

Course: World Religions, Cults and Heresies
Section One: Christianity and World Religions
Lesson Four

Title: Islam

Introduction:

Islam means 'Submission'.
Muslim means 'one who submits'
Allah means 'The God' in Arabic

Comparison between Islam and Biblical Christianity

Islam promotes outward adherence to religious duties.

It is a religion of works.

Biblical Christianity is not based upon any religious practices.

It is new life in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 'Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.'

Biblical Christianity is to be distinguished from sacramental Christianity in which leaders are priests who offer sacraments, and through which it is claimed grace is received by the recipient.

Muhammad rejected Nestorian Christianity.

Muhammad came into contact with Nestorian Christianity.

The Koran attacks Nestorian Christianity.

Nestorians separated the two natures of Christ.

They denied the association of Mary as the 'Mother of God'.

They would only accept that Mary was the 'Mother of Christ'.

Nestorianism was condemned by the First Council of Ephesus in 431 AD.

Main Points

1. Origins of Islam

Arabs at time of Muhammad held Allah to be supreme but not the only god. They did not consider it important to worship him. The Ka'aba 'House of Allah' was full of images of gods and goddesses.

At time of Muhammad it was the custom to make pilgrimage to Ka'aba, walk around seven times, kiss or touch the Black Stone which was built into the wall.

The Black Stone of Mecca was associated with the Arab cultural heritage.

Note: Religion always embeds itself in culture.

The Ka'aba and the Black Stone of Mecca.

Hagar was cast out with Ishmael.

They would have died of thirst in the desert but scripture states that God opened the eyes of Hagar to see the place where there was a well of water (Genesis 21:14-21).

Muslim tradition states that at Mecca

- Ishmael kicked the sand and a spring of water came up. Pilgrims came to drink of the water and to be healed.
- The 'House of Allah' Ka'aba (meaning cube) was destroyed by the flood.
- Abraham came to Ishmael and they rebuilt the 'House of Allah' together.

The Black Stone of Mecca

Muslim Tradition states the black stone was:

- ...a meteorite that fell from heaven.
- ...originally in the Garden of Eden.
- ...handed down from Adam.
- ...was originally white but has become black through the sins of the people.

The Bible says:

- ...it was Lucifer and his angels who fell from heaven.
- ...Adam and Eve were put out of the Garden of Eden because of sin.
- ...it is a sinful nature that has been handed down through Adam. People are sinful by nature.
- ...the only Stone who can take away sins is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the stone that the builders rejected. '*Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner' (1 Peter 2:7)*' It was the sinless Son of God who could become sin for us. Salvation is only through Jesus Christ by becoming a new creation in Christ.

Muhammad

Muhammad (means Praised) born 570 in Mecca, died 632.
Mecca - shrine city. Kaaba - House of Allah.

Muhammad's father was Abdullah meaning 'slave of Allah'.
Muhammad's father died two months after Muhammad was born.
Muhammad's mother died when he was six
Brought up by poor uncle, Abu Talib.
Part of Quraish tribe who looked after the Ka'aba.

Arabs at time of Muhammad recognised Allah as supreme but not the only God. Worship centred on Ka'aba.
Ka'aba full of images of gods (360 gods - one for each day of the year).
Custom to walk around the black stone 7 times.

At 25 years of age Muhammad was employed by a wealthy widow, Khadijah, in Mecca. She was 40 and offered to marry him.
They had 2 sons (both died in infancy) and 4 daughters.
They were married 25 years before Khadijah died.

Timeline of the Life of Muhammad

Satanic verses

Muhammad preached his revelations in Mecca.
When he was reciting the Sura (53:19-20) it is claimed that Muhammad moved away from his position of monotheism and upheld the worship of the three daughters of Allah.
'Have you considered Allat and al-Uzza and Manal, the other third?'
The Meccans at the time worshipped many gods and these included these three goddesses.
Muhammad claimed that the angel Gabriel rebuked him for reciting this and told him he had been under Satan's power at the time.
Muslim clerics claim this did not happen.
Salman Rushdie (b.1947) wrote a book based on the idea of the Satanic verses (1988).

Division between Sunnites and Shiites

Cause of the division in Islam - who should succeed Muhammad?
Muhammad was a religious and a civil ruler over most of the people of Arabia.
The majority held that the successor should be the best man for the job.
These are held to be the four caliphs who ruled the Muslim empire after Muhammad.

Others maintained successor must be a descendant of Muhammad.
Muhammad had no son.
His daughter, Fatima, was the wife of Ali.
Shi'ite claim that Ali was appointed by Muhammad as his successor.
Ali supposedly appointed his son, Hasan.
These descendants are called Imams.

The Sunnite

Claim to follow the true tradition of Muhammad.
Reject belief in the Imams.

The Shi'ites

Shi'ite means 'partisans' (of Ali).
Minority.
Believe in the Imams
Most of the Muslims in Iran; many in Iraq but minority; Afghanistan; Pakistan.

2. The Scriptures of Islam

Koran means 'the recitation'.
Muslims claim that the message of the Koran was given by Allah to Muhammad by the Archangel.
114 revelations in the Koran. 114 Sura (chapter or division). Each Sura is one revelation.

