

and Islam, Christianity The War on Terror

Pastor Vern Christopherson

Week 1
February 10

Overview of Islam

Week 2
February 17

Islam Movements and Emphasis

Week 3
February 24

Islam and Christianity

Week 4
March 3

Islam and Terrorism

Thursdays, February 10 through March 3
10am or 6:30pm

Feel free to attend either the morning or evening session.
The sessions will last approximately 90 minutes.

If you have to miss a session visit our Website at
www.zumbrolutheran.org/programs/adult to:

- 1. Print a copy of the study guide**
- 2. View a video of the class on-line**

If all else fails, you can pick up a study guide in the church office.

An Overview of Islam

“The twenty-first century will be the century of Islam. Muslim civilization will be central to understanding where we will be moving in the future. Consider the facts: a population of 1.3 billion and growing; about 25 million living permanently in the West and many of them now making an impact on social, political, and economic life; and a religion that comes with commitment and passion. Understanding Islam is therefore imperative to anyone wanting to make sense of living in the twenty-first century.”

Akbar W. Ahmed

How do you respond to the rise of Islam in the modern world?

Let's pool our information: jot down everything you know about Islam.

The Beginnings of Islam – Muhammad

Muhammad was born in 570 C.E. (Common Era) in the city of Mecca.

At age 25 married a wealthy widow Khadijah. She bore him two sons who died in childbirth and four daughters.

Like many pious seekers of his time, Muhammad sought the knowledge of the true God in the loneliness of the desert.

In 610 the archangel Gabriel appeared to him in the cave Hira and told him to start preaching:

Proclaim! (or Read!) In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, who created – created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood:
Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful – He Who taught (the use of) the Pen – taught man that which he knew not. (Sura 98.1-5)

Because of threats and violence, Muhammad moved to Medina in 622. This year marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar.

Because of continuing revelations from the angel Gabriel, Muhammad was convinced he proclaimed the same faith as Jews and Christians. He initially hoped they would recognize him as a prophet.

Some of the leaders of Mecca converted to Islam. In 628 the authorities of Mecca bowed to Muhammad's increasing political and religious influence and allowed him free access to the Kaaba for the month of fasting, Ramadan. When he arrived in Mecca in 630, accompanied by military troops, the residents of Mecca yielded without much resistance. He cleansed the Kaaba of its idols. The Kaaba would soon become the most important shrine in Islam. And Mecca would become its most important city.

Muhammad succeeded in unifying feuding Arab clans. They were united into the *umma*, the "community of God." Muhammad helped in creating a community law.

Muhammad died on June 8, 632. He had no male heir. There would be problem in choosing his successor.

The Koran (Qur'an) teaches that Muhammad was a servant of God, without any superhuman powers, exceptional only in the special duty to be God's prophet and messenger:

Say thou: "I am but a man like you: It is revealed to me by inspiration, that your God is One God."
(Sura 41.6)

And:

"I tell you not that with me are the treasures of Allah, nor do I know what is hidden, nor do I tell you I am an angel. I but follow what is revealed to me."
"Can the blind be held equal to the seeing? Will ye then consider not?" (Sura 6.50)

Muhammad indicates that it was by a miracle that the ability to communicate the Koran was given to him, an uneducated person. Other proclamations of the Koran describe Muhammad as a model for the faithful. The numerous model stories from Muhammad's life demonstrate this. Muslims are bound to abide by these "traditions," also known as *hadith*.

After his death, numerous legendary stories arose among the faithful.

"the perfect Muslim"
superhuman qualities
heart purified in childhood
ascended to heaven on his heavenly steed (*buruq*)

What do you remember about Ishmael from the Bible? (Genesis 16 and 17)

Legendary stories about Ishmael.

Muhammad is a descendent of Ishmael
Ishmael grew up in Mecca
He grew up there, being taken there by Abraham
Ishmael was the progenitor of the Arabs
Isaac may have gotten the land, but Abraham's blessing went to both boys
Ishmael fathered twelve sons (see Genesis 17:20)

The Koran (Qur'an)

Koran in Arabic means "reading," "recitation." Muslims call the Koran the "Word of God."

The Koran is the most widely read book in the world.

Islam recognizes Jews and Christians as "people of the book," as they see themselves. Still, Islam calls to them:
"O people of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him." (Sura 3.64)

The Koran text is divided into chapters and verses. The chapters are called *suras*, the meaning of which is unclear. There are a total of 114 *suras*. A verse is an *ayah*, a "sign," because every verse is seen as a miracle of God.

The text of the Koran is slightly shorter than the New Testament.

