

MUHAMMAD & HIS BELIEFS
(MOHAMMED)
(Part 2)

1. ***Every religion is the incarnation of its founder! Therefore, Islam is an incarnation of Muhammed*** – although faithful Muslims would strongly disagree with this statement because they would say that Islam is a “revelation of Allah” and not an “incarnation of Muhammed.”
2. Muhammed was born in 570 AD, into the *Hasheem Family*. They were a part of the idolatrous *Quresh Tribe* in Mecca on the Arabian Peninsula.
3. “The inhabitants of Arabia prior to the birth of Muhammed were known, as they are to this day, as Arabs, and are bound together by a very loose tribal structure” (Dr. Tim Tennent, Professor of Missions, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary).
4. Arabia in the 6th century was a “...*land of traders and raiders*” who would make their living preying off of the caravans that they would attack and plunder (Tennent).
5. His father died close to his birth and his mother died when he was 6 – so *he was parentally deprived as a young boy*, but was raised by his extended family.
6. All Muslim scholars agree that Muhammed had a very ordinary childhood and youthful years – much like the so-called “silent years” of Jesus growing up in Nazareth.
7. Like the rest of his fellow tribesmen, *Muhammed was a pagan idolater*, who sacrificed to multiple deities located in a cube-like building known as the Ka’ba in Mecca, the center of idol worship for the Arabian Peninsula.
8. Inside the Ka’ba was an important “Black Stone” along with some 360 other images and idols that these Arab people worshipped. Mecca then was the Athens or “Mars Hill” of the Arab world (Tennent).
9. “Pre-Islamic Arabia was a place of *Bedouin people* who were trading with the many camel caravans that were going up and connecting with the *silk route*, which wended all the way from Europe to China” (Tennent) So for these Arab tribesmen living on the Arabian Peninsula, their only contact with the outside world was through these various caravans that traversed their arid desert peninsula.

10. Since his father died before his birth, and his mother also when he was young, Muhammed was primarily raised by his uncle, *Abu Talib*, who was a traveling merchant.
11. Muslim history and tradition says that Mohammed often traveled with his uncle on trading journeys into Syria and possibly other locations around the Middle East. Little more is known for sure about Mohammed's childhood.
12. "It is often said that 'geography is latent history' or that 'geography often determines history.'" That is certainly the case with Arabia and the life of Muhammed.
13. "The geography of Arabia is critical to understanding the whole rise of Islam. If you look at a map of Arabia, you will see that..."
 - It is a land enclosed on the north by the mountains of Asia Minor;
 - On the south it is trapped by the Indian Ocean;
 - On the east are the mountains of Persia;
 - On the West is the Mediterranean and Red Sea.
 - Therefore, "Arabia is certainly a land which is isolated geographically" (Tennent).
14. Muhammed then *had a very limited worldview* because of the *geographical isolation* that he grew up in.
15. Therefore, Muhammed learned most of his early theological beliefs from other traders – not known for their theological learning, much like "traveling salesmen" today!
16. When he was 25, Mohammed married a rich 40 year old widow named "Khadijah," who owned several camel caravans. Muhammed helped her run her business. Interestingly, Muhammed married no other woman until after she died.
 - This marriage to a wealthy widow gave him status among the nobles of Mecca;
 - Her wealth also gave him more and more time to devote to his growing spiritual pursuits;
 - From the age of about 40 Muhammed began to go regularly to Mt. Hira, a solitary place to pray and meditate.
 - There he began having a series of "visions" that occurred over the next 22 years – or from 610 AD to 632 AD;

