

# **CHURCH HISTORY TURNING POINTS**

## **Muhammad and Islam (Part 1)**

911 was the emergency number for most of my life. It became something altogether different in 2001. 911 could now be pronounced nine eleven instead of nine one one, and it had a vastly different reference. It was learned almost immediately that Muslim fundamentalists who believed they were acting in the interests of Allah and their faith committed the atrocities.

My familiarity with Muslims was fairly localized at the time. I had helped put together a lunch to raise money for some people left crippled by the fighting in Serbia, with the Muslim Hakeem Olajuwon agreeing to attend so that people would want to come! Hakeem did not strike me as a mean Muslim who wanted to kill the infidels.

Take most any newspaper or news magazine on most any day and you will find a story that speaks of Islam, the Muslim faith. Of the 6.6 billion people on the planet, over 1 billion, or roughly 1 out of every 4 to 6, are Muslim.<sup>1</sup>

We might surmise that most everyone knows a great deal about the basics of Islam. Yet, many non-Muslim people actually know very little. Why do some Muslims seem to be peace-loving people and others seem bent on any kind of violence to further their religious or political agenda? For that matter, why do some of the Muslims fight so violently against other Muslims? What is the difference between the Shiites and the Sunnis? Why are so many Muslims in the Middle East fighting against ISIS, or the “Islamic State of Iraq and Syria”?

In a church history class, it is fully appropriate to seek the historical facts that help answer some of these questions. Frequently, the answers involve more than mere historical data, and accordingly, we cannot provide full explanations for some of the actions we see around our world today. As has often been the case in every religious tradition, there are motives for actions and agendas that sometimes have more to do with politics and personal issues than with the actual historical faith. Still, our study of the history provides a good framework for identifying when these issues are personal and when they are religious.

So with that in mind, let's use two weeks to take a historical journey into Islam and view its inception, scripture, early expansion, and core beliefs, always keeping in mind the manifestations of the faith today.

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<sup>1</sup> This figure varies from 1.126 to even 1.8 billion depending on whose numbers you believe.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MUHAMMAD

Up to this point in our class, we have focused on the Roman Empire. We studied its split into Eastern and Western divisions. We saw the Western division crumble before invading forces of Goths, Lombards, Vandals and others. As we went through the 500's and into the 600's, the Western Empire was no more. It was more tribal lands than any sort of empire. The Eastern Empire was still in place with the Emperor ruling from Constantinople. Historically, this Eastern division of the Roman Empire has taken the name of the "Byzantine" or "Later Roman Empire." While it was the Christian power in what we today call the "Near East," it was not the only power in that part of the world.

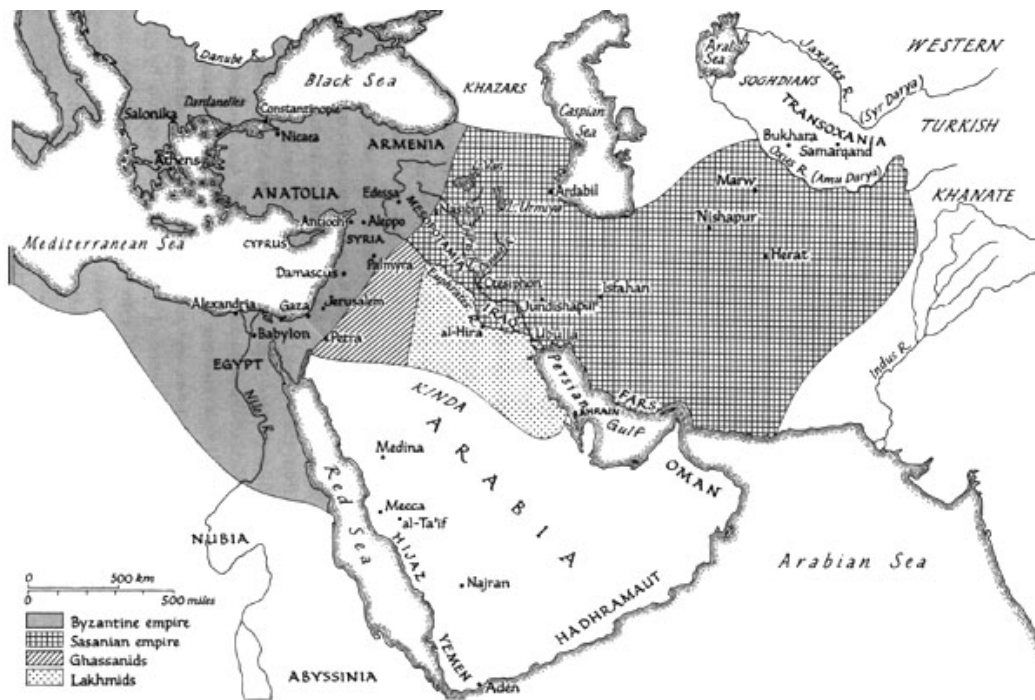
Below is a map of the various kingships as 600AD dawned in the Mediterranean world. All of the shaded areas were part of the Roman Empire at its peak, with the exception of the Sasanian Kingdom. This is the term used for the remains of the old Persian kingdom that had never fallen under Rome's control.



