impact our study of Christianity and Islam.
- b. The period of the Crusades (A.D. 1095 – 1291) are generally portrayed as a “War against Islam.”
- c. These were the so-called “Christian Holy Wars” commissioned by the Church to liberate the “Holy Land” out of the hands of the Muslims infidels.
- d. However, the tensions between Islam and Christianity began long before the Crusades.
- e. The starting point was the *Seventh Century* when Islam began a period of conquest by the “Armies of Allah” that basically redefined the face of the Middle East and North Africa – and extended into Spain. Before long Islam was a viable threat to all of Europe.
- f. And important date in the Islamic-Christian conflict was the year 638 AD when the Muslims first captured Jerusalem – the very *birthplace of Christianity*.
- g. As we have already seen in this study, the regions conquered in this “Era of Islamic expansionism” included the very “heart of Christianity” in Jerusalem, as well as the wider “Cradle of Christianity” in the Middle East, Syria, and North Africa.
- h. So it is a *fundamental error* and popular *historic revisionism* to say that Christians suddenly decided to lead a Crusade against the Muslims. It is a gross distortion of the historic record.
- i. In reality, the Muslims attacked and captured Jerusalem and many of the early “Christian Holy Lands” to the degree that finally the Christians fought back to regain their lands taken by the Muslims.
- j. But there will continue to be two basic opinions about the Crusades – one for Islam against Christianity; the other for Christianity against Islam.

- The *negative historical interpretation* of the Crusades basically says that it was a totally “offensive war” of aggression and hostility against Islam – inspired by a corrupt Papacy and motivated by greed and plunder;
- The more *positive historical interpretation* says the Crusades were in reality a “defensive war” against centuries of Muslim aggression and imperialism against Christianity;
- **Question:** Were the Crusades “piety” or “pillage?” Were they wars of “liberation” or “occupation?”
- **Answer:** It all depends upon your preconceived historical biases!
- However, it is a historical fact that *Islam was born through jihad* or “holy war,” under Muhammed, and it grew for centuries the same way. Without a doubt, Islam has always primarily “grown by the sword” rather than by preaching and persuasion.
- Therefore, it is my personal opinion that the Crusades were largely the *reaction and response* of the West to more than four centuries of *Islamic military expansion* and *religious imperialism* which had captured more than 2/3rds of the Christian world of that time.
- So while the Crusades lasted for two centuries, *Jihad has been a permanent fact of Muslim history* in the expansionism of Islam worldwide.
- Regardless of how one interprets the Crusades, we would all agree that there were *many* atrocities, wrongs and injustices committed – and often in the Name of God and the church. So certainly there is great room in Christendom for confession and repentance – and restitution wherever possible, for the evils committed by professing Christians during the Crusades. In warfare there has always been “collateral death and damage.” That’s why it is called *war!*
- However, it is unfortunate that the Crusades have become the “historical whipping post” that the West in general – and the church in particular, has been flagellated on for centuries! That is certainly an unbalanced and inaccurate historical reductionism to those events.

2. COLONIALISM:

- a. This second area of conflict between Christianity and Islam very closely parallels the first one. That’s because *Colonialism* can be interpreted as just another form of *Crusading*.