- For about the first 3 years, Muhammed basically kept these revelations private.
- However, during the month of *Ramadan*, something happened to change Muhammed forever – as well as the rest of the world. It was the 9th month in the Arabian lunar calendar, which was sacred to the pagans, so they would declare a “truce” from their caravan raiding during this month to give everyone some time for worship, meditation and reflection.
- So it was during *Ramadan* that Mohammad received his life-changing revelation on Mt. Hira saying: “*Proclaim*” or “*read.*”
- Later he heard another voice saying: “*Thou are the messenger of God, and I am Gabriel.*”
- This was the beginning of Mohammed’s ministry and he realized his calling and prophetic mission;
- His first wife, Khadijah, was one of the first to believe that Mohammed was actually receiving divine revelations. Only she and a few other friends initially accepted Mohammed’s newfound monotheism faith.
- Increasingly Muhammed began to call other people to leave their idolatrous polytheism and follow the One True God, Allah.
- He obviously met fierce resistance and opposition in the highly polytheistic atmosphere of Mecca. Anytime religion clashes with economics, there will be great problems!
- There is a parallel here between the preaching of Muhammed and that of Paul in Ephesus when he faced great opposition from Demetrius and his fellow idol craftsmen and silversmiths who were in danger of losing their trade through the preaching of Paul (Acts 17:25ff).
- Allah ultimately confirmed Muhammed’s prophethood in 620 AD by bringing him by night to Jerusalem. These several “spiritual visits” are known as the “Night Journeys” of Muhammed (Obviously there is no historical record of Muhammed ever physically visiting Jerusalem, which is the 3rd holiest city to Islam);
- While in Jerusalem Muhammed reputedly conversed with Abraham, Moses and Jesus.

- There he was also taken by a ladder (miraj) to the 7th heaven.
- Moslems believe that the “Dome of the Rock” was built on the site of his heavenly ascension.

17. But Mecca continued to be central in the life and ministry of Muhammed since it was the capital city of the Arabian Peninsula.

- As we have already seen, Mecca was the pilgrim center for the many Arab Tribes that populated the Peninsula;
- Their central shrine, called the “Ka’ba,” was located there with all of their 360 idols and images;
- So Mohammed begins to preach his fiery sermons in Mecca against this polytheistic idolatry – telling the people to turn to the One God. This message was obviously not well received by the local residents, whose idolatry was well entrenched;
- To his credit, Muhammed also denounced the many “loan sharks” who were profiting off of this idolatrous worship. He also preached against the wealthy people of the city who were profiting from ill-gotten gain;
- He also defended the cause of widows and orphans – and forbade the killing of female infants, which was widely practiced during that time;
- But Mecca was not yet ready for this firebrand. As threats were increased against his life, he was invited to come to the rival city of Medina and become their leader;

18. So in 622 AD, Mohammed migrated to Medina – 250 miles to the north of Mecca, to become the military, political and religious head of this new fledgling “Nation of Islam.”

- This journey of Mohammed to Medina is known as the *Hegira*, and is one of the most important dates in the history of Islam;
- In fact, all Islamic history begins from this date, which is “year 1” of the Muslim Calendar – and can be paralleled with the “Jewish Exodus” from Egypt which marked the beginning of their existence as a nation;
- Thus the letters “A.H.” or *Anno Hegirae*, or “after the Hijra” are used in all Islamic dates (like we use “A.D.”);

- And this is the time that the monotheistic visions of Muhammed become the collective belief of a group of followers, known as Muslims – who were neither Jews or Christians;
 - So the city of *Yathrob* was renamed *Medina*, which means “City of the Prophet”;
19. For the next 8 - 10 years Mohammed unified the various Arab tribes into an invincible fighting force;
20. Finally, in January, 630 AD, Mohammed marched on Mecca with a force of 10,000 men, and it fell without a fight. Reputedly only 28 Meccans and 2 Moslems were killed.
21. When Mohammed entered Mecca, he encircled the Ka’ba 7 times, and paid homage to the “Black Stone” as the symbol of monotheism.
- It was believed by the Arabs that it was placed there by Abraham, the “father of monotheism”;
 - They believed that Abraham traveled with his son Ishmael, to that place to construct the altar upon which to sacrifice to the One true God, and laid this “Black Stone” as the altar to monotheism;
 - So now they had a sacred place that was the center of their monotheism to rival the location of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem;
22. Muhammed then purified the Ka’ba of its idols and destroyed them one by one. It was then established as the center to which all Muslims must face when they pray – and the “Muslim call to prayer” was heard in the “holy city” for the first time. He also mandated it as the place that every able bodied Muslim must make a pilgrimage once in their lifetime.
- He destroyed all the idols of the “Ka’ba” except the statues of Jesus and Mary (according to Moslem Tradition) – believing it to have been built by their patriarch, Abraham;
 - However, Medina continued to be his base from which he conducted military campaigns into Syria and made treaties with the Christian tribes;
 - It is also important to note that Muhammed increasingly had regular – and often hostile contacts, with Jews living in Medina during this period. That was because they would not accept his brand of monotheism and worship of Allah rather than Jehovah;

