

Lesson 24
Thought Provoking Questions
Islam

I. Definitions -- Like many religions, Islam has its own vocabulary to describe its beliefs. Understanding some of its most important religious terms will be helpful in understanding Islamic history and belief.

A. Islam -- the name of the religion which came out of the revelations and teachings of Muhammad. Islam is the Arabic term for "submission."

B. Muslim -- the name given to one who adheres to the religion of Islam. Muslim is an Arabic cognate of Islam, meaning "one who submits." The Muslim submits to the will of Allah as revealed by Muhammad.

C. Allah -- the Islamic name for God. It cannot be easily translated into English. One Muslim writer defined it: "The word means the unique God Who possesses all the attributes of perfection and beauty in their infinitude. Muslims feel strongly that the English word 'God' does not convey the real meaning of the word 'Allah.'"

D. Muhammad -- the common name of an Arabic man born in the city of Mecca in A.D. 570 (d. 632). He claimed that he was the prophet to restore true religion and the praise of Allah throughout the world, just as Jesus Christ was a prophet in his time for his people. Muhammad means "the one who is praised."

E. Quran (also spelled Koran) is Arabic for "the recitation," and refers to the collection of revelations supposedly given by Allah through his archangel to Muhammad and preserved as the Islamic scripture.

1. Muslims believe in the Law of Moses, the Psalms of David, and the *Injil*, or gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. However, they believe that those scriptures were superseded by the scripture given through Muhammad, and that the Bible used by Christians and Jews is a distorted version of those other scriptures.

3. Wherever the Bible contradicts Islam, the Muslim says the Bible is incorrect.

4. *Surah* refers to the divisions within the Quran, and roughly corresponds to our "chapter."

a) The Quran contains 114 revelations, each composing one surah or chapter.

b) The shortest revelations appear first, the longest ones last.

c) There is no chronological arrangement in the Quran.

5. *Hadith* --Also important Islamic literature, it is Arabic for "collected traditions." These customs provide source material for the intricate political and social structure of Islam.

F. Caliph -- Arabic for leader and refers to the main leaders of Islam, especially the immediate successors of Muhammad.

G. Âyatollah -- refers to a spiritual master or leader in Islam.

H. Sects of Islam.

1. *Sunnite* -- they accept the four caliphs in direct succession from Muhammad and no others. The Sunnis practice a moderate form of Islamic interpretation. Ninety percent of the Muslims in the middle east are Sunnis (e.g., 90% of the Jordanian Muslims, 90% of the Egyptian Muslims, 90 % of the Saudi Arabian Muslims, 98% of the Libyan Muslims).

2. *Shia'ite* -- second largest Muslim sect, it is more literal in its interpretation and application of the Quran and is much more militant and fanatical than the Sunnis. Ninety-three percent of Iran's Muslims are Shia'ites, formerly led by one of the most powerful Shia'ites, Ayatollah, Khoumeni.

3. *Ahmdiyani* -- another sect of note, founded in the 1800s. This small sect has produced the bulk of Islamic apologetics against Christianity and Judaism over the last half of the last century. They are strong proselytizers and are active on American campuses.

4. *Sufi* -- this sect is the mystical sect of Islam. Sufis are rejected by many conservative Muslims. Some Sufi writings seem to reject unitarian monotheism of traditional Islam for a form of "immanent pantheism."

II. Islamic Beliefs.

A. God.

1. For the Muslim, Allah is the only true God.

a) There is no such blasphemous thing as the "Trinity."

b) Jesus Christ is a prophet of Allah; he is not the Son of God or God himself (Surah 4:171).

2. The Muslim god is unapproachable by sinful man.

a) Allah is so perfect and holy He can only communicate with mankind through a progression of angels and prophets.

b) The Muslim God is a god of judgment, not grace; a god of wrath rather than love.

3. The Muslim's desire is to submit to the point where he can hold back the judgment of Allah and, perhaps, through the capricious whims of Allah, inherit eternal life in an earthly paradise of gluttony and sexual gratification.

4. Muslims have no concept of God as a loving and compassionate Father.

B. Jesus Christ.

1. As stated above, to the Muslim Jesus Christ is just one of many prophets of Allah; he was the prophet for his people in his day.

a) He is not the son of God or a part of any Trinity. (Surah 4:171).

b) He did not atone for anyone's sins, although he himself was sinless.

c) Jesus Christ did not die on a cross; various Muslim traditions say that He either miraculously substituted Judas Iscariot for himself on the cross, or that God miraculously delivered Him from the hands of the Romans and Jews before He could be crucified.

