

Abraham and Islam

Father Abraham – Part VIII

Romans 4:20-21

Introduction – History of Islam

In the sixth century, 570 A.D. to be exact, a little boy was born in Mecca. Even though he was distantly related to the Arab royal family Hashim, the particular branch of the family into which he had been born was poverty stricken.

The newborn boy was named Muhammad. After both of his parents died during his early years, he was shuttled between relatives until, at last, a poor uncle took him in.

According to Muhammad's biographers, he was a normal Arab boy who enjoyed talking with the travelers in the caravans and exploring desert caves. The only thing that was unusual about his childhood was that he began to experience religious visitations. Muhammad's mother, Aminah, had often claimed to have visions and paranormal experiences as well. She was involved in, what we would call today, the "occult arts".

At the age of forty, Muhammad claimed to, once again, have a heavenly "visitation from the angel Gabriel." He would claim, from that experience, that he had been chosen by Allah as the next prophet and apostle.

His choice of words, "prophet and apostle," are interesting choices. As one author pointed out, there was no tradition of being a "prophet" or an "apostle" in Arabian religion. The term "prophet" was more than likely used in the hope that the Jewish people would accept him as their next prophet and the term "apostle" was probably used in the hope of persuading the Christians to follow him as well.

Muhammad claimed that Gabriel had visited him and placed on him the prophetic mantle. This, he maintained, inspired him with God's newest revelation, which was summarized and recorded in the *Hadith* and the *Koran*.

At first, Muhammad preached to the Jewish people that he was God's newest prophet in the line of Abraham and Jesus. It is interesting to note that, when Muhammad began his rise as a tribal leader and self-proclaimed prophet, he adopted many Jewish customs. These included customs such as: some of their dietary laws, the observance of Saturday Sabbath, and praying toward Jerusalem. In addition to this, he praised the Old Testament scriptures and, in the *Koran*, referred to the Jews as "people of the book".

According to historians, and the clear actions that happened next, when it became obvious that the Jewish merchants were not going to become his disciples, Muhammad decided to drop all observances of Jewish rituals. He changed the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to Mecca, threw off the Saturday Sabbath, and adopted the religious rites in which he had been raised.

Ultimately, he began to war against the Jews, pillaging their villages and plundering their homes. It is interesting that the response to comments made by Jerry Falwell and Franklin Graham have been not only condemned by Islamic nations, but met by death threats being issued against these men.

The truth of these accusations, however, is a matter of public record. Even the *Koran* and the

Hadith support such conclusions. Secular texts as well; such as, the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, along with Western historians and even Muslim scholars attest to the fact that Muhammad gained power and prestige by plundering and killing Jews.

It is a well attested fact that after one Jewish town surrendered, seven hundred of the men were beheaded in one day and the women and children were sold into slavery. It is also true, according to sacred Muslim writings that Muhammad married, among others, a young girl and consummated the marriage when she was only nine years of age.

As Muhammad's power and tribal leadership grew in Mecca and Medina, so did his religious views. These views were nothing more than a combination of Jewish tradition and the Bible, along with the well known worship of the moon god, Sin.

Sin was considered by the Arabs to be the supreme deity among all other gods. It is interesting that in the Old Testament, when the Israelites fell frequently into idolatry, one of the forms of idol worship was the moon god.

According to numerous inscriptions, discovered in North and South Arabia, which date back to the time of Muhammad, and even to centuries earlier, the Arab name for the moon god was, Sin, but his title was "al-ilah," meaning, "the deity". Before Muhammad was even born, the name of the moon god came to be known by his title, "Ilah," rather than his name, and we know it today as, "Allah".

Arabs, years before Muhammad's birth, often named their children "Allah," in honor of their most powerful deity, the moon god. Allah worship was ancient middle eastern astral worship, or the worship of the sun, the moon, and the stars. For this reason, it, as well as the astral worship of Baal, was condemned in the Old Testament.

Muhammad took one of his fellow Arab's many gods, the moon god, and began to teach that Allah was not only the greatest god, but the only god. This aspect of monotheism became part of his teaching; teaching that became known as "Islam". The unbelieving Arabs could still believe in the moon god Allah. The Jews and Christians could also be told that Allah was their one true God.

One author summarized,

Islam was Muhammad's repackaging of the ancient moon god worship. Modern Islam still uses the symbols, the rites, the ceremonies, and even the name of its god

which came from the ancient religion of the moon god, Allah.

