

BEYOND THE BASICS (Week #2)—Handout 1 of 2

Prepared by Pastor Daren Erisman for Bethlehem Lutheran Church, October 12, 2008

THE HADITH OF GABRIEL

‘Umar ibn al-Khattab said:

One day when we were with God’s messenger, a man with very white clothing and very black hair came up to us. No mark of travel was visible on him, and none of us recognized him. Sitting down before the Prophet, leaning his knees against his, and placing his hands on his thighs, he said, “Tell me, Muhammad, about submission.”

He replied, “Submission means that you should bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is God’s messenger, that you should perform the ritual prayer, pay the alms tax, fast during Ramadan, and make the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to go there.”

The man said, “You have spoken the truth.” We were surprised at his question him and then declaring that he had spoken the truth. He said, “Now tell me about faith.”

He replied, “Faith means that you have faith in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day, and that you have faith in the measuring out, both its good and its evil.”

Remarking that he had spoken the truth, he then said, “now tell me about doing what is beautiful.”

He replied, “Doing what is beautiful means that you should worship God as if you see Him, for even if you do not see Him, He sees you.”

Then the man said, “Tell me about the Hour.”

The Prophet replied, “About that he who is questioned knows no more than the questioner.”

The man said, “Then tell me about its marks.”

He said, “The slave girl will give birth to her mistress, and you will see the bare-foot, the naked, the destitute, and the shepherds vying with each other in building.”

Then the man went away. After I had waited for a long time, the Prophet said to me, “Do you know who the questioner was, ‘Umar?”

I replied, “God and His messenger know best.”

He said, “He was Gabriel. He came to teach you your religion.”

A MINIMAL OUTLINE OF ISLAM:

Practices “Pillars” of Muslims

1. Confession of faith (*shahada*)
2. Prayer (*salat*)
3. Fasting (*sawm*) in month of *Ramadan*
4. Alms (*zakat*)
5. Pilgrimage (*hajj*)

Beliefs of Muslims

1. God
2. Angels
3. Prophets
4. Books
5. Day of Judgment

ISLAM & CHRISTIANITY—THEOLOGICAL CONNECTIONS

Prophets & Scripture:

- Prophets receive God's messages and some were entrusted to bring scriptures to their peoples.
- Moses received the Torah, David the Psalms, Jesus the Gospel (*Injil*), and Muhammad the Qur'an.
- Muhammad is believed by Muslims to be the last prophet and the Qur'an the perfection of God's revelations to humanity. The previous books are believed to have been corrupted. Qur'an considered God's exact words and the perfect completion of God's revelation to humanity (correcting all previous texts)

Creation & Humanity

- God as Creator of the universe (*ex nihilo*)
- Creation created "good"
- Humans given special status as "vice-regents" of the world
- Similar story of Adam and Eve (7:19-26) who are forced out of the Garden of Eden after being tempted by Satan (though Eve's name not specifically mentioned in Qur'an) However, humanity not held in permanent "original sin" from a "Fall," but continues as moral agents given the provisions of the earth and the guidance of God.
 - à Humans remain the same creatures with the moral capacity to choose good or evil à No need for redemption

Angels & Jinn

- Angels are seen as messengers and helpers of God.
- There are other supernatural beings known as *jinn* which can be very mischievous. An evil jinn, Satan (*Iblis*), refused God's command to bow down to Adam (7:11-18).

Jesus (*Isa*)

- Jesus mentioned in:
 - 15 out of 114 suras (chapters)
 - 93 out of ~6200 verses
 - Traditional Muslim understanding of Jesus:
 - Miraculous:
 - ✦ Jesus born a virgin birth from Mary (*Maryam*)
 - ✦ As a youth: fashions a bird of clay and breathes life into it
 - ✦ Later cures a leper and a man born blind
 - ✦ Through God, raises the dead
 - ✦ Causes a table spread with a feast to descend from heaven to feed his Apostles
 - ✦ No crucifixion:
 - ✦ In his stead it was possibly Simon of Cyrene or an Apostle
 - ✦ Jesus ascends to heaven at this time
 - ✦ At end of time:
 - ✦ Comes back and vanquishes anti-Christ
 - ✦ Ushers in an age of justice
 - ✦ After 40 years will die and be buried in Medina with Muhammad

- ✦ God will then raise Jesus with everyone else in the general resurrection
- ✦ What makes Jesus special within Islam?
 - Only person who does not die (common interpretation of (4:156-158)
 - A birth akin to Adam
 - Names for Jesus: Messiah (Christ), Son of Mary, Messenger, Prophet, Servant, Word and Spirit of God.
 - Titles for Jesus: a 'sign', a 'mercy', a 'witness' and an 'example'.

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Day of Judgment

Muhammad's early preaching warned particularly of the coming Judgment

Classical Tradition (many modern Muslims would not take these signs to be literally true, yet these signs create an ironic framework for a modern world)

Mahdi: A sign of the final Judgment, the Mahdi is a liberating figure, who born from the family of the Prophet, will establish justice and spread Islam. Not a Qur'anic idea, but the Shi'a Muslims consider their hidden Imam, the 12th leader of the Shi'ites, to be the Mahdi.

Jesus: He will return in the Last Times to preach, break all the crosses, kill all the swine, and after establishing the Kingdom of God, die.

Dajjal: Not mentioned in the Qur'an, tradition has it that Dajjal, an ally of Satan, is red-dish and one-eyed with "KFR" inscribed on his forehead implying he is an unbeliever. Coming from the East and riding a donkey, he will successfully tempt many with works of miracles and eventually conquer the earth except for Mecca and Medina. Either the Mahdi or Jesus will vanquish Dajjal.

