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ISLAM OR EASTER

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“I did not see a temple in the city because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” Revelation 21:22

Recently a politician with designs on the White House said that he is both a Muslim and a Christian. This is altogether impossible. In their purest form these two religions exclude each other. There is no middle ground between Islam and Christianity, no place of appeasement. Christians and Muslims are forever separated by two books, the *Koran (Qur’an)* and the *Holy Bible*; two cities, Jerusalem and Mecca; two prophets, Mohammed and Jesus; and two temples, the Kaaba in Mecca which belongs to Islam, and Jesus in heaven--who is to Christians the true temple, the place of atonement.

Islam and Christianity are derived from different sources and are governed by radically different principles, not the least of which is that Christianity glorifies God in a way that Muslims believe is dishonoring to God. An essential tenet of Islam is that the faithful can never be vanquished. This is why Mohammed, Islam’s prophet and sole voice of authority, told his followers that Jesus was stolen away before His enemies were able to kill Him, and in His place a “shadow” was crucified. On the other hand, Christians believe that the God of the Bible always comes to us with power kept back. The cross, despised by the world as a symbol of weakness, glorifies God as nothing else can for He is not just power and brute force; God is mercy and grace. The underlying principle of Islam is the love of power. The underlying principle of Christianity is the power of love. “The message about the cross doesn’t make any sense to lost people. But for us who are being saved, it is God’s power at work. As God says in the Scriptures, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of all who claim to be wise. I will confuse those who think they know so much.’” [1 Corinthians 1:18-19 CEV]

Islam has offered Christians a crumb by telling them that the prophet Mohammed admitted that Jesus was not born of a human seed and that he spoke of Him with reverence. This acknowledgement comes with a price. We must accept what follows it, which is that Mohammed is a greater prophet than Jesus because he came **after** Him. This same reasoning is used to explain why the earlier parts of the *Koran* are contradicted by later revelations, for what comes last is superior to what has gone before it. Mohammed, a mere man coming after Jesus, is given the respect Christians reserve for God, while Jesus who fully demonstrated through His miracles and the resurrection that He is the Son of God is looked upon by Muslims as if He were a mere man.

Muslims cannot accept the resurrection because their prophet has taught them that Jesus was lifted to heaven where God immediately confronted Him. As if Jesus were being scolded, Mohammed describes Him in the *Koran* as explaining to God that others said He was the Son of God and therefore equal to God. **Here is where Islam falls on its sword.** Why was this not said of Mohammed? He could not say what Jesus said, “Which of you can truthfully accuse me of one single sin?” [John 8:48 TLB]

✠ *The Present*

✠ Islam has two versions, one radical and the other peaceful. Their methods are different but their goal is the same--the conversion of all mankind to the teachings of Mohammed. Which Islam is the real Islam? All Muslims believe that earlier revelations are overruled by later ones. And since the prophet Mohammed ended his life preaching *jihad* "holy war" this would indicate that radical Islam is Islam. Which Islam will triumph? Obviously if peaceful Islam to win over radicals, the *Koran* will have to be altered.

In Islam Jesus ascends into heaven but the resurrection which we celebrate at Easter does not precede it. If we were to believe that it would spell the end of Christianity. For where there is no resurrection there is no cross, and where there is no cross Christianity is reduced to a moralistic philosophy. Religions which tell us that righteous deeds earn a place for us in paradise are in abundance. Islam is one of many. The prophet of Islam tells us that there are two angels who record our good and bad deeds. If the good outweighs the bad, we will enter paradise provided we accept Mohammed as the messenger of Allah.

The resurrection distinguishes Christianity from all other religions because it points us back to the cross. The cross tells us that if God should "mark iniquities" no one could "stand" before Him [Psalm 130:3], no one except Jesus. Had Jesus not been sinless, He would still be in the grave simply because Scripture says, "For the wages of sin is death." [Romans 6:23] Since Jesus did rise from death it must mean that He had not sinned. Islam teaches that God cannot have a Son. The resurrection proves otherwise because Jesus was perfect in holiness. ". . . who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the **spirit of holiness**, by the resurrection from the dead." [Rom. 1:4] This means that Jesus is not only different from us by degree but in kind "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." [Rom. 3:23]

Mohammed

The first phase of Mohammed's life [570-632 A.D.] was passed in obscurity while he practiced his ancestral religion in Mecca, his birthplace. However Mohammed sensed that Arabia was ready for a new religion. At age 40 he began hearing voices and receiving revelations. At first he thought that he might have been seized by a diabolical spirit [Arabic *jinn*] but as his confidence grew the prophet became more emboldened and preached in public against idolatry. Over the next 22 years, he received revelations from the angel Gabriel with the exception of a three-year interval during which the prophet contemplated suicide. On one occasion Gabriel assured him that he was a prophet thereby saving him from death.