The symbol of this worship, by the way, is the crescent moon. It is the sliver of the moon which is visible to the human eye during that particular phase of the moon.

Is it any surprise that the symbol of Islam is the crescent moon? The crescent moon sits on top of their mosques. A crescent moon is on the flags of Islamic nations. Muslims fast during the month which begins and ends with the appearance of the crescent moon in the sky.

At the very outset of our study today, you need to know that Allah is not Elohim. Just as an angel came to Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, and gave him revelation and an honored calling as a prophet of God; so also an angel came and delivered to Muhammad new revelation and the honor of being the next in line of God's prophets.

I personally do not doubt that angelic visions or apparitions were a part of their experience. Both of these men have led millions of people away from the deity of Jesus Christ. I can only quote the warning Paul gave when he wrote to the Galatians, in chapter 1, verses 8 and 9,

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

Now, just how attractive is Islam in the world today? How compelling is this amalgamation of Jewish tradition, biblical passages, and Christian beliefs that are mixed with Arabic culture and the worship rituals and ceremonies of the moon god, Allah?

Ladies and gentlemen, Islam is the second largest religion in the world. In England, there are more practicing Muslims than evangelical Christians. Funded by the vast resources of Arab oil money, the Muslims are buying abandoned Anglican churches and turning them into mosques. This is occurring at such a rate that some Muslims claim that England will be the first European Muslim country. I read recently that the legal situation has reached the point where the English Parliament has been forced to rule that Muslims do not have to follow English Common Law in the matter of divorce; they can follow Islamic law instead.

What is the status of Islam in America? A Muslim mosque or worship center is completed nearly every month. There are now more Muslims in America than there are Episcopalians. There are already more than five hundred Islamic centers in the United States. They are similar to the one in Washington, D.C. that opens its doors to curious people daily, so they may come in and be kindly taught the philosophy, art, and culture of Islam.

So, what exactly is Islam? The word “Islam” originally denoted heroism, especially in the context of a willingness to die in battle. The word “Islam” slowly developed the meaning of, “submission or surrender”.

Technically speaking, by the way, Islam does not claim to be a new religion formulated by the prophet Muhammad. Instead, it claims to be a, “continuation of all former religious principles decreed by God through his revelations to all prophets.”

The Islam prophets include, according to Muhammad and the *Koran*, Jesus Christ. They revere Jesus as a true prophet of God, but nothing more. Just as Mormonism does not do away with Jesus, but instead rewrites who He is, so Islam does the same, as I will discuss in a minute.

Abraham and Islam

Perhaps you are thinking, “How does all of this relate to Romans, chapter 4?”

There is one connection. Islam includes the belief that the very first Muslim was none other than Abraham. Muslims look to Abraham as their spiritual Father.

Why? Because Abraham surrendered to God; Abraham submitted to God, thus Abraham displayed the very meaning of Islam, which is to surrender to God’s will. In fact, the Arabic noun form of the verb “to surrender,” is the word “Islam”.

Given the rise of Islam today; given the fact that the name Allah is recognized now more than ever before; given the fact that Muslims now intersect our lives in the Western world every day, it is impossible, I believe, to teach on the life of Abraham, without exposing other religions that view Abraham as their leading man of faith. And, for your information, my job description, according to the scriptures, is to not only teach the Word, but to expose and warn of the error of false doctrine in the world.

Jude warned the believers in verses 3 through 4, ***Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt***

the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus, who were young pastors, in Titus, chapter 1, verses 13b through 16, to,

. . . reprove them severely so that they may . . . not pay attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth. . . . [men who] profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.

Several times Paul wrote to warn the believers of false teachers and false teaching. In fact, entire letters from Paul were written to expose and challenge the false teaching of those who ultimately, denied the grace of God and the deity cross work of Christ.

So, just how important is Abraham in all of this?

You need to know that Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike, claim that Abraham is their founder and their spiritual father.

- The Muslims believe they are related to Abraham as descendants of Ishmael. Every one of the five prayers that Muslims pray during the day, end with a reference to Abraham. Yassar Arafat’s liaison for religious dialogue has emphatically stated that Abraham belongs to only the Muslims.
- The Jews believe they are related to Abraham as descendants of Isaac and as the keepers of the covenant.
- Christians are clearly taught that they are the true sons and daughters of Abraham, being related to Abraham by virtue of their faith in Abraham’s God.

Paul wrote in Romans, chapter 4, verse 11, that Abraham is,

. . . the father of all who believe . . .

So, who is right?