As well as the Sasanian Empire, a large number of people inhabited the Arabian Peninsula. These were nomadic tribes that were independent, not belonging to any united empire or kingdom, although some of them kept a loose affiliation with the Sasanians. To better follow these peoples, we set out a map on the next page.

The differences between the Byzantine Empire and the Sasanian/nomadic people were huge. The Byzantine Empire was built on a Greek/Roman culture. While Christianity replaced the early Greek and Latin paganism, Christianity was taught

and understood in light of Greek philosophy. The Byzantine alphabet was based on Greek and Latin letters. The science came from Greek and Latin schools.



Map 1. The Middle East on the eve of the Muslim era.

The Sasanians and Arabs, however, rejected all things Greek as alien. The Sasanian culture was based upon ancient Iranian and Semitic<sup>2</sup> cultural traditions. The Arabs were also Semitic in origin. This meant that the Sasanians used an entirely different alphabet (even writing right to left instead of left to right), had different religious conceptions of God and right and wrong as well as different foods, and different day-to-day perceptions of both community and family life.

The main religion for the Sasanian Empire was Zoroastrianism, so named because of its following the teachings of Zoroaster. He was a prophet from what is now northeast Iran that lived around 1200 B.C. This faith taught that there was a creator God (“Ahura Mazda”) and an evil demon (“Angra Mainyu”). One’s eternal afterlife is determined by whether a person chooses mostly good or evil in their life (good go to Paradise; bad go to the place of torment). Because your afterlife is based on choices and works, rather than beliefs, Zoroastrianism is very tolerant of other religions. Hence, this was a natural destination for exiled

<sup>2</sup> “Semitic” as a word comes from the name of “Shem,” one of Noah’s three sons. The name has come to describe a culture and group of people who allegedly descended from Shem. These are Near Eastern people who include the Hebrews, the Babylonians, and others of that region. These people also speak languages that are termed “Semitic.” (Whereas English and other western languages are classified as “Indo-European.” Bigotry towards Jews is termed “Anti-Semitism” using another form of the same word.)

Christians (this was the faith of Cyrus the Great, who ruled from Babylon while the Jews were in captivity).

Of course there was also interaction between the peoples who inhabited each Empire. For example, the Byzantine Empire had a number of Jews living in it. A number of those Jews had never fully been Hellenized (read that “Greek-ified”). In many ways, they had more in common with the Semitic people living in the Sasanian and Arabic lands. By the same token, there were many Jews living in Sasanian and Arabic lands that certainly had many religious concepts in common with the Byzantine Christian Empire, for those Jews had as Holy Scriptures what the church has come to call the Old Testament. (Additionally, The Jews in Babylon in the 300-500’s reduced a good bit of Jewish tradition into what is now known as the “Babylonian Talmud.”)