- b. When we speak about *Colonialism*, we are talking about the historic period roughly from A.D. 1450 – 1960/70.
- c. This time period is largely portrayed by the Muslim world as another “Western Expansionism against Islam.”
- d. From the Muslim perspective, the Colonial period was just another form of “Crusades” by the *Christian world* against the *world of Islam*.
- e. *Spain* and *Portugal* led the way in the Sixteenth Century with their warrior-missionary adventures. Then the *Dutch, French* and *English* entered this *global race of empire building*. Soon followed *Belgium, Germany, Italy* and *Russia*.
- f. And it is crucial to realize that *it is estimated that 90% of the lands occupied by the various colonial powers were Islamic*.
- g. Since Islam makes no basic distinction between “religion and the state,” they tend to interpret other countries the same way. So from the perspective of the Islamic world, *all of this colonialism was just another form of “Western Imperialism” and a “cultural crusades” by the West against Islam*.
- h. And since this was the same approximate time of the birth of the “Modern Missionary Movement,” Christian missionaries were largely seen as the “spiritual mercenaries” of colonialism! They were seen as the “Christian chaplains” to colonial powers that were subjugating Islam.
- i. *Great Britain* was especially seen this way since she tended to take her “Christian religion” everywhere she went – and built “Colonial Churches” for her people to attend.
- j. That’s why the Muslims continue to look to the “glory days” of Islam in her first 300 years of expansionism when they took so much ground from Christianity.
- k. They especially look to the era of “Islamic Dominance” from 750 AD – 1258 AD (known as the “Abbasid Period” of Islam).
- l. So Islam experienced its “Golden Age” at the time the “Dark Ages” were taking place in the West (A.D. 750 – 1265) – but especially the years of 780 AD – 830 AD.
- m. This “Islamic Era” was marked by great achievement in almost every area of endeavor: *philosophy, theology, literature, mathematics, medicine,*

***astronomy, architecture, craftsmanship.* And it is an age of advance and achievement that Islam has never been able to match again.**

- n. Obviously the *birth of the Nation of Israel* in 1948 is seen in the Islamic world as *the ultimate expression of Western colonialism*. Here is the very heart of the hatred and conflict between the Islamic World and the Western World – but especially against America.**
- o. This “Jewish Zionism” that led to the statehood of Israel is seen as the height of colonialism and imperialism against Islam.**
- p. And since America was the first country to recognize the State of Israel following the United Nations Resolution of 1948, America is especially hated and feared throughout the Islamic World.**
- q. The “Balfour Declaration” said that the British Government would look favorable on the creation of a Jewish State in Israel for the Jews (originally they were looking to make it in Uganda, Africa).**
- r. This started an “Anti-British” and later “Anti-American” mentality among the Arabs in general and the Muslims in particular – which has largely continued to this day.**
- s. Therefore, the birth of Israel could never have happened without the strong support of the United States.**
 - o Ever since that historic event, America has been perceived in the Muslim world as the real power behind the birth and existence of the Nation of Israel.**
 - o As a result, America is constantly seen and portrayed as the real enemy of Islam.**
 - o So one of the biggest stumbling blocks to American and Muslim relationships is America’s continued strong support of Israel – and her lesser support of Palestine and the PLO. Throughout the Islamic world this is seen as an unjust and unbalanced political allegiance.**
 - o So the “Middle East” is the greatest focal point and “flash point” of the conflict between America and Islam.**
 - o America had a good reputation in the Arab and Muslim world until the creation of the State of Israel and our strong support of it.**

- Closely related to this “Jewish Zionism” is the Christian Eschatology often known as Christian Zionism.
- This is the strong vocal and financial support of the Nation of Israel from much of the evangelical and Pentecostal world to the neglect of the Muslims in general and the Arab Christians in particular.
- This “blind loyalty” to the Nation of Israel, coupled with a strong belief in the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple – are all believed to be necessary prophetic fulfillments for the Second Coming of Christ.

3. CULTURE:

- a. Here we are talking about the clear “cultural clash” or “cultural war” between *Western Secularism, Americanism, Zionism, the Christian Culture* and the *Islamic worldview*.
- b. In reality, the “globalization of the world” is the “Americanization of the world” because we are the dominant power in the world today. As a result, the “American Culture” has worldwide influence on the developing nations of the world.
- c. And this is especially true of the domination of our American media on the world – particularly our TV, movies and music.
 - a. All of our media is seen in the Islamic World as decadent and detrimental to Islam.
 - b. As a result, America is seen as the “Great Satan” that must be destroyed in order to save Islam from the moral decay of the West.
 - c. Although Christianity was born in the Middle East where Islam was also birthed, she is largely seen today as a “Western Religion,” or the “Religion of foreigners.”
 - d. In Islam, Christianity is seen and defined by the *Roman Church, Greek Church, European Church* and *American Church* – all of which are totally “Western” and alien to the Muslim mentality.
 - e. And as we have already seen, while we in the West separate the “political” from the “religious” or “theological,” Islam makes no such distinction or dichotomy. To them, Islam is a “holistic” and a total way of life encompassing every area of living from the cradle to the grave.