I am not going to deal with the Jewish side of the argument today, since I have already done so in

previous sermons. Today, I want to deal with this issue from the Islamic claim to Abraham.

I found it interesting, in researching Islam and reading an entire book on the life and teaching of Muhammad, that Muhammad, dozens of times in the *Koran*, told his followers to check his teaching with the Old and New Testament scriptures to see if he was indeed, telling the truth. If they had done so, by evaluating the two inspired works of Muhammad's teaching; that is, the *Hadith* and the *Koran*, as he claimed they could, Islam would have died in the seventh century, along with Muhammad.

Muhammad had only a general sense of the stories of the Bible, and taught them incorrectly. He mixed them together and at times, totally mixed up the characters and the historical timeline. For example, he taught:

- that the flood occurred during the days of Moses;
- that Pharaoh's wife adopted Moses, instead of Pharaoh's daughter;
- that Nimrod threw Abraham into a fiery furnace, where he was unharmed by the flames, even though Nimrod lived centuries before Abraham;
- that Moses' sister, Miriam, was the mother of Jesus, instead of Mary;
- that Jesus was born under a palm tree, instead of in a stable;
- that Jesus was not crucified, but that Judas was mistaken for Jesus and crucified in His place, while Jesus was taken up to heaven.

Obviously, this was not only a distortion of Scripture, that he claimed to agree with, but it is effectively the eradication of the gospel and the redemption by faith in the sacrificial atoning death, burial, and literal, physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. Ladies and gentlemen, Islam is not just another word for the worship of God, they have a different god entirely.

What Does the Scripture Say? - Abraham and Christianity

I think it is ironic that, when Paul began chapter 4 of Romans, as he began to talk about this key figure, Abraham, in biblical history, he asked, in verse 3,

... what does the Scripture say? ...

So, what does the Scripture say?

The Revelation of God to Abraham

This is the revelation of God to Abraham, in Romans, chapter 4, verse 20a,

... with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief. . .

Now, wait a second. What was the promise again?

Paul clarifies it in Galatians, chapter 3, verse 16. This is a verse that in our generation, is as important as John, chapter 3, verse 16. Galatians, chapter 3, verse 16, delivers the stunning announcement to the Jewish people and to the Muslim people of the world,

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many [people], but rather to one [descendant], "And to your seed," that is, Christ.

In other words, "Here is the promise," Abraham, "from you will come the Messiah!"

Earlier in chapter 3 of Galatians, in verses 7 through 9, Paul spoke these incredible words,

Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you." So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the . . .

. . . who?

- Abraham the Jew? No!
- Abraham the Gentile? No!
- Abraham the Muslim? No!
- Abraham the . . .

. . . believer.

And, that promise came true! The Redeemer would be born, with Jewish and Gentile blood coursing through His veins, the descendant of Abraham; the descendant of Ruth and Bathsheba; the descendant of David and Boaz; the one whom Abraham was promised would come and be a blessing to the nations of the world. And yes, people, one day, from every tribe, tongue, and nation will worship the Lamb, who sits upon the throne, and give to Him all praise and honor and glory and blessing; He, the promised seed, Jesus Christ, God the Son, descending Deity in the flesh!

The Response of Abraham to God

Now, having seen the revelation from God to Abraham, notice the response of Abraham to God, in Romans, chapter 4, verse 20b,

. . . [Abraham] grew strong in faith, giving glory to God

Abraham had two responses. The first was that he grew in faith.

Three kinds of biblical faith

Now, there are at least three kinds of biblical faith. Let me give them to you.

Decisive or saving faith

1. First, there is decisive or saving faith. This is faith exercised in Jesus Christ, once for all time, when a person asks Him to become their personal Savior; to make them a child of God. Saving faith is a transaction that occurs once for all time in a person's life and, once that faith is acted upon, the issue of salvation is settled forever.

Doctrinal faith

2. Secondly, there is doctrinal faith. The word "faith" is used in the New Testament to refer to a body of truth or doctrine. As we read earlier, Jude told believers to contend for, to defend the faith.

Daily faith

3. Finally, there is daily faith. This faith has to do with total reliance and submission to our Lord for the events of each day. Paul said, in II Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 7, "for we walk by faith, not by sight". In Ephesians, chapter 6, verse 16, he told the believers to take up the shield of faith in the daily struggle against the evil one and temptation. Then, in Acts, chapter 14, verse 22, he encouraged the believers to "continue in the faith". This is not a reference to losing salvation. Decisive faith is different from doctrinal faith and daily faith.