- However, there is no clear record of Muhammed having any significant and sustained contacts with Christians there during this time;

23. Muhammed made a final pilgrimage to Mecca in 632 AD. He was ill during this time, but made it back to Medina where on June 8, 632 AD, he died in the arms of *Aisha*, his favorite wife whom he had married when she was just 9 years old (Allah gave Mohammed permission to have 12 wives!).

24. Muhammed was buried in Mecca, the “City of the Prophet” in the “Prophet’s Mosque” – which is the second most sacred mosque in the world to this day. It is second only to the “Grand Mosque” in Mecca. It is followed by the “Prophet’s Prayer Mosque” also in Arabia where Muhammed is believed to have prayed after the Hegira on his way to Mecca. Finally, the “Dome of the Rock” in Jerusalem, which is the fourth most holy mosque in the world. Muslims believe this was the site where Abraham was going to sacrifice his son, Ishmael, before God intervened. It is the most sacred mosque outside of Arabia. So the most sacred Muslim mosques are to this day:

- The “Grand Mosque” in Mecca;
- The “Prophet’s Mosque” in Medina;
- The “Prayer Mosque” in Arabia;
- The “Dome of the Rock” in Jerusalem;

25. It is crucial for your understanding of Muhammed and Islam to realize that in his early travels he was exposed to the *monotheism of both the Jews and Christians* – which he felt was superior to the polytheism of the paganism of the Arabian Peninsula. Without question, had Muhammed not encountered the teachings of both Judaism and Christianity – there would be no Islam!

26. Therefore, since Muhammed’s early years were impacted by both *Jews and Christians* – we must look more closely at his relationship with them. Without understanding his debt to both Judaism and Christianity, you will never fully understand Islam.

- Tragically, there is no clear evidence that the Gospels were translated into Arabic during the life time of Muhammed – which would explain why his knowledge of the Gospels and New Testament was so incomplete;

- Therefore, Mohammed's ignorance of the Bible and Christianity is evident throughout the Koran – even from the most superficial reading of it;
- So let's look more closely with his early encounters with both Judaism and Christianity...

27. Jews:

- By the time of the birth of Muhammed, *Jews were already living throughout the major cities of the Arabian Peninsula;*
- They especially were concentrated in a city known as *Yathrob*, later known as *Medina*, the second largest city of the Arabian Peninsula some 250 miles north of Mecca;
- Obviously the Jews were very troubled and distressed over the rampant idolatry of the Arabs all around them – just as they were by the idolatry of every people they lived among in the Diaspora;
- So when they heard about the monotheistic preaching of this “prophet Muhammed” that there was only one true God, they were glad – and gave him initial support and encouragement;
- Since he preached against idolatry and the acceptance of “One true God,” they had a commonality with him.
- In addition, Muhammed emphasized the importance of Abraham and the Ten Commandments as the Word of God;
- So on the basis of these commonalities, the Jews of Medina opened the gates of the city to Muhammed and welcomed him;
- But soon they increasingly became disenchanted with his message as his “revelations” made some major changes in the Jewish Scriptures (Joseph is not seduced by Potiphar's wife, Ezra becomes the “son of God,” etc. Q. 12);
- So this tampering with the message of the Torah soon caused Muhammed to lose his Jewish support – and rightly so;

28. Christians:

- Tragically, Muhammed's world was devoid of any healthy examples of orthodox, evangelical Christianity;