Similarly, there were times when the church and the Byzantine Emperor would exile those who failed to agree with certain official Christian positions. These exiles frequently made their way into these Sasanian and Arabic lands. For example, when Nestorius and his followers were exiled for unorthodox views on Jesus’ humanity, a good many of them went into the Sasanian and Arabic lands, carrying on their beliefs in exile.<sup>3</sup>

Between the 300’s and 500’s, the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires frequently battled each other over borders, with both sides using or battling the Arabic tribes in the process. There was a lucrative trade that went on with India and the lands to the East that had silk, incense, spices, and other goods. The trade routes went through these lands as well as the nomadic lands of the Arabian Peninsula, and the people that controlled these routes controlled something most valuable.

The nomadic people of the Arabian<sup>4</sup> Peninsula (there were also nomadic people in the Sasanian lands) are of unique interest in understanding Muhammad and the early years of Islam because these are the people of his heritage. The nomadic tribes were by-products of the sparse desert climate. These were people who moved their flocks around. These families maintained a tribal affiliation as they

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<sup>3</sup> Nestorius was the newly installed archbishop of Constantinople when he preached a Christmas sermon asserting that Jesus was *not* God when in Mary’s womb. Nestorius reasoned that God could not be “born,” and Mary could not carry “God” as a human.

<sup>4</sup> These are true “Arabs.” They are distinct from those of the Middle East that we may think of as Arabs. For example, the Palestinians are not historically considered true Arabs. They were originally the sea people that settled the coast near modern Israel. Historically, their name has been some variation of Palestinian – either Pelagians, Pelagasians, or Philistines. True Arabs traditionally trace their lineage back to Abraham through Ishmael (see Koran 2:121-127) and his great grandson Adnan as well as the Biblical Joktan (Qahtan to the Arabs).

moved from area to area where climate and resources allowed their flocks to graze. The settled life of towns, and with it the more specific trades (blacksmiths, weavers, bakers, teachers, etc.), were unknown in many parts of this land.

By and large, these people were outside the realm of governmental control. They lived in loose affiliation with each other based upon heritage and family relations. Each tent represented a family. The tents that camped and traveled together were a clan.<sup>5</sup> The clans that kept up a relationship were considered a tribe. This situation had been the case for centuries in the semi-arid lands of that region, so the tradition and culture was well established.

## ENTER MUHAMMAD

As we relate the life of Muhammad, we are at a bit of a historical disadvantage in comparison to much of what we have studied in this class. As much as possible, we have sought contemporary documents and original primary source material to understand the history we have studied. We rely on these documents because the primary documents produced by a source in the same time frame we are studying are typically the most reliable materials that are not subject to later agendas of the authors. In the case of Muhammad, we do not really have any contemporary documents. We are forced to read and interpret documents written later by people who already have an agenda or purpose in writing.<sup>6</sup> With that in mind, we are a bit guarded about what we assert. For fuller details on much of this material, we recommend reading a comprehensive book like *The Oxford History of Islam*<sup>7</sup> or *Muhammad the Prophet*.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Typically, the oldest or wisest among the clan, the “elder,” was the clan leader. The Arabic word for “elder” is *shaykh* or in English, “Sheikh.” Clans would also have an elected leader, a *Sayyid*.

<sup>6</sup> The *Hadith* (the “Sayings”) are collections of statements attributed to Muhammad, his family, or his companions. The most commonly used set of these sayings was compiled by al-Bukhari who died in 870, over 200 years after Muhammad. The other biographies were also written over 100–200 years after Muhammad. Ibn Ishaq (d. 768) wrote the *Sira* and the *Maghazi*.

<sup>7</sup> (Oxford University Press 1999) John Esposito, editor of the four-volume *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, put together this work combining chapters written by 16 leading scholars on Islam (both Muslim and non-Muslim).

<sup>8</sup> (Thunder Bay Press 2004). This book is written by a Muslim and was originally published in August 2001, one month before the events of September 11, 2001.

As we relate the story of Muhammad and Islam, it is difficult to readily grasp the facts due to the unfamiliarity of the names and language used. In an effort to keep this as readable as possible, we will resort to footnotes to be clearer on the various terminology used in Islam while trying to maintain a more reader-friendly text.