The Muslim finds everything in the Koran needed to lead a God-pleasing life in preparation for eternal life. The Koran contains utterances concerning:

1. Faith convictions, such as faith in the oneness of God, the prophets and chosen ones, the angels, and the last judgement;
2. orders for service to God, which includes fasting during the month of Ramadan and the rites during the *hajj*, pilgrimage to Mecca;
3. societal order, particularly concerning family law; and
4. moral-ethical standards, according to which all Muslims must orient their lives.

Even though Muslims have been scrupulous in establishing the original text of the Koran, there are still difficulties in interpreting it. Later revelations are used to explain earlier ones. Dark or ambiguous *suras* are to be interpreted by those with a clear meaning. Particularly difficult is how to interpret some of the passages related to criminal law (i.e., should we cut off the hand of a thief).

According to tradition, Muhammad received his first revelation in the year 610. This event is celebrated annually on one of the last nights of the month of fasting, Ramadan, as the "Descent of the Koran."

Muslim understand the process of revelation as completed in four stages:

God's speech in heaven

An angel takes this speech to earth and seeks out God's prophet

The angels whispers the text word for word.

The Koran is a collection of all the revelations. Nothing in the texts may be altered by the copyists and collectors because then the word of God would be mingled with human thoughts.

For Muslims, this form of revelation is not limited to Muhammad and the Koran. Moses and his five books, David and the Psalter, Jesus and the Gospels are also seen as prophetic revelations. As Muslims see it, however, parts of these books of the earlier prophets underwent changes in the process of tradition (especially when the oral traditions were written down). Therefore, they no longer agree with the heavenly source. For this reason, God sent a prophet one more time, namely Muhammad, who would now impart the conclusive book of revelation, which is safe from further adulterations.

The Five Pillars of Islam

The Prophet's last address was at Arafat, just before his death in 632. It sums up the essence of Islam. It identifies the five pillars upon which Islamic belief and practice rest:

Worship your Lord and Sustainer. Perform your five daily *salat* [prayers]. Fast your month [of Ramadan]. Make pilgrimage to your House [the Kabah and Makkah]. Pay the *zakat* on your property willingly and obey whatever I command you. Then you will enter the Paradise of your Lord and Sustainer.

Pillar One: Testimony of One God

There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.

He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him.

With these words Islam puts itself in irreconcilable opposition to all faiths that believe in many gods, and to Christianity, which holds that Jesus is the Son of God.

Islam means "self-surrender" and "service." The promise is given that through submission to Allah, people will find their appropriate place and achieve peace (*salam*).

Pillar Two: Self-Surrender in Prayer

Muslims' daily routine includes traditional prayer five times daily: before sunrise, at noon, in the afternoon, at sundown, and before sleeping. Events of the day are continually interrupted by prayer, and people are reminded that they must be attentive to God. If Muslims cannot carry out a prayer at the specified time, they can make it up later.

Muslims pray in the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca.

The order of prayer includes:

Niyah – intention to pray

Oiyam – standing

Ruku – kneeling

Sujud falling prostrate

At-tashahhud – the recitation

Taslim – greeting of peace

Pillar Three – Fasting

The most important sign of religious faithfulness, aside from daily prayer, is daytime fasting during the month of Ramadan. Whoever fasts through the month of Ramadan with faith and a sense of responsibility will be forgiven for past sins by God.

The end of the fast is commemorated in the communal celebration known as Eid.

Pillar Four – Giving of Alms

Muslims are encouraged to give alms regularly and in times of emergency.

Seest thou one who denies the Judgement (to come)? Then such is the (man) who repulses the orphan (with harshness), and encourages not the feeding of the indigent. So woe to the worshipers who... refuse (to supply) (even) neighborly needs. (Sura 107)

Those who remain steadfast to their prayer; and those whose wealth is a recognized right for the (needy) who asks and him who is prevented (for some reason from asking). (Sura 70.23-25)

Those who spend their wealth for increase in self-purification... to seek for the Countenance of their Lord Most High. (Sura 92.18,20)

The rule is that all adult, healthy Muslims are to give 2.5% annually of their property and earnings from crafts, industry, or business; or 10% of their earnings from crops and livestock.

Pillar Five – The Pilgrimage

Two months after Ramadan begins, the pilgrimage to Mecca commences. These are days of great religious importance not only for pilgrims, but for all Muslims. They are reminded that they belong to the *umma*, the worldwide community in Islam, which binds people together beyond class and ethnic diversity through faith in the one God.

More than 1.5 million pilgrims come to Mecca annually. Only those of the Muslim faith are allowed to enter the city.

All adult, healthy Muslims of sufficient means are encouraged to make the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) at least once in their lifetime. Muhammad himself commanded it. He promised pilgrims paradise as a reward for their journey.



The Kaaba. The Holy Shrine in Mecca

