

Same God? 9-23-01

It has been a sad and mournful time for our nation. I read a very good sermon related to this week from the first few chapters of Joel. I encourage you to take time to listen to the word of God through that prophet to Judah in a time very similar to our own.

We live in a society where freedom of expression is still permitted. But in the News media I sense this over ruling law of the politically correct. There is such a fear of hate and violent response, that criticism is kept in check by most commentators. I believe this has distorted the facts and I would like to clarify some of them. I am not an expert on Islam, nor have I read the entire Koran. But I will attempt to give you an outline on the differences between the Muslim and Christian faith.

Before I do that, let me first say that America is a place where all are free to worship as they choose. Thank God for that and may that freedom continue. There exists a great diversity in interpretation of the Bible among Christian groups just as there is a huge diversity of opinion on the interpretation of the Qur'an. In this nation, Muslims have just as much right to gather and worship as we do. To persecute them for being Islamic is sowing an action you may end up reaping. Yet, to allow them freedom and respect as humans does not mean we must agree with their beliefs or even hold those beliefs as equal to ours. I respect many of my Christian brothers and sisters while not respecting some of their interpretations. That does not mean I do not love them. God so loved the world that He gave his only Son... and that includes those in every faith. God loves Muslims and we are more likely to be an instrument in their conversion to Christianity if we show them love and understanding instead of hatred.

Do we serve the same God? I have shared with you before how Mohammed chose the moon god Allah to be his one true god. That is why the Islamic symbol includes a crescent moon. Although the name Allah stuck as the name of God and even Arab Christians use that name, it originally meant the moon god. Consider 1Thess 5:5 and Genesis 1:14.

Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." Is Allah one with Jehovah? When we look at Jesus we see that everything He did and said matched the heart of His Father. The author of Hebrews says Jesus is the exact image of the invisible God. We find no difference in the action and description of the God of the Old and New Testament and the life of Jesus Christ. If Allah is the same as Jehovah we should find no difference between them either.

I have found I get into trouble when I quote someone who quotes someone else so let us take our information directly from the Koran. I found in numerous passages that the god of Islam does not love the wicked, the unjust, mischief makers, etc. The Women [4.107] *And do not plead on behalf of those who act unfaithfully to their souls; surely Allah does not love him who is treacherous, sinful*; In great contrast, the God of the Bible loves the world as we have mentioned earlier. Romans 5:8 (NIV)⁸ *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* And compare these words of Jesus with the above quote: Luke 6:28 (NIV)²⁸ *bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.* So we see a great difference here in who Allah loves and who the God of the Bible loves. That can mean a great difference in the value of a life of an unbeliever in the eyes of a believer. If I don't think God loves you I will act a great deal differently than I would if I believed He did love you.

If Allah does not love sinners then who does he love? The Immunity[**9.108**] *Never stand in it; certainly a masjid founded on piety from the very first day is more deserving that you should stand in it; in it are men who **love** that they should be purified; and Allah **loves** those who purify themselves.* Allah loves those who purify themselves. The contrast with the God of the New Testament is obvious. The Bible declares that we cannot purify ourselves. Romans 5:10-11 (NIV)¹⁰ *For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*¹¹ *Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.* We are made right with God through the death of his Son in our place. We have received a gift of the righteousness of Christ by faith in what Jesus did for us. (Also see Ephesians 2:8,9) In his great love for us lost sinners, He saw there was no hope for us purifying ourselves and so made available to us the righteousness of his Son.

Around the Temple Mound there are several great archways. The cap of these archways runs to a point like a long and narrow rooftop. It is a commonly held belief amongst Muslims that this is where the scale for our deeds will sit on Judgement Day. Their good deeds will go on one side of the scale and their bad ones on the other. The way that scale tips will determine their eternity. Thank God, the God of the Bible, that we have already been found righteous in Jesus. Our eternity does not depend on our works but our relationship with our Savior.

But perhaps the greatest difference is in how Mohammed saw Jesus. He declared Jesus to be a great prophet, but not the only begotten Son of God. Muslims categorically deny Jesus is Divine. Mohammed is the greatest of prophets and therefore greater than Jesus. Mohammed never claimed to be Divine. In fact he made it quite clear that he was not. Jesus, however, said that before Abraham was, I AM. Mohammed was pointing to a set of rules. His kosher food was mostly borrowed from the Old Testament. Many of his stories also were borrowed, such as that of Adam and Abraham. The religion of Islam is a list of works and law. The relationship of Christianity is one of grace and mercy.