- f. While we make a strong separation between “Church & State,” they make no such distinction. In Islamic countries *“religion is politics, and politics is religion.”*
- g. So in true Islam there is no distinction between the “sacred” and the “secular.”
- h. Most true Muslims see this “compartmentalization” and “separation” as both abnormal and unhealthy.
- i. They quickly point out our American and Western breakdown of morality as the logical consequences of the separation of religion from all other areas of life.
- j. So Islam is not just a “religion.” It is a *theocracy*, or “rule by God” through the Koran. It is a holistic worldview that results in a total Islamic lifestyle.
- k. While they have an all-encompassing “Muslim Culture,” we have lost any clear concept of an equally all-encompassing “Christian Culture” in America and in the West.
- l. Therefore, most professing Christians would be hard-pressed to come up with an intelligent definition of just what “Christian Culture” is!
- Depending upon their spiritual background and exposure, some would define it in terms of “do’s and don’ts.”
 - Others would describe it in terms of things like lifestyle... liturgy...“being religious”...“going to church”...“obeying the 10 Commandments”...or “living by the Golden Rule.”
 - So obviously there is no clear sense of consensus about what “Christian Culture” really is.
 - But since Islam is largely based upon “good works” and “religious performance,” most Muslims have a clearer sense of what “Islamic Culture” is all about.
- m. So as a result of this separation of religion from the rest of life, Christianity is largely seen as *inferior to Islam*. The Christian Faith is portrayed as the *religion of slaves and subjects* while Islam is the *religion of masters and rulers*.

- n. Islam then, feels that they have a “superior culture” to that of the West in general, and to Christianity in particular.

4. COMMUNITY:

- a. Islam by nature is a strongly *community oriented religion* where *group solidarity* is of supreme importance.
- b. *Individualism* as it is known, revered and practiced in the Western world is largely anathema to the world of Islam.
- c. Few if any decisions are ever individually made in Islamic Communities.
- d. *Personal identity* is solely discovered and maintained through membership in the family, clan, group, nation, community of Islam.
- e. So to “convert” to another religion – especially Christianity, is to totally lose one’s identity, family, community – *everything!* And usually your life!
- f. This is why “individual conversions” are so difficult and rare in Islam.
- g. That is also one of the biggest challenges to Islamic evangelism. If there is going to be a mass movement away from Islam, whole communities will have to be converted – not just individuals.
- h. Studies have shown that it takes an average of *3 years of relationship and friendship* before a Muslim becomes a Christianity! So there is no such thing as a quick “*Four Spiritual Law*”...or “*Steps To Peace With God*”...or “*Roman Road*” approach to Muslim evangelism! Unless you are committed to building *years* of friendship – you will never see Muslims won to Christ.
- i. This is where the words of St. Francis of Assisi are so relevant: “*Preach the Gospel at all times, use words if necessary.*”

5. CALIPHATE:

- a. This is the Anglicized or Latinized version of the Arabic word *Khalifah*, and means “successor” or “representative.” The word primarily means the “spiritual successor to Muhammed.”