2. Most Muslims believe that Jesus Christ was taken bodily into heaven without having died (Surah 4:157).

C. Sin and Salvation.

1. Sin and salvation in Islam is associated with two concepts: works and fate (*kismet*).

2. Every Muslim who hopes to escape the judgment of Allah must fulfill the works of the Five Pillars of the Faith (Surah 10:109).

a) Recitation of the Shahadah ("There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah").

b) Five daily prescribed prayers (*Salat* or *Namaz*) in Arabic. These prayers include genuflection and prostration in the direction of the holy city, Mecca.

c) Almsgiving (*Zakat*), which is unlike tithing since Muslims are only required to give one-fortieth of their income as charitable contributions.

d) Fasting (*Saum* or *Ruzeh*) during the entire month of Ramadan, when Muslims are supposed to fast from all food and drink from sunrise to sunset in atonement for their own sins over the previous year (However, after sunset many

Muslims enjoy a feast and some get up before sunrise to eat some more before the sun rises and the fast begins again).

e) A pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Mecca, the holy city, at least once in a lifetime.

3. Holy war (*Jihad*) used to be a condition of faith, and early Muslims believed it was their sacred duty to murder anyone who would not embrace the one true faith. While some contemporary Muslims downplay the requirement for *Jihad*, as we shall see there are many, especially Shia'ites, who still urge its practice.

III. Sharing the gospel with a Muslim.

A. The three key areas to discuss with a Muslim are the nature of God, the identity and Deity of Jesus Christ, and salvation by grace.

B. Emphasis should be placed upon the fact that the Christian God transcends man's finitude and sinfulness because He cares about people individually, and He loves individuals.

1. Divine love is a concept missing from Islam and yet essential to human peace and happiness with God.
2. John 3:16 is a powerful witness to God's love.
3. Many Muslims will refuse to listen when told about Jesus, claiming that the bible is distorted and untrustworthy.
4. They should be directed to one of the fine works available on the inspiration of scripture. (*They Word Is Truth*, Ed Young; *Biblical Criticism*, J. W. McGarvey; *Revelation and the Bible*, edited by Carl F. H. Henry; *Inspiration and Authority of the Scriptures*, Jimmy Jividen; *Special Revelation and the Word of God*, Bernard Ramm; or *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, B. B. Warfield.)
5. This can open the door to present the Biblical teaching that Jesus Christ is truly God and is the only way to salvation.

C. Next, the Muslim needs to hear that salvation does not depend upon his worthiness, but upon the grace of God

displayed through the atonement of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

- 1. No one can work his way to heaven or to Muslim paradise.**
- 2. The Muslim will agree that Allah could justly choose to bar all or mankind from paradise since no man is perfect as Allah is perfect.**
- 3. However, Biblical salvation does not depend on man's perfection; in fact it is man's imperfections that require a Savior who pays the penalty for man's sins.**

D. Finally, the Christian should love the Muslim.

- 1. Muslims have a definite zeal for God.**
- 2. Muslims desire to follow God and express their worship of God through their lives.**
- 3. The Christian should respect Muslims' sincere intentions and share with them the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ.**
- 4. When a Christian can demonstrate the power of the Word of God in his own life, using it as an example of the joy and peace possible to those who love Jesus Christ, he becomes an effective ambassador for Christ to the Muslim of the opportunity to know and worship the true God rather than Muhammad's distorted concepts about God.**

IV. Is Islam a religion of peace?

A. Following 9/11 many world leaders, led by George Bush and Tony Blair, declared that Islam was a religion of peace that had been "hijacked" by a few extremists.

- 1. The hijackers were called Islamofascists (at least until some objected to that term and it became politically incorrect), who were generally considered to be perverters of a personal and peaceful faith.**

2. Often connected to this view is the idea that the War on Terror is ultimately a struggle against poverty and ignorance, both of which breed radicalism.

a) This is a variant of the familiar tendency to assume that if enough money is thrown at a problem it will go away.

b) Despite the fact that Osama bin Laden is quite wealthy, and that study after study has shown that jihadists and even suicide bombers tend to be wealthier and better educated than their peaceful peers, most analysts assume that the problem of “radical Islam” is bred in the resentment that feeds off disadvantage, and can thus be solved by global affirmative action.