The tribes and clans in Muhammad's day worshipped various divinities. In Mecca, the largest and most important city in the Arabian Peninsula, there was a large cube in the middle of the city called the Ka'ba. The Koran (2:121-127) claims that Abraham and Ishmael built the original cube, although there is no earlier authority or reference for that history.<sup>9</sup> Mecca kept an idol of every clan and tribe's divinities (a total of 360, one for each day of the lunar year), and as a result was a focus point for annual pilgrimages for the Arabian nomads for sacrificing and worshipping. The key tribe in control of Mecca, which kept strong economic control over most aspects of the pilgrimages, was the *Quraysh* tribe.<sup>10</sup> This tribe would give various roles with economic interests to the pilgrimages to its various clans. For example, one clan would distribute water to the pilgrims from a certain fountain. Another clan would collect offerings and distribute food. Another clan would resolve disputes, *etc.*

Muhammad was born around 570.<sup>11</sup> His father, who died before his actual birth, was in the clan in charge of distributing water from the Zamzam spring (see fn. 9) (the Hashimite clan). By age 6, Muhammad's mother also died and Muhammad became an orphan. Much of his childhood was spent in the deserts in a nomadic life raised by relatives. There is an interesting history that relates that Muhammad came into contact with a Syrian monk between the ages of 9 and 12. Muslim writings relate that this monk recognized Muhammad as the Prophet. Christian history from the Byzantines relates that this monk was actually a Nestorian.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Muslim faith teaches that Abraham brought Hagar and Ishmael to the valley of Mecca ("Makka") and abandoned them there with limited food and water. After two nights and a day, Hagar despaired for lack of water. While Hagar paced and pleaded with God, Ishmael miraculously uncovered a spring with his hands. Ishmael cried out, "Zummi, zummi" imitating the sound of the gurgling water. This spring supposedly became the holy well "Zamzam." Abraham returned later and built the temple/original Ka'ba, with Ishmael's help. (See, *Islam in the World*, Malise Ruthven (Oxford Univ. Press 2006) p. 13-14).

<sup>10</sup> From the Arabic word *qirsch*, which meant "shark." The Shark was the emblem of this tribe.

<sup>11</sup> Certain Muslim writings and traditions give the birth of Muhammad as September 1, 570, but scholars disagree on the accuracy of this date.

<sup>12</sup> Yes, this is a monk who followed the teachings of the Nestorius mentioned earlier. Once Nestorius was exiled over his failure to accept the orthodox view of Jesus as fully God and fully human, the bishop of Constantinople lost his position and Empire residency. Nestorius and his followers were responsible for teaching that Jesus was two different persons, one human and one divine. As such, there would be room for Muhammad and others to deny the full deity of Jesus,

As Muhammad matured, he married a distant cousin from the Quraysh tribe who gave him four sons (each dying early in life) and four daughters. Muhammad took a life as a caravan leader, where he maintained a reputation as scrupulously honest. Muhammad's early reputation was greatly enhanced when he took on responsibilities to rebuild and restore the Ka'ba. This seminal event in his life requires a bit more understanding of the Ka'ba itself.



The Ka'ba, pictured above, is the most sacred and important holy site of Islam today. It is located in the center of the Mecca courtyard Mosque. It is cube shaped and roughly 50 feet high. It preexisted Muhammad and was recognized by all the different clans as a place of worship, regardless of which deity the clans followed. There is one door into the cube. Within the Ka'ba is a large black stone 14 inches in diameter.<sup>13</sup> Also in the Ka'ba today is Muhammad's sword, a letter

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being able to separate out Jesus as a human. One wonders if the Nestorian/Muhammad encounter really occurred, whether the Nestorian heresy affected the ultimate teachings of Muhammad that Jesus was a prophet, and not the divine God of Gods. Byzantine history indicates that this monk was a likely source of some of Muhammad's later visions and ideas that became the Koran.

<sup>13</sup> The history of the stone is unknown. It predates Muhammad. While the stone is worn smooth from centuries of kisses by the faithful, it has not always had such veneration! When

Muhammad wrote, as well as other items holy to Islam. While the original structure was probably made of wood, the structure today has stonewalls covered by Egyptian cloth.