- The Christian church of Muhammed's day was just emerging from some of the early "Christological Councils" where they were struggling to formulate the nature of Christ;
- **Note:** Muhammed was born in 570 AD, and the "*Council of Chalcedon*" did not finally formulate the orthodox position on Christology until 451 AD.
 - It affirmed that Jesus Christ was "*fully God*" and "*fully man*";
 - He was One Person with two Natures – one fully divine, and one fully human;
 - He was the *theanthropic* Person of history.
 - So the full message of this Christian orthodoxy about the nature of Christ was not fully disseminated in the Arab world during the time of Muhammed;
- As a result, many were vacillating between the two extremes of:
 - Emphasizing *Christ's divinity* to the neglect of *His humanity*;
 - Or *Christ's humanity* at the expense of *His divinity*;
 - So immediately before the birth of Muhammed and the advent of Islam, there was a whole host of *Christological heresies* abounding. Groups like the *Ebonites, Arians, Socinians, Docetics, Sabellians, Nestorians, Monofisites* and *Adoptionists, etc.*, who each deviated from the orthodox Christology that taught both the *full deity* and *full humanity* of Christ in *One Person*;
 - And since these Christological heresies had been condemned in the Rome and the rest of the orthodox Christian world, many of them fled to the Arabian Peninsula to practice and propagate "*another gospel*" about "*another Christ*" that was inspired by "*another spirit*" (II Cor. 11: 4-5);

29. Also, there were some ugly wars taking place involving "Christians" that did not help Muhammed's understanding of authentic Christianity.

- In the year he was born, "Christian" Ethiopian invaders from Abyssinia, tried to conquer his hometown of Mecca;

- In the northern part of his country, “Christian” Byzantine armies used Arab tribesmen in their wars with Persia;
 - So these wars involving “Christians” made it easy for Muhammed to also “take up the sword” to propagate his new found faith;
 - And all over the Arabia Peninsula, Mohammed saw these Syrian Nestorian monks in strange-looking monasteries who worshiped three gods, the “Father, Jesus and Mary.”
30. So clearly then, *Mohammed never fully understood the orthodoxy of either Judaism or Christianity.*
- Muhammed knew just enough about Judaism and Christianity to be confused and confusing;
 - And he neither read, nor comprehended either the Jewish Bible or New Testament – although he initially had great respect for the “*People of the Book*” as Jews and Christians are called in the Koran;
31. However, Muslims do not believe that Muhammed was influenced by any human influences – but received all of his knowledge or “revelations” directly from God through the angel, Gabriel (Jabril).
32. As we have seen, Muhammed supposedly received his initial “revelation” from Gabriel on the 17th of Ramadan in the Moslem calendar, in the year 610 AD.
33. Muslims also believe that Mohammed was “sinless” but not “divine.” But he is believed to be the last and greatest prophet of God/Allah – the “Seal of the prophets.” Or to quote the Koran: “*Mohammed is not the father of any of your men, but The Apostle of God, and the Seal of the prophets*” (Sura 33:40)
34. In addition to the Koran, which they believe was given to Muhammed by Gabriel directly as a copy of the “Heavenly Koran,” the traditions about Mohammed are known as “Hadith.” They continue to play a great – but divisive role, in the various sects of Islam as to their place of authority.
35. Interestingly, the Koran has no “birth narrative” for Mohammed – which is central in the Gospel narratives about Christ.
36. There is obviously no reference in the Bible of Mohamed, or prophecy about his coming – although they believe that Jesus prophesied his coming as the “Comforter.”

37. It is significant that the Koran never claims that *Mohammed performed any miracles*. However, Muslims believe that his receiving the Koran from Allah was his big miracle.
38. So in less than a hundred years after the death of Muhammed in 632 AD, his followers had burst out of the Arabian Desert to conquer and create an empire whose glories were to shine for a thousand years.
39. Muslims then believe that every prophet prior to Muhammed was sent to a limited people group. Muhammed however, was sent to all people.
40. Summary:
- Muhammed claimed equal status with Moses and Jesus;
 - Muhammed claimed to be the “*Seal of the Prophets,*” or the last and final prophet of God to man. Thus he is the fulfillment of all O.T. prophets;
 - Muhammed demanded absolute obedience to his words;
 - Muhammed claimed that Jesus prophesied his coming as the “Comforter”;
 - Even though Muhammed drew heavily from both Jewish and Christian teachings – he never fully understood either.
 - Therefore, it is historically and spiritually accurate to say that Islam is a “hybrid religion” that sprang forth from the roots of Arab paganism and animism, and strongly from his misunderstandings of both Judaism and Christianity.

Prayer...