- b. When Muhammed died in 632 AD at about the age of 62, he left a religious and political organization that was totally centered around him. During his life he was the *spiritual, political and military leader of Islam* – and the only source of *revelation* from Allah. So Muhammed had the authority of Allah behind him in everything he said and did. He was “God’s Caliph,” or undisputed ruler on earth – and his power was exclusive and not shared by others.
- c. Unfortunately, neither Muhammed nor his followers seemed to have thought much about who would rule after his death. This is in distinct contrast to...
- Moses and the “70 Elders” whom he shared power and authority with (Ex. 18);
 - Nor was it like Moses’ preparation of Joshua to succeed him (Deut. 32:1-8; 34:9; Josh. 1:1-9);
 - And it was not like Jesus’ sharing His power and authority with the “Twelve Apostles” (Matt. 10) and “Seventy-Two” (Lk. 10);
- d. As we have already seen, Islam – just like ancient Israel, believes in a *theocracy*, or “rule by God.” And Muhammed alone was the focal point of that *theocracy*.
- e. So when he died, there was an immediate *problem of succession*. The very first successor was *Abu Bakr*, Muhammed’s father-in-law, who had been with him from the very beginning. He was also the father of Muhammad’s favorite wife, *Aisha*. Like Muhammed, Bakr was a military genius, and continued the expansion of Islam by the sword. He died just 2 years after he had been named the successor of Muhammed. But before his death, he had set in motion a military strategy and momentum that would lead to one of the largest empires in history within a few decades after his demise.
- f. Bakr was succeeded by Umar, who was also a very strong political and military leader. He continued and expanded the military conquests begun by Bakr – conquering Syria the Byzantine territories and Egypt and the Persian Empire. But just as importantly, Umar formalized Islamic tradition and practices, established the Islamic lunar calendar beginning with Muhammad’s migration to Medina, and began the process of codifying the Koran. This process of codifying the Koran was completed by his successor, Uthman.
- g. However, there were also a number of splits in Islam during these times between the followers of Muhammad from Medina and those

from Mecca. Ultimately the split took place between Uthman and Ali, who was the son-in-law of Muhammed. This ultimately led to the establishment of the Sunnis – who followed Uthman, and the Shia who followed Ali. And that major division exists to this day.

- h.** The title and authority of the Caliphate existed off and on until it was official discontinued in 1924 by the Republic of Turkey who constitutionally abolished the institution of the Caliphate. As a result, the title has been inactive and unused generally in the Muslim world – until recently.
- i.** However, there have been attempts to revive the title and concept in various places throughout the Islamic world by Muslim radicals and Fundamentalists.
- j.** Without a doubt, this is one of the chief purposes and passions of Muslim Fundamentalists today around the world.
- k.** A biography by Abdullah Azzam, one of the most influential Islamic thinkers – who has also greatly impacted the philosophy of Osama bin Laden, declared that his life “...revolved around a single goal, namely the establishment of Allah’s rule on earth and restoring the caliphate” (“What Do the Terrorist Want?” by Daniel Pipes, *New York Sun*, July 26, 2005).
- l.** Osama bin Laden spoke of the certainty that “...*the pious caliphate will start from Afghanistan*” (Ibid).
- m.** Bin Laden’s chief deputy, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, likewise wrote about the establishment of the caliphate: “...*history would make a new turn, God willing, in the opposite direction against the empire of the United States and the world’s Jewish Government*” (Ibid).
- n.** So from the time of Muhammed forward, Muslims believed that the *spiritual, legal, political and military powers* should be united in one person and one religion. That’s why there as no “separation of church and state” in true Islam.
- o.** The Koran was to be the “law of the land” and citizenship was determined and defined by religious commitment.
- p.** This *fusion of religion and politics* was symbolized by the *Caliph*, or spiritual successor to Muhammed. That’s why Islam believed in and practiced a *caliphate* from the seventh until early in the Twentieth Century when it was officially abolished by Turkey.

- q. But make no mistake about it, Fundamentalistic Islam has a goal of the establishment of a *worldwide caliphate* founded on Shari'a law that would restore the "Golden Age" of Islam.
- r. However, Evangelical Christians also see themselves under the clear mandate of the "Great Commission" to take the Gospel of Christ to the ends of the earth. But as we have seen earlier, we are to *evangelize the world through love* – not *Christianize the world through force*.
- s. Likewise, Islamic Fundamentalists see themselves under a similar mandate to take the "Message of Mohammed" to the ends of the earth and bring the whole world into *submission* at the feet of Allah.
- t. As a result, Christianity and Islam are on an irreversible "collision course" that can only be avoided if one or the other denies the essence of their faith!
- u. So the world is ultimately moving toward an "Islamic Caliphate" brought about by jihad and terrorism; or the "Kingdom of God" ushered in by the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus!