During Muhammad's early adulthood, a storm damaged the Ka'ba, and the four main tribes of Mecca decided to repair it. Each tribe was to rebuild a side. The tribes fought, however, over who would get to place the stone back into the structure. To resolve the dispute, the tribes decided the next person to enter the structure would get to place the stone. Muhammad entered the structure next. Showing the wisdom for which he was famous, Muhammad decided to place the stone on a blanket. He then took a representative from each tribe and had them take one of the four corners of the blanket. Together they lifted the stone and carried it into the structure where Muhammad then placed it.

While Mecca and the Arab tribes were both basically pagans and polytheists, there was a definite movement of Arabs who followed Abraham's teaching of one God. These monotheists were called *hunafa*. Nearing the age of 40, Muhammad sought out a greater understanding of the divine. While frequently taking contemplative hikes in the desert and mountains, Muhammad related a profound experience while on Mount Hira.<sup>14</sup> In the year 612 (the 27<sup>th</sup> day of Ramadan), Muhammad is recorded to have received an angelic visit from Gabriel ("Jibra'eel"). The angel told him to, "Recite!" (Koran 96:1-5).

Somewhat disturbed by the visit, Muhammad sought counsel from his wife<sup>15</sup> as well as another relative who we are told was a Christian. Muhammad received a prophecy that he would be rejected from his people because of his message, but that it was a message from God nonetheless.

Muhammad began to register and recite the visions he received. In Islamic terms, these revelations "descended" on Muhammad. These visions proclaimed God angry at the polytheism of the people. These visions set out commandments,

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Muhammad had his last pilgrimage journey, he reportedly kissed the stone. A successor to Muhammad (named "Umar") is reported to have said, "I know you are nothing but a stone, have no power to do either good or evil, and had I not seen the Prophet [Muhammad] greet you, I would not do so."

<sup>14</sup> This mountain is today called Jabal al-Nur, which means the "Mountain of Light."

<sup>15</sup> Muhammad actually had over a dozen wives. Polygamy was culturally accepted and a way of binding tribes together to care for widows and fatherless children. Interestingly, among the wives of Muhammad was one who was Jewish. Islamic law limits polygamy to four wives, but Muhammad was not bound by this in that his marriages were seen as necessary to establish and secure the presence of the Islamic faith.



instructions, and historical material that were put into what is now called the “Koran.” This is why Muhammad is called, “The Messenger of God.”

Interestingly, Islam claims that in this way, Muhammad actually fulfilled a prophecy of Jesus.<sup>16</sup> In John 16:7-14, Jesus states:

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it known to you.

To the Muslims, the “Counselor” is Muhammad.<sup>17</sup>

If we read John in the original Greek, the word translated “Counselor” or “Comforter” (depending on translation) is *Paraklete* (παράκλητος). Muslims teach that *paraklete* means “worthy of praise.”<sup>18</sup> In Arabic, “worthy of praise is “Muhammad.” This seems, to many Muslims, a precise fulfillment of the promise of Jesus. However, the Greek word does not mean “worthy of praise.” It means, “One called along side” as in “one who helps.” It was a word used for a lawyer, as counselor, or a consoler. There is a Greek word that sounds similar, *periclytos* (περικλυτός), which means “famous,” “excellent,” “noble,” or “renowned.” But, this is a very different word than what Jesus used.

Christianity teaches that Jesus is referencing the Holy Spirit. In fact, Jesus indicates such when he refers to the *Paraklete* as the “Spirit of Truth” later in the same passage. As Christians, we see this prophecy fulfilled at Pentecost when the

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<sup>16</sup> See Khan at 45. This is found first in the Sirah of Ibn Hisham (d. 834).

<sup>17</sup> This brings up the question of how Islam can use Christian and Jewish scriptures, but still embrace the faith of Islam. There are several Muslim approaches to Christian scriptures. One is that the original Christian and Jewish scriptures were authentic and accurate but that over the years they have become corrupt. Another view is that the scriptures are still fairly reliable, but that the exegesis or understanding of the scriptures is defective.

<sup>18</sup> See Kahn at p. 45.

Spirit descends on the people and convicts them of sin, righteousness, and judgment, just as Jesus said (see Acts 2).