It is no easy thing to take on the religious establishment. The brave prophet met with fierce opposition from the more powerful clans who wished to preserve the religion of the Kaaba, if for no other reason than that it brought to Mecca multitude of visitors during holy month. Muslims now call this *Ramadan*. Islam believes that the annual pilgrimage [Arabic *hajj*] to Kaaba in Mecca, which every Muslim should complete once if at all possible, was originally carried out by Abraham whom they say built the Kaaba with the assistance of his son Ishmael who had been born to Hagar, the handmaid of Sarah. [Genesis 16:15] Muslims accept this

statement without question even though the Bible and other resources do not corroborate this or that Abraham ever built a temple of any kind.

With the death of Mohammed's uncle Abu Talib, Mohammed was no longer guaranteed the protection of his clan. This led to his sudden departure from Mecca which Muslims call the *Hegira* "the severing of relationships" or "the departure." The year was 622, the first year of the Muslim calendar. The prophet took up residence in Yathrib, a mostly Jewish oasis city some 240 miles to the north. Yathrib is now called Medina "the city of the prophet."

On a day that stands out in history, Mohammed, who was accustomed to praying in the direction of Jerusalem to ingratiate himself with the Jews, suddenly turned toward the Kaaba in Mecca. Immediately as if on queue his followers did the same. The year was 624 just two years into the Hegira. His Jerusalem was now Mecca.

✚ *The Past*

✚ Is the Arab a descendent of Abraham as is commonly believed? When speaking of Ishmael, Genesis 21:21 indicates that he married an Egyptian who was of the same race as Hagar his mother. However if the Arabs are in fact the descendents of Abraham, then by consequence it makes them Semites or descendents of Shem. This would mean that what has transpired in ancient and modern history demonstrates that the Bible is a prophetic wonder. When speaking of Ishmael it says, "He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, and every man shall be against him, . . ." [Gen. 16:12]

If Mohammed was to have a legacy, he needed to rid the Kaaba of polytheistic superstition. Worshippers were willing to placate their deities and the jinn, those desert spirits who perhaps were their departed ancestors, through gruesome practices. Child sacrifice was not unknown. It is believed that he succeeded in cleansing the Kaaba of idolatry, or did he? Arnobius [d. ~326 A.D.] reported that pilgrims to the Kaaba worshipped "an unshapen round stone." This is the famous Black Stone, possibly a meteorite, that was gift from their pagan deities. The custom was to kiss the stone which continues today. Orientalist Stanley Lane-Poole [1854-1931] commented, "Is it asked how the destroyer of idols could have reconciled his conscience to the circuits of the Kaaba and the veneration of the Black Stone covered with adoring kisses? ***The rites of the pilgrimage cannot certainly be defended against the charge of superstition; . . .***" [cited by Samuel Zwemer, *Mohammed or Christ*, ***emphasis added***]

The Kaaba was never cleansed and just like Mormon temples the Kaaba is not open to infidels. There is no cross in the Kaaba where angels are unduly patronized, and no cross sits atop Mormon temples, where instead of the most important symbol of Christianity, there stands a replica of the angel Maroni.

During the last phase of his life Mohammed became a warrior similar to Bedouin raiders who regularly swooped down on passing caravans. Stealing was a way of life, a sport if you like. In fact, the word Arab means "ambush." The Arab does not place much value on life, and consequently because Islam is a true expression of Arabism, it does not value human life. Rather than see his followers destroyed by raiding and stealing from one another, Mohammed directed them toward those who had not as yet accepted his religion. He proclaimed a *jihad* or holy war. The non-Muslim, the infidel, can be plundered, and his life forfeited chiefly because he does not

accept Mohammed as the messenger of Allah. Should the infidel be a Christian or Jew, persons of “The Book,” they may go on living, but they must be ostracized. All such are called *dhimmi* “protected people” who pay surtaxes, who cannot sue a Muslim in court, etc. In some countries *dhimmi* were required to wear different colored turbans. The law as it applied to the *dhimmi*, and originally proclaimed by Mohammed, was to last only 100 years. Within ten years of the death of Mohammed, the Middle East was soaked in blood under the leadership of Abu Bakar, Islam’s first caliph and the father of Mohammed’s nine-year-old wife.