(1) A huge number of people in the West, including many influential governmental positions, assume that poverty and disadvantage are the “root causes” of terrorism.

(2) John Wallach, president and founder of the pacifist group Seeds of Peace, explained, “The United States needs more than a military response to terrorism. It needs a humane response as well, one that signals that we, as the greatest and richest nation on earth, care about the suffering of the hundreds of millions of less fortunate people throughout the world.

(3) But it is not global humanitarianism that concerns the jihadists -- it is waging war against the infidels.

c) We fool ourselves when we imagine that the problem is localized “Islamic fundamentalism” a “hijacking” of an originally peaceful religion, such that the great majority of its adherents not only do not participate in religiously sanctioned violence, but also disapprove of it on grounds derived from the religion itself.

(1) In reality, active jihadists, while a minority among Muslims, base their actions in Islamic theology and are in the ascendancy throughout the Islamic world.

(2) Nowhere in that world is there a significant anti-jihad, anti-al Qaeda, or anti-bin Laden movement; while Muslims

worldwide rioted over cartoon in a Danish newspaper and remarks by Pope Benedict XVI, they have never rioted over Osama bin Laden's supposed hijacking of their faith.

(3) In fact, the pictures shown of the Muslim world was of rejoicing while the Trade Towers burned and fell and victims leaped to their deaths.

3. Most Muslims won't join in the jihad, but not because they don't approve of it; Islam, as in every other religion, the number of the actively devout is always much smaller than the number of those who identify themselves as members.

4. A smaller number of Muslims actively reject the jihad and Islamist ideology, but retain cultural Islam; these moderates, however, are much more marginalized and less influential than most Westerners imagine.

B. There is no shortage of Muslim leaders who openly and unapologetically proclaim the necessity of imposing Islamic sharia law upon the world.

1. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al Qaeda's leader in Iraq before he was killed in June 2006, explained his goals in strictly religious terms: "As for our political agenda as some people call it, so we find it summarized richly in the saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him), 'I have been sent with the sword, between the hands of the hour, until Allah is worshipped alone.'"

2. Before he left Britain one step ahead of law enforcement and returned to his native Lebanon, the jihadist Sheikh Omar Bakri Muhammad often boasted of his intention to "transform the West into Dar Al-Islam [the land of Islam]" and establish Islamic law on British soil. "I want to see the black flag of Islam flying over Downing Street," he said, and his now disbanded al-Muhajiroun group was dedicated to this goal.

a) The transformation of Britain into an Islamic state could come in two ways, he explained: "If an Islamic state arises and invades," in which case "we will be its army and its soldiers from within."

b) But if no such Islamic state arises, Bakri said that Muslims would convert the West to Islam “through ideological invasion . . . without war and killing.”

c) Bakri’s fellow British jihadist, the now imprisoned Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Masri, explained that this was a universal imperative: “Allah is the only one that must be worshipped on Earth, and the only way to guarantee this is to control all the land masses, air, and sea and give Islam the proper channel to be heard by the people.”

3. The idea that Muslims must fight in order to ensure that Islam has the “proper channel to be heard by the people” is a common teaching in the Islamic world.

a) South African mufti [an expert in the Shari'ah who gives legal judgments called fatwas] Ebrahim Desai repeated it in answering a question at “Islam Q & A Online.”

(1) The questioner asked, “ I have a question about offensive jihad. Does it mean that we are to attack even those non-Muslims [who] don’t do anything against Islam just because we have to propagate Islam?”

(2) Desai went on to explain that “if a country doesn’t allow the propagation of Islam to its inhabitants in a suitable manner or creates hindrances to this, then the Muslim ruler would be justifying [sic] in waging jihad against this country, so that the message of Islam can reach its inhabitants, thus saving them from the Fire of Jahannum [Hell]. If the Kuffaar [unbelievers] allow us to spread Islam peacefully, then we would not wage Jihad against them.”

b) Al-Zawahiri, al Qaeda’s second in command, articulated a global vision in the summer of 2006: “War with Israel is not subject to a treaty, cease-fire, Sykes-Picot Treaty agreements,¹ patriotism or disputed borders, but it is jihad

¹ The Sykes-Picot-Eisner Agreement of 1916 was an understanding between the governments of Britain and France, with the assent of Russia, defining their respective spheres of influence and control in west Asia after the expected downfall of the Ottoman Empire during World War 1. By the terms of the agreement, Britain reserved the area which became Transjordan, France was to

for the cause of God until the entire religion is for is for him only. Jihad seeks the liberation of Palestine, the entire country of Palestine and to liberate every land that used to be a territory of Islam, from Spain to Iraq. The entire world is an open field for us With the grace of God we have now returned to the field. . . . Dear Muslim brothers everywhere, today we must target the Jewish and the American interests everywhere.

