

Islam

(Part 1 of 2)

The Arabic word “*Islam*” means “submission to God.” Naturally, those who follow Islam are termed “Muslims” (one who surrenders to God). Islam is currently the fastest growing religion in the world and is second in size only to Christianity. There are approximately 3.5 to 4 million practicing Muslims in America. These statistics, along with current terrorist activities that are associated with the religion, make the subject a timely study.

Islam’s Beginnings:

A man named Muhammad, born 570 AD in Mecca, was apparently meditating in a mountain cave one day. He claimed that the angel Gabriel appeared to him. Muhammad was about 40 years old when he met Gabriel. Islam tradition states that at this time the angel began to reveal the Quran to him, which he continued to do over the next 20 years. Muhammad took these “revelations” and spoke them to his fellow Arabians in Mecca and soon gained a great following.

The Developmental History of Islam:

At the death of Muhammad (approximately 632 AD), caliphs began to rule in his absence. Caliph is Arabic for “successor or representative.” One of the predominant concepts of the Islamic faith during this period was *dar al-Islam* (Ar. the geographic expansion of the Islamic faith) through *jihad* (Ar. struggle). Once lands were conquered through military might, the *umma* (Muslim Government ruled by the *Shariah* [sources being the Quran and *Hadiths* (teachings of the prophet Muhammad)], *fiqih* [Ar. human reason], and community [Quran 3:159]) would be established. Over a matter of 300 plus years, the Islamic military movement literally overpowered and conquered the Byzantine (late Roman) Empire.

The caliphate ruled through the Ottoman Empire which saw the zenith of its power in the 17th century. The Ottoman Empire (Sultan rule) was an Islamic military power that basically surrounded the area of the Mediterranean Sea. November 1, 1922 the Ottoman Empire was dealt a devastating blow (during World War I) by European Colonial dominance.

History behind Islam’s Hatred for America:

Britain defeated the Ottoman Empire in a battle over Palestine in 1917-1918. In 1922, the League of Nations issued a mandate granting control over Palestine to the British, entrusting them to facilitate the establishment of a Jewish national home called Israel. Jews began to migrate by the thousands from Russia, Poland, and Nazi Germany to this new safe haven. From 1945 to 1948, 85,000 holocaust survivors were brought secretly to Israel. Israel declared independence from Britain in 1948, and immediately the Arab League declared war on Israel.

The problem that Muslims had with a Jewish state in Palestine was that the Jews took one of their most holy Mosques in Jerusalem called the “Dome of the Rock” (Ar. *Qubbat al Sakhra*). The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem was the epicenter of Muslim faith. It was here that *hadith* (teachings of Mohammed) tradition states that the prophet Mohammed made a miraculous trip from Mecca to Jerusalem by the aid of Gabriel. Once in Jerusalem, Mohammed led Jesus, Abraham, Moses, and other prophets in prayer and then ascended into the heavens to see the throne of God (the event is termed Ar. *miraj*).

America came to the aid of Jerusalem during Israel's wartime with the Arab League. America's aiding the Jews in this war coupled with America's being considered infidels (unbelievers) gave cause to deep-seated bitterness on the part of Muslim nations. Many Islamic extremist today use Quranic verses regarding fighting to justify their acts of terrorism against any who would represent an infidel (unbeliever of Allah and his prophet) (cf. Quran 2:117; 2:245; 4:85; 8:66; 9:12-14, 29, 36, 111; 48:17 ect.).

Today, there are 56 Muslim states registered with the OIC (Organization of the Islamic Conference). The OIC convened for a conference in February of 2005 titling the meeting, "Combating International Terrorism." The notes from the meeting are encouraging from the standpoint that they reject acts of terrorism in the name of religion. Unfortunately, there are terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaida, HAMMAS, IG (Islamic Group), GIA (Armed Islamic Group), and many other Islamic-based groups that do not share the views of the OIC. Next week we shall examine the teachings of Islam and compare it to God's Word.

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