When the *Koran* [Arabic for “utterances”] which is the record of revelations given to Mohammed is placed along side the Bible, their teachings do not harmonize. The same can be said of the *Book of Mormon* which like the *Koran* is supposed to have come by the hand of a prophet who first received it from an angel. Mohammed communed with the angel Gabriel, so that page-by-page the heavenly *Koran* could find its way to earth. Mohammed said that the *Koran* was the only miracle he performed. The Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith, Jr. [1805-44] also communicated with an angel. The angel Maroni led him to a “golden” book that could only be translated through miraculous means. Both prophets produced written works that purportedly were revealed by supernatural intervention, but by any fair reading they utterly contradict the Bible.

Unlike the Bible, the *Koran*’s utterances are not set in a historical context, and much of it is incomprehensible. Even though essayist Thomas Carlyle [1795-1881] praises Mohammed, he is forced to say, “It is toilsome reading as ever I under took, a wearisome, confused, jumble, crude, incondite. Nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the *Koran*.” It may be that some Muslims account for its incoherence due to the fact that Mohammed referred to himself as “the illiterate prophet.” They seem to glory in the idea that their prophet was uneducated because this would mean that his utterances were not gleaned from writings second-hand but must have been sent to him through a supernatural channel. However nothing in the *Koran* is truly original. It is a reconstruction of Jewish and Christian thought, Arabian lore, animism and the occult.

The beginning of Mohammed’s ministry was commendable. Unfortunately the religion he left behind reflects his later life and not the earlier time when he attempted to reform the Kaaba. This explains why Islam and the later additions to the *Koran* are hostile and intolerant. Arabia is now the epicenter of Wahhabism, a rigid and coercive version of Islam which deeply concerned a true friend of the Arab, Lawrence of Arabia. Even today Jews and Christians are spoken of by Wahhabists as “pigs and monkeys.” Funded by the fabulously rich Saud dynasty of Arabia, Wahhabists have paid for the construction of many American mosques and educational supplies which for the most part do not favor free societies.

Here is the genius of Islam. **Religion is a means to political ends.** In America it is different. Politics is the means, and religion (or irreligion if you prefer) is the end. If America accepted the Islamic ideal it would mean that apostasy is the same as treason. This to a Christian living in America is unthinkable.

Jesus the Son of God

Behold a greater prophet than Mohammed is here in the person of Jesus who not only cleansed the temple on two occasions, but after it had been torn down He rebuilt it in just three days, the same amount of time the prophet Jonah spent in the great fish. This was the sign that Jesus promised to Israel.

“Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up into Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple . . . ‘Do not make my Father’s house a house of merchandise.’ . . . So the Jews answered and said to Him ‘What sign do you show to us, since you do these things?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again.’ Then the Jews said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple and you will raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture . . .” [John 2:13-21]

Jesus, the **Holy One** mentioned in the psalms, came and died, and after dying, escaped death. “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices, my flesh will rest in hope, for you will not leave my soul in death, nor will you allow your Holy One to see corruption.” [Psalm 16:9-10] [See also Acts 2:22-33, 13:33-41] Immediately after saying that Jesus would be made a guilt or sin offering, Isaiah the prophet declares that He would return to those who are called “His seed” because His days, in spite of a horrible death, would be “prolonged.” [Isaiah 53:10] Unlike the jinn of Arabian lore who cannot be seen, Jesus revealed himself to his brethren. “And that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that he was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, . . . After that he was seen by James, then by all the apostles, then last of all He was seen of me [Paul] as one that is borne out of due time.” [1 Cor. 15:5-8]

Mohammed taught that at the resurrection he would be the first to rise from the dead. This is impossible. According to Scripture Jesus is already “the first fruits of them that slept.” [1 Cor. 15:20] What does all this mean? It means that if one needs to be shepherded in life, he or she should not look to Mecca or even Jerusalem where the temple once stood. Recently the pope to appease Islamic militants prayed in the direction of Mecca. That was a mistake and a sad day indeed for Roman Catholics. Christians pray **by looking to heaven** where Christ the Lamb of God sits at the right hand of the Father. “But he [Stephen], being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, ‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’” [Acts 7:55-56]

Conclusion

The Scriptures teach that the person who truly seeks after God will find Him. Those who find God will enter into a covenant with Him. More importantly God will faithfully covenant with them. But how can we enter into a covenant with God? “Gather my saints together to me, those have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” [Psalm 50:5] Christ is our sacrifice. Through Him we covenant with God. At Easter, as at any time, this benediction speaks to us of covenant and sacrifice--“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” [Heb. 13:20-21]

✝ *The Future?*

✝ May God bless the world and keep it safe from jihadists whose violence is authorized and encouraged by the *Koran*. And may God deliver America from politicians who think that radical Islam can be pacified. The radicals want it all; they want it their way and they want it now no matter what the cost in blood. Why? It is because they are not willing to trust in the blood of Christ that their religion calls for blood.