4. Until November 2003, when adverse publicity compelled them to take it down, the Islamic Affairs Department (IAD) of the Saudi Arabian embassy in Washington carried this statement of Islamic supremacism and belligerence on its website: “The Muslims are required to raise the banner of Jihad in order to make the Word of Allah supreme in this world, to remove all forms of injustice and oppression, and to defend the Muslims. If Muslims do not take up the sword, the evil tyrants of this earth will be able to continue oppressing the weak and [the] helpless.”

a) In other words, the antidote to tyranny is Islamic law, and Muslims are obliged to wage war against unbelievers to impose it; the spread of Islam must continue at all costs.

b) There can be no half measures or peaceful coexistence with unbelievers as equals on an indefinite basis.

c) As Egyptian jihad theorist and activist Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), whose works are still widely influential among Muslims worldwide, put it in his jihad manifesto *Milestones (Ma’alim ‘ala Al-Tariq)*, which has circulated throughout the world and been published in well over a thousand editions: “Islam cannot accept any mixing with Jahiliyyah [the society of unbelievers] The foremost duty of Islam in this world is to depose Jahiliyyah from the leadership of man, and to take the leadership into its own hands and enforce the particular way of life which is its permanent feature.”

get Iraq (other than Mosul and its district), Syria and Cilicia. Russia was to get Constantinople and the Ottoman Armenian vilayets.

5. Another influential jihadist writer, Sayyid Abul a'la Maududi (1903-1979), shares Qutb's perspective.

- a) **The author of several influential books, including *Jihad in Islam* and the massive *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*, Maududi was, like Qutb, not simply a theorist; in 1940 he founded the Jamaat-e-Islami (Muslim Party).**
- b) **This organization still exists today in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh (as well as in Jammu and Kashmir, which is one of the principal flashpoints of jihad activity), and is dedicated to making these countries Islamic states.**
- c) **Maududi's influence goes well beyond the subcontinent; one admirer called him "the greatest revivalist of Islam in the twentieth century" and pointed out that his "writings and thoughts inspired similar movements in a large part of the world."**
- d) **Maududi argues that Islam was inherently political, not just religious in the sense in which most Westerners understand the term, and that Muslims must wage war in order to impose Islamic law upon the world.**
- e) **To accommodate Muslims of his day he declared: "The truth is that Islam is not the name of a 'Religion,' nor is 'Muslim' the title of a 'Nation.' In reality Islam is a revolutionary ideology and programme which seeks to alter the social order of the whole world and rebuild it in conformity with its own tenets and ideals 'Muslim' is the title of that International Revolutionary Party organized by Islam to carry into effect its revolutionary programme. And 'Jihad' refers to that revolutionary struggle and utmost exertion which the Islamic Party brings into play to achieve this objective."**
- f) **Maududi envisioned this struggle, and the controlling culture that Islam would become, as universal: "Islam requires the earth - not just a portion, but the whole planet - - not because the sovereignty over the earth should be wrested from one Nation or several Nations and vested in**

one particular Nation, but because the entire mankind should benefit from. . .[Islam] which is the programme of well-being for all humanity.”

(1) The well-being of all humanity would be best served by the imposition of what Maududi saw as the laws of Allah -- for he regarded allegiance to merely human laws as the root of all societal evils: “No one has the right to become a self-appointed ruler of men and issue orders and prohibitions on his own volition and authority. To acknowledge the personal authority of a human being as the source of commands and prohibitions is tantamount to admitting him as the sharer in the Powers and Authority of God. And this is the root of all evils in the universe.”

(2) The Muslims, the party of Allah, are accordingly “left with no other choice except to capture State Authority, for an evil system takes root and flourishes under the patronage of an evil government and a pious cultural order can never be established until the authority of Government is wrested from the wicked and transferred into the hands of the reformers. . . .[I]f the Muslim Party commands adequate resources it will eliminate un-Islamic Governments and establish the power of Islamic Government in their stead.”