Yajuj and Majuj: The Qur'an only briefly mentions them as enemies and spoilers of the land, while Hadith describes that they will attack Palestine and trouble Jesus and his companions. Jesus will ask God to destroy them.

Trial and Judgment

After the resurrection, everyone will be judged by God. The imagery is of a great scale in which each person's books recording their good deeds are put on one side and each person's books recording their bad deeds are put on the other. If the good deeds are heavy enough, that person will be eligible for Paradise while those who are heavy with evil will be condemned to Hell. Finally, everyone will cross the narrow bridge between Paradise and Hell. Unbelievers and sinners will fall into Hell, though it is speculated that some not too bad Muslims may spend a little time in Hell and then go to Paradise—Finally, it is a matter of God's will and mercy.

shirk: To "associate" someone or something with God.

The opposite of tawhid and the one unforgivable sin according to Islam.

During the expansion of Islam in the 700's the Muslims established protection for the

"People of the Book": Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians, and were charged a poll or head tax. They did not pay the required Muslim alms, but were not allowed to spread their faith. They became islands of faith communities and some have continued to this day (i.e. Egyptian Copts, Palestinian Christians).

Non-Muslims were offered three choices: (1) convert to Islam and become full members in the Muslim community; (2) retain one's faith (if People of the Book) and pay a poll tax; or (3), be subject to warfare until Islamic rule was accepted.

While tawhid unites Muslims with remarkable equality, tawhid also separates out non-Muslims and particularly those who commit shirk.

For Muslims, tawhid expresses right relationship with God and defines our humanity. To move away from tawhid is essentially to move away from our humanity. If taken to its extreme as in the case of militant, radical Islam, there can then only be two “abodes”: the house of Islam (**Dar al-Islam**) where tawhid is observed or the house of war (**Dar al-Harb**) where tawhid must be struggled for through jihad.

Middle ground: **Dar al-Sulk** (“house of contract”). The portion of the world that is not Muslim, but is in good relationship with Muslims.

jihad: Literally means “to strive” (or “to struggle”) and more specifically, to strive to do the will of God. The Muslim community is “to enjoin good and forbid evil” (Qur’an 3:110).

There are several meanings:

- 1) Strive to lead a good, virtuous life through self-discipline.
- 2) Strive for a moral and just society.
- 3) Strive to defend Islam through preaching, teaching or armed struggle.

With respect to suicide bombings:

It is prohibited to kill women and children. Also, suicide is prohibited in Islam. Those who commit suicide are condemned to repeat that act for eternity. However, those who die defending the faith are considered martyrs...and this is where it gets complicated. Somehow, those who are participating in the suicide bombings believe that they are fighting evil (regardless of the civilian casualties!) and consider their actions as legitimate jihad. Some have labeled this as “neo-jihad,” others as simply un-Islamic terrorism.

Role of Women in Islam:

Most importantly: As with any faith tradition, the role of women varies with context. Some Muslim women are extremely restricted while others enjoy great freedom (a former prime minister of Pakistan is a woman—Benazir Bhutto).

Qur’an: Adam and his wife (she is not named “Eve” in the Qur’an) are created at the same time and both eat from the forbidden tree (she does not tempt Adam).

Muhammad: He was actually a progressive reformer of women’s rights in his time. Under his leadership, female infanticide was shunned and women gained the right to retain inheritance and their dowry during marriage as well as to divorce.

Polygamy: Today, it is uncommon and often illegal or considered socially unacceptable. According to the Qur’an (4:3), a man may marry up to four wives **if** he can treat them all equally (a practical impossibility). Islamic law (Shari’a) restricts polygamy further by requiring permission from the first wife. Interestingly, though Muhammad was allowed 13 wives, he remained faithful to his first wife, Khadija until her death, 25 years later, and then married mostly widows (two of which were Jewish) who had lost their husbands in the course of Muslim battles. After Khadija, only one of Muhammad’s wives bore him a child, a son who died at a young age.

Clothing: A complex and contextual issue. All Muslims are to dress modestly and both men and women are to be covered in the Mosque with women additionally wearing a scarf to cover their hair. The wearing of a veil is not mentioned in the Qur’an and the Muslim community during Muhammad’s time rarely wore veils. A couple centuries later (as Islam had expanded and come into contact with many cultures), the wearing of veils was associated with prestige, wealth, and later, modesty and piety. Today, wearing a veil is contextual as is dress in general.

Clothing terms: **Khimar** (Headscarf hanging down to just above the waist—most com-

mon); **Chador** (A loose-fitting, black cloak covering the head and body—Iran); **Abaya** (A loose-fitting, head-to-toe black robe—worn mostly in Saudi Arabia); **Burqa** (Heavier and larger version of the Chador with a sewn-in mesh covering for the eyes—Taliban-controlled Afghanistan & parts of Pakistan and India).

An appraisal: Because of the real tension between the conceptually egalitarian nature of Islam and the patriarchal nature of its practice, the Islamic community has responded to women in varying ways over the centuries. Women are considered fundamentally equal as Muslims, but in practice, they are kept separate from men in public life (particularly worship) and play a largely subordinate role to men (not unlike many Christian women around the world). However, there have been great women scholars, politicians, etc. who have and continue to play a significant role within Islam.

Plurality of Faiths

Qur'an addresses plurality of people and faiths: God could have created one single community but rather created many communities so that they would strive to work together and outdo each other in good deeds (49:13)