This is the same *Paraklete* that Jesus refers to earlier in the same discussion with his apostles found in John 14. There, Jesus says he will:

...ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor [*Paraklete*] to be with you forever – the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you... On that day, you will realize that I am in the Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. (Jn 14:16-20)

Jesus taught that the apostles already knew the *Paraklete* because He was living with them. He certainly was, for Jesus was filled with that very Spirit. Jesus then points out that once he has gone, he will ask the Father who will send the Spirit to actually indwell the apostles. Then, the Spirit will not just live *with them* (as it did before Jesus left) but would actually be *in them*. This indwelling would be when the apostles would actually understand that Jesus was one with God, that the apostles were in Jesus and that Jesus was in the apostles. These were spiritual truths that the apostles did not understand at the time. It was not until the Spirit came down on Pentecost that the apostles finally understood what Jesus was talking about! This is why Paul would later write that spiritual truths cannot be understood without the Spirit's own enlightenment (1 Cor. 2:8-14).<sup>19</sup>

After these visions descended on Muhammad, he spent three years preaching monotheism to his family. Then, Muhammad started teaching others around the Ka'ba. This teaching certainly had potential to wreak some economic havoc on various clans that depended on the economic benefits of the idol worship of various nomadic clans and tribes. It is not surprising that the Quraysh, save two men of note, rejected this early teaching of Muhammad.

Some of the Quraysh sought to kill Muhammad, but were hesitant for fear of starting a blood feud. So on September 24, 622, Muhammad took his family and fled to Yathrib (called "Medina" today).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Many Muslims also teach that Muhammad was foretold in the Old Testament. The passages seen to reference Muhammad are many of those that Christians see as passages foretelling the coming Messiah, Christ. These are found in a variety of places, for example, Dt 18:15: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers. You must listen to him."

<sup>20</sup> Muslims call this (622) the "Year of Flight." In Latin/Arabic, it becomes *Anno Hejirae*. It is the start of the Muslim years. They are noted as A.H. as opposed to the Christian system of A.D. (for Latin *Anno Domini*, or "Year of our Lord").

In Medina, Muhammad is respected and quickly recognized for his wisdom as the town's moderator. He builds the first mosque in Medina, which serves as a place of worship as well as his court and headquarters. During this time, the Quraysh continue to plot against Muhammad. They were joined in their plotting by two Jews. Islamic writings note that the Jews even willingly bowed to the idols of the Quraysh to show their trustworthiness in betraying Muhammad.

Muhammad starts a military campaign against the Quraysh. He begins by raiding caravans. These raids soon progressed into actual battles with each side bringing their military forces to bear. While Muhammad lost an occasional battle (including more perceived treachery and betrayal by Jews), he won the war. The Quraysh capitulated, as did the other tribes, and by 630, Muhammad had basically united the Arab Peninsula under the banner of Islam. Those who were not converted to the faith were assessed a tax, but were allowed to live in peace, absent some act of treachery.

Muhammad died in 632. But in the year or two before his death, he had another encounter with Christianity. About 60 learned Christian men from Najran (modern Yemen) made a journey along with their Bishop to discuss with Muhammad the nature of Christ. Muhammad, as will be seen later, taught that Christ was a prophet, but not the Son of God in the unique way understood by Christian orthodoxy. As Jesus supplanted the prophet Moses, so the Muslims believed that Muhammad supplanted Jesus.

The debate centered on the nature of Jesus, whether fully God and fully man. The Christians claimed that Muhammad was carrying on the heresy set out by Euthyches and rejected by the Council of Chalcedon (see earlier classes on both Euthyches and the Chalcedonian Council). Muhammad remained unconvinced of Christian orthodoxy, and according to Islamic writings, proposed a showdown of sorts (termed an "ordeal"). This was where the parties gathered in an agreed place, called down the curses of death from their respective deities/positions, and then watched to see who survived the encounter.

As the Islamic history recounts the day of Ordeal, the Christians arrived and proposed instead that they pay a per-person tax and then be allowed to worship freely as they saw fit. Muhammad accepted this and granted those who paid the tax freedom to worship.

The Koran is in accord with this when it states, "Lo! Those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabaeans and the Christians and whosoever believeth in Allah and the last day and doeth which is right shall have their reward with their

Lord: fear shall not come upon them, neither shall they be grieved” (Koran 2:62; 5:69; 22:17).