Abraham grew in his daily faith in the promise of God.

Notice that Paul gives us a second response of Abraham, in Romans, chapter 4, verse 20b. Abraham not only grew in faith, but he was,

. . . giving glory to God

Do you know what that means? That is another way of saying, "Abraham was thanking God in advance, for what God promised to do."

How many of us have ever thanked God in advance for keeping His promises to us?! How many of us have ever started the day by saying, "Lord, I want to say, ahead of time, that whatever happens today, You have promised that everything is going to work out for my good, so that I might be conformed just a little more into the image and likeness of Christ. So, in light of that promise, I want to thank You in advance, for whatever will happen today!?"

That was the revelation from God to Abraham, and the response of Abraham to God.

Application

A three-fold response of Christians to Islam

Let us tie up some loose ends before we close. We have talked about the revelation from God to Abraham and the response of Abraham to God, but what about the response of Christians to Islam? There is a three-fold response. Let me give it in the form of three key words.

Respect

1. The first key word is respect. As with any religion we encounter, there should be respect for the person involved; there should be care and compassion given to share the attribute of love for them as individuals. They are not the enemy, they are our mission field. So, if you happen to work or live near one, invest the time to listen to and to acknowledge them with respect.

Recognition

2. The second key word is recognition. While you respect them as individuals, even though you disagree with them, at the same time, you need to recognize, and you need to help them to recognize, that the *Koran* disagrees, time after time, with the Bible. They need to recognize that Allah is not Jehovah. Even though the religion of Islam worships only one god, that god is not the one true and

living God, who introduced Himself in Genesis, chapter 1, as Elohim.

The Jesus of the *Koran* is not the Jesus of the Bible. According to the *Koran*, as taught by Muhammad, Jesus was not the only Son of God, Jesus did not die for our sins, Jesus was not divine, but only a human man, and Jesus Christ did not come from heaven to save the lost.

So, we are to have respect and we are to practice recognition, and then, there is a final key word that is most important.

Rededication

3. The third key word is rededication. When you discover the passion and zeal of a Muslim for his religion and his god, it should challenge your own faith and commitment to the true God of Abraham.

Practicing Christian rededication

Examine your own commitment to the truth. You may need to practice this final key word of rededication.

Prayer

No matter where Muslims are, they pray five times a day. How often do you pray? Missionaries to Muslims in Africa gave me a Muslim prayer mat, which I have often rolled out on my study floor and knelt to pray to Yahweh. I am so convicted by my lack of prayer, as compared to the Muslim who will unroll his prayer mat five times a day, face Mecca, and pray to the moon god.

Fasting

Fasting is also a part of the Muslim's religious observance. When have you ever skipped a meal in order to pray and focus on your Lord and His Word?

Dress guidelines

Dress guidelines among the Muslims are more than modest. In fact, they are seventh century customs that are being imposed in a twenty-first century world. Nevertheless, compare the women in our Christian world with Muslim women, who dare

not show their flesh. I wonder if Christians in the twenty-first century have progressed or digressed!?

Passion for the reputation of our Lord

Muslims have passion for the reputation of Allah. Everywhere they go, their greeting of, "Allah is great," is broadcast. How often do you talk to others about your living Lord?

Passion to sing to our Lord

With passion, Muslims chant their songs to Allah. With what kind of passion do we sing to our triune God; that is, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit?!

Conclusion – Islam and Christianity Differ

In spite of their zeal and passion, Islam is a world-wide religion that gives its followers no assurance of heaven – none. The Muslim martyr, the one who dies in some holy jihad; that is, some act of battle against the enemy of Allah, is guaranteed Paradise. How tragic.

Surely the great prophet Muhammad was certain of Paradise. No, even Muhammad said, "Although I am an apostle of Allah, I do not know what Allah will do to me."

My friend, the religion of Islam provides no assurance for Muslims that they will go to heaven.

Did you notice what God's promise did for Abraham? Look at Romans, chapter 4, verse 21.

and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.

Dear friends, Abraham does not belong to the Muslim, nor does he belong to the Jew, nor, in fact, does he belong to any denomination or nationality. He belongs, as the scriptures have taught us, to those who place their faith in the promised Redeemer.

John Ashcroft was quoted recently by Cal Thomas, a Christian journalist, in summarizing the key difference between Islam and Christianity. I believe this quote sums it up,

Islam is a religion where you send your son to die for God; Christianity is a faith where God sent His Son to die for you.

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