6. CHRIST:

- a. Obviously the Islamic teaching about Christ is the single **BIGGEST** area of conflict between Muslims and Christians. Jesus is the "crux of the conflict."
- b. It comes as a big surprise to many Christians that Jesus (Arabic = Isa) is mentioned in 15 suras (chapters) and 93 *times* totally in the Koran.
- c. When Jesus is spoken of in the Koran, it is always with *great respect and honor*, as are all of the prophets of God. That's why when any of these prophets are spoken of by Muslims, they will use the phrase of respect: "*Jesus, peace be on him.*"
- d. In the Koran, Jesus is called the...
 - "Word of God"
 - "Spirit of God"
 - "The Messiah"
 - "The Righteous One"
- e. Here is a brief summary of what Muslims believe about Jesus:

- He was *born of the Virgin Mary* (Q:3:47)
 - As an infant, *He miraculously spoke in the cradle* (Q. 19:29-30)
 - He was a *created being* and is not eternal (Q:3:59)
 - He was *not the "Son of God"* (Q:19:34-38)
 - He was just a *prophet or apostle* (Q:2:136; 2:84; 9:30)
 - He was the *Messiah* (Q:4:157, 171; 9:3)
 - He is no more than a *servant of Allah* (Q:43:59)
 - He *healed lepers, gave sight to the blind and raised the dead* (Q:5:113)
 - He *did not die on the cross* (Q: 4:157)
 - He was *not divine* (Q:5:17, 75)
 - He will one day *come again* in the "last days" in Judgment (Q:43:61)
 - Most importantly, that *Jesus was a faithful Muslim*, a "follower of Allah" (Q:43:63-64; Vol. 6, Bk. 60, Num. 238)
- f. The teachings and traditions of the *Hadith* further say this about the "Second Coming" of Jesus:
- He will "slay the anti-Christ";
 - He will destroy all religions but Islam;
 - He will "kill all swine";
 - He will "break the cross";
 - He will remove the "poll tax" from the infidels (Jews & Christians);
 - He will reign as a just king for about 40 years;
 - He will marry and have children;
 - He will perform the Hajj to Mecca;
 - He will die and be buried near Mohammed in Medina;
- g. So Muslims indeed have a strong and extensive beliefs about Jesus. However, the majority of their beliefs about Jesus are either totally wrong or are only partial truths about Him.
- h. Therefore, they have an "inoculation of Jesus" against the true historic and Biblical Jesus that makes it VERY difficult for them to take an objective look at Him as revealed in the Bible. So they have an "*inoculation against the real Jesus.*"
- i. As a result, Islam feels she has *surpassed and superseded Christianity* – not by a rejection of Jesus, but by a *radical reinterpretation of Him*.
- j. Starting with the affirmation that Muhammed is the "*...last and greatest Prophet of God,*" Islam relegates Jesus to a secondary position. He is honored as the next-to-last in a long series of 25 prophets, or the *penultimate prophet* second only to Muhammed. And Jesus came with the same message as all of the other prophets before Him: "*Worship Allah alone.*"

- k. When it comes to a study of the difference between Christianity and other World Religions, the MAJOR issue is always *Christology*, or the doctrine of the *Person* and *Work* of Christ.
- l. In both Galatians 1 and II Corinthians 11, the Apostle Paul warns about a “*different Gospel*” about a “*different Jesus*” inspired by a “*different spirit*.”
- m. So as I have taught for years in courses on “Comparative Religions” and “Contemporary Cults,” you can be right at every other point in your theology – but if you are wrong about Jesus – you are wrong at the ONLY place that counts! If you are *wrong about Jesus* – then you are wrong enough to lose your soul and be separated from God for both time and eternity!
- n. The Koran also teaches that Jesus was “born of the Virgin Mary,” and refers to Jesus as the “Son of Mary” some 23 times. However, it also teaches that *Mary was a sister of Aaron & Moses* (Sura 19:28). So this is a serious contradiction between the Koran and the Bible and a historical “date error” of over 1,400 years!
- o. It is significant that the Koran talks a lot about the *miracles* of Christ but little about the *teachings* of Christ. So *either Muhammed knew little about the teaching of Christ, or he chose to ignore them because they contradicted with his teachings.*
- p. To be continued in our next session...

Closing Prayer...