## POST-MUHAMMAD

Once Muhammad died, serious questions arose as to his successor.<sup>21</sup> Muhammad was not going to have a successor as the “Messenger of God,” but the question centered on the successor of his temporal powers as the leader of the Muslims. There was a struggle in Muhammad’s family over succession.

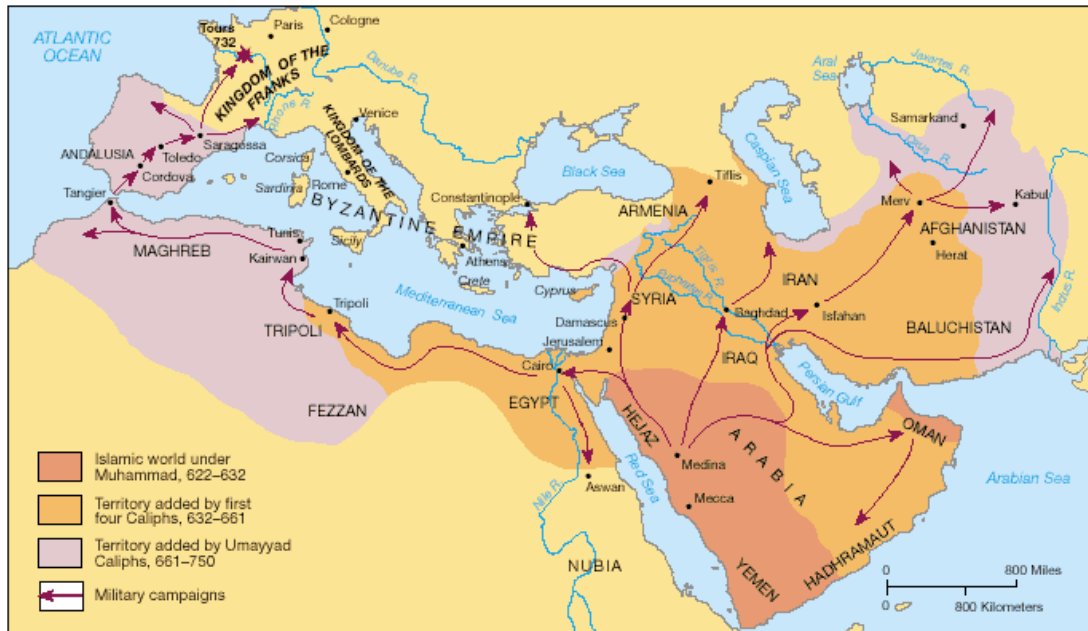
Some thought that Muhammad meant to transfer his temporal authority to Ali, his son-in-law. Others put up a man named Abu Bakr as their new leader. Abu Bakr seemed to get the greatest number behind him and he started collecting the various pronouncements of Muhammad into one place (what became the Koran). Abu Bakr did not live long and was succeeded by Umar. Umar continued the military conquests of Muhammad and conquered the Sasanians. This brought Islam right up to the border of the Byzantine Empire as well as India. When Umar died in 644, Utham succeeded him and conquered much of North Africa as well as the island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean. (See map on next page.)


Meanwhile, there was still a strong contingent of Muslims who believed that the right of succession actually belonged to Ali and his line, as noted previously. These two factions continued to dispute in spite of the assumption of actual rulership by Abu Bakr as noted earlier. There were even poisonings and assassinations. Those who believed the rights of succession were legitimately Ali’s formed their own sect of Islam. The Arabic word for “sect” is *Shi’a* and these people today are known as *Shi’ites*. The *Shi’ites* lost their chance to command the majority of Islam when their revolt was quelled in 698. Since that time, the sect has continued as a religious movement with definite political overtones.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>These are successors in the sense of leaders and teachers in the community of believers. Although there were many prophets prior to Muhammad, Islam teaches that there would be no more after him. For this reason, Muhammad is called, “The Seal of the Prophets.”

<sup>22</sup> There are significantly fewer Shi’ites than Sunni’s in the Muslim world. Most Shi’ites are concentrated in certain areas. Iran is one of those areas. In Iran, 90 percent of the population is considered Shi’ite. The Ayatollah Khomeini was a Shi’ite cleric and political leader of Iran after the Shah of Iran was overthrown in 1979.