The message of the Koran:

...addresses the downtrodden and poor.
...promotes the equality of all men before Allah
...denies the need for a mediator between God and man.
...holds that there is no need for a mosque to pray - God is everywhere.
...makes the Islamic religion convenient to keep. Muslims pray five times a day - every Muslim carries a prayer rug; prays by taking off shoes and kneeling down facing Mecca. Prayer is the Al-Fatihah - opening verses of the Koran.

A system of works compared to receiving God's free gift.

Islam is a religion based on works where Muslims seek to earn salvation through submission to the precepts of their faith.
Biblical Christianity maintains that it is only through the free gift of God in Jesus Christ that we can have eternal life, and not of works (Ephesians 2:8).
It is trusting Christ alone for salvation.

Mediator

Islam has no mediator between God and mankind.

Biblical Christianity maintains there is One mediator between God and man, The Man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5-6)

It is only through the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son that we can be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:18)

The Koran attacks the person of the Son of God

Koran states that 'God has no Son'.

Claims Jesus was one of the prophets.

Quote: Sura 19:88-92 'They say: "(Allah) Most Gracious has begot a son!"

Indeed ye have put forth a thing most monstrous!

At it the skies are ready to burst, the earth to split asunder, and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin, That they should invoke a son for (Allah) Most Gracious.

For it is not consonant with the majesty of (Allah) Most Gracious that He should beget a son.'

3. Teachings of Islam

Outward adherence to religious practices

Submission to Allah means outward adherence to the Islamic religion.

A Muslim is one who submits by

...reciting the creed 'There is one God and Muhammad is his prophet'

...upholding the five pillars of Islam.

The Five Pillars of the Islamic Faith.

- 1) The Declaration of Faith – Shahada. Recitation of the creed.
- 2) Five daily prayers in direction of Mecca.
- 3) Welfare contribution for poor - Zakat
- 4) Pilgrimage to Mecca - HAAJJ
- 5) Fasting during daylight hours of the ninth lunar month of Ramadan. The Koran was revealed as a guide to mankind during Ramadan.

All Religious Duties

- 1) Prayers. 5 times a day – Sunnites. 3 times a day - Shi'ites
- 2) Fasting - Ramadan
- 3) Almsgiving
- 4) Jihad - advance Islam (Surah 9:19)
- 5) Circumcision
- 6) Veiling of women
- 7) Abstaining from certain foods, and alcohol.
- 8) Polygamy. Muslim man may marry up to four wives provided he can look after them otherwise only one.

Biblical Christianity maintains that outward adherence to religious duties cannot save because it does not change our nature.

What we do is a consequence of who we are. We are born sinful and at enmity with God.

A person can only receive salvation by being born again (John 3:3) of the Spirit of God and by becoming a new creation in Christ. Only the power of God the Holy Spirit can change a person from the inside.

Biblical Christianity is by nature 'new life in Christ'.

In this respect it is not like a religion because it is not built on works.

Jihad (holy war) compared with love your enemies.

Some Muslims associate the word Islam with 'defiance of death' or readiness to die.

It is linked closely with 'jihad'. They maintain that loyalty to the faith (imam) of Islam is through total commitment to 'jihad'.

Jihad and the Koran

Surah 9:19 'Do ye make the giving of drink to pilgrims, or the maintenance of the Sacred Mosque, equal to (the pious service of) those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and strive with might and main in the cause of Allah? (*jihad fi sabil Allah*) They are not comparable in the sight of Allah: And Allah guides not those who do wrong.'

Surah 9:20 'Those who believe, and suffer exile and strive with might and main, in Allah's cause, with their goods and their persons, have the highest rank in the sight of Allah: They are the people who will achieve (salvation).'

Strive with might and main - jihad

Islamic extremists regard this as 'Holy war in the name of Allah'.

Moderates regard this as the spread of Islam by peaceable means.

However, the phenomenal spread of Islam from 632-732 was not through peaceable means but by the use of the sword.

The phenomenal spread of Christianity was through preaching.

Later events such as the Crusades were inspired by papal authority and unscriptural teachings relating to purgatory.

Islam is by nature 'a religion of jihad'.

Holy war in the name of Allah.

Biblical Christianity teaches 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you' (Matthew 5:44). Christianity is spread through the preaching of the gospel whereas Islam was spread by the sword and apostates sentenced to death.

Summary:

1. Islam follows a tradition that the black stone of Mecca takes away the sins of the people. Biblical Christianity holds that only the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, can cleanse a person from sin (1 John 1:7)
2. Islam has no mediator between God and mankind but presents a system of works to earn salvation. Biblical Christianity holds that without a mediator there is no way for us to enter into the presence of God. Jesus Christ is God and Man and has become our mediator. There is only one mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).
3. Islam believes that salvation is through outward submission to Allah. Biblical Christianity holds that outward adherence to a system of worship cannot change the heart. It is only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that a person can receive a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17).

What should the student do?

- 1) Pray for Muslims they are in contact with.
- 2) Show Christ to Muslims through love.
- 3) Be a friend whenever opportunity arises.
- 4) In conversation talk of the need for a changed heart.
- 5) Give testimony of knowing new life in Jesus Christ

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