(3) This is, he says, exactly what Muhammad and the first caliphs did: “It is the same policy which was executed by the Holy Prophet (peace of Allah be upon him) and his successor illustrious Caliphs (may Allah be pleased with them). Arabia, where the Muslim Party was founded, was the first country which was subjugated and brought under the rule of Islam.”

g) Maududi further explains that “as soon as the Ummah of Islam captures State power” it will therefore ban various un-Islamic practices: the lending of money at interest, “all forms of business and financial dealings which are forbidden by Islamic Law,” gambling prostitution, “and other vices,” and “it will make it obligatory for non-Muslim women to observe the minimum standards of modesty in dress as required by Islamic Law and will forbid them to go about displaying their beauty like the days of ignorance.”

An Islamic state will also “clamp censorship on the cinema.”

h) Non-Muslims may continue to live in such a state, but they cannot hold political power within it: “Non-Muslims have been granted the freedom to stay outside the Islamic fold and to cling to their false, man-made ways if they so wish. They have, however, absolutely no right to seize the reins of power in any part of god’s earth nor to direct the collective affairs of human beings according to their own misconceived doctrines. . . .In such a situation the believers would be under an obligation to do their utmost to dislodge them from political power and to make them live in subservience to the Islamic way of life.”

i) The political movement Maududi created, Jamaat-e-Islami, is one of the largest political parties in Pakistan today, and numerous government officials have risen through its ranks.

(1) One of its former leaders in Pakistan, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, stated that Jamaat-e-Islami believes “NOT in the Western definition of ‘democracy,’ which assign[s] (in principle though) all authority to the people. We believe in the Authority of Allah and human being[s] as His vicegerents. Thus ‘democracy’ in Islam is guided as well as guarded.”

(2) The democracy that Ahmed envisions will need no voting, for its principles are “quite clearly expounded in the Qur’an and Sunnah.”

6. Egyptian jihadist Muhammad “Abdus Salam Faraj (1952-1983), who, like Qutb, was executed by the Egyptian government (in Faraj’s case, for his role in the assassination of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat), wrote a book entitled *Jihad: The Absent Obligation* that crystallized many of these ideas.

a) “Allah revealed Islam,” he wrote, “in order that humanity could be governed according to it. Unbelief is darkness and disorder. So the unbelievers, if they are not suppressed, create disorder. That is why the Muslims are

responsible for the implementation of Allah's Law on the planet, that humanity may be governed by it, as opposed to corrupt manmade laws. The Muslims must make all efforts to establish the religion of Allah on the earth."

b) Faraj's book was found on the bookshelf of one of the plotters of the July 21, 2005, terror attacks in Great Britain.

7. This is also the view of the Islamic group Hizb ut-Tahrir, which despite its protestations of peacefulness is banned in many countries for its avowed determination to establish an Islamic state.

a) A website expounding the group's philosophy explains: "Islam makes it a duty upon all Muslims to work to change their countries from Dar al-Kufr [the land of unbelief] to Dar al-Islam, and this can be achieved by establishing the Islamic State, i.e., the Khilafah, and by electing a Khaleefah [caliph and taking a bay'ah [oath of allegiance] on him that he will rule by the Word of Allah (Subhaanahu Wa Ta'Ala), i.e., he will implement Islamic laws in the country where the Khilafah has been established. Then the Muslims should work with the Khilafah to combine the rest of the Islamic countries with it, hence the countries will become Dar al-Islam and they will then carry Islam to the world through invitation and jihad."

b) "Invitation and jihad" -- but mostly jihad; an al Qaeda manual discovered not long after September 11 in a safe house in Manchester, England, declared: "Islamic governments have never and will never be established through peaceful solutions and cooperative councils. They are established as they [always] have been by pen and gun, by word and bullet, by tongue and teeth."

(1) As Islamic governments have "never been established through peaceful solutions," it seems likely that although "word," "pen," and "tongue" are mentioned, they quickly give way to "gun," "bullet," and "teeth."

(2) The manual continues: "Islamic government would never be established except by the bomb and rifle. Islam

does not coincide or make a truce with unbelief, but rather confronts it. The confrontation that Islam calls for with these godless and apostate regimes does not know Socratic debates, Platonic ideals, or Aristotelian diplomacy. But it knows the dialogue of bullets, the ideals of assassination, bombing, and destruction, and the diplomacy of the cannon and machine-gun.”