 *The Spread of Islam. The rapid spread of Islam created within a century a unified cultural and economic zone from India to the Atlantic Ocean within.*

As mentioned earlier, there are writings, the *Hadith*, that are supposed to supplement the Koran as sayings of Muhammad and his companions/successors. These are subject to study by many Muslims. Those who follow the teachings of these *Hadith* are termed Sunnis. The Shi'ites, not surprisingly, follow only the supplemental sayings of Ali, deeming the sayings of Muhammad's other companions as improper.

## WHAT ARE THE MAJOR TENETS OF ISLAM?

Islam is built around five "pillars." These five are: (1) a profession of faith that there is only one God and that Muhammad is his prophet; (2) prayer rituals ("Salah"); (3) payment of a charity ("Zakat"); (4) fasting during Ramadan ("Sawm"); and (5) pilgrimage to Mecca ("Hajj"). The five pillars hallmark the practices of the faithful, although they are certainly not the only rules of the faith.

The faith itself teaches that God's eternity awaits certain faithful whose lives merit God's heaven. The faith teaches a fairly rigid legalism. If your good deeds outweigh your bad, or if you meet certain other criteria, then you are eventually in heaven. Even those going to heaven, however, may have to spend some measure of time in hell as punishment for their sins.

The Christian concepts of grace and the atoning sacrifice of God are foreign to the

Muslim religion. Our goal next week is to compare the tenets of Islam to those of Christianity.

### POINTS FOR HOME

1. *“When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth... He will bring glory to me [Jesus!]” (Jn 16:13-14).*

The Holy Spirit is not simply a good feeling in the heart of a believer. The Holy Spirit is not just an idea in the brain. The Holy Spirit is God, dwelling within believers confirming faith and the real truth of spiritual reality. Believers were promised the Holy Spirit, believers receive the Holy Spirit, and believers walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thank you, Lord.

2. *“Now brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you have received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you ... that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day” (1 Cor. 15:1-2).*

The claims of Jesus Christ, and the claims of the Christian faith have never been some watery idea that Jesus was a good guy, a good prophet, or some other human wanting to start a religion. Jesus Christ claimed divinity. His closest first generation followers affirmed his divinity. And perhaps most audacious of all, this incarnated God died to justly restore the relationship with a fallen humanity. That is the gospel in which I stand.

3. *“If we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned. As we have already said, so now I say again: if anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned” (Gal. 1:8-9).*

What else could there be? Jesus is the final word. The gospel is not temporary. It's no bandaid. It is the true final solution to the problem of my sin and death.

### HOMEWORK

To recap, we are memorizing 1 John this year in the English Standard Version. That amounts to two verses a week. To be current, we need to have memorized 1

John 1:1-3:15. This week we add 1 John 3:16-17. We provide all verses below for your help!

**1John 1:1** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— **2** the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— **3** that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. **4** And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

**1:5** This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. **6** If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. **8** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

**1John 2:1** My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. **2** He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. **3** And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. **4** Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, **5** but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: **6** whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. **7** Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. **8** At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. **9** Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. **10** Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. **11** But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

**12** I am writing to you, little children,  
because your sins are forgiven for his name’s sake.

**13** I am writing to you, fathers,

because you know him who is from the beginning.  
I am writing to you, young men,  
because you have overcome the evil one.  
I write to you, children,  
because you know the Father.  
**14** I write to you, fathers,  
because you know him who is from the beginning.  
I write to you, young men,  
because you are strong,  
and the word of God abides in you,  
and you have overcome the evil one.

**15** Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. **17** And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

**18** Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. **19** They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. **20** But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. **21** I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. **22** Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. **23** No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. **24** Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. **25** And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.

**26** I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. **27** But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. **28** And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. **29** you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.



**1John 3:1** See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. **2** Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. **3** And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. **4** Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. **5** You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. **6** No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. **7** Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. **8** Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. **9** No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. **10** By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

**11** For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. **12** We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. **13** Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. **14** We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. **15** Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

**16** By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. **17** But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?