When he came down from his cave experience where he had his first revelations others convinced him that he had heard from God, (especially his wife) whereas Christ never had any doubt about the voice of His Father. Later Mohammed claims the revelation that he was god's prophet came from the Angel Gabriel.

Jesus lived a sinless life. He could ask, "Which of you convinces me of sin?" Who of us would dare ask that? Neither could Mohammed. In fact in the Koran he admits to faults. The same Arabic word used for 'faults' is translated 'sin' in other parts of the Koran. His eleven wives are quite a contrast to Jesus total dedication to his Father. Mohammed's life was one of constant power struggles, wars, pursuit and capture of other clans and their possessions. Jesus never fought a single man. The Old Testament, which is recognized as God's revelation by the Muslims, (though replaced and surpassed by the Koran) says that God would not let David build the Temple because of the blood on his hands. Would God then use a warrior to deliver his last great revelation?

There has been a great effort on the news to make the Islamic faith look tame and accepting of all. Although some passages sound accepting of others, some do not. The Qur'an is full of contradictions. Consider this passage: [**4.101**] *And when you journey in the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten the prayer, if you fear that those who disbelieve will cause you*

*distress, surely the unbelievers are your open **enemy**.* To the Christian, unbelievers are lost sheep loved by God.

And who can an Islamic person kill? The Women[4.92] *And it does not behoove a believer to **kill** a believer except by mistake, and whoever **kills** a believer by mistake, he should free a believing slave, and blood-money should be paid to his people unless they remit it as alms; but if he be from a tribe hostile to you and he is a believer, the freeing of a believing slave (suffices), and if he is from a tribe between whom and you there is a covenant, the blood-money should be paid to his people along with the freeing of a believing slave; but he who cannot find (a slave) should fast for two months successively: a penance from Allah, and Allah is Knowing, Wise.* What is the implication then if you should take the life of an unbeliever? (Christians and Jews are technically believers, according to the Qur'an.) Considering the above, the Taliban will never hand Osamu Bin Laden over to unbelievers, and if they give him to an Islamic state they will never sentence him to death.

Finally, the idea of heaven is a dramatically differing one. Jesus taught that we will not marry or be given in marriage. Descriptions in the Bible of heaven describe all caught up in the worship of a holy God. The description in the Qur'an is one of the pleasure of women and wine. If you die a martyr the promise is: *Spend eternity in gardens of tranquillity. Youths of never-ending bloom will pass around to them decanters, beakers full of sparkling wine... And suck fruits as they fancy. Bird meats as they relish. And companions with big beautiful eyes Like pearls within their shells...*

When the father of the Arabic people was born God made a very specific prediction. Gen 16:11-12 (NIV)¹¹ *The angel of the LORD also said to her: "You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery."*¹² *He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."* When you look at the TV pictures of the followers of ben Laden running over the hills and screaming Allah Akbar (Allah is great) as they fire their weapons, God's description fits so exactly – a wild donkey of a man. Is his hand against everyone? Everyone who loves peace and civilized life. Is everyone's hand against him? Now it certainly is. Is he living in hostility toward all his brothers, Arab, Christian and Jew? How accurate are the Words of the I AM, who sees the end from the beginning.

What the news media has not been informing us of is the great number of Christians that have died at the hands of Muslims in Sudan, Pakistan, and Indonesia. In Indonesia alone 5000 Christians have been murdered by Muslim extremists since '95. We are mourning the loss of 5000 but that is only the latest toll and the first major death toll in OUR homeland. What news have you heard of the people accused of witnessing to Afghans, a crime punishable by death? That crime holds the same sentence in all Islamic countries. In Israel the Jewish government will hold you in jail and deport you for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. But here in our great country of America, Muslims are free to share their faith with us as we are with them. When appealing to the Islamic world to help fight against America, Mohammed Omar (the religious leader of Afghanistan) asks, "what other government would prosecute Christian proselytizers?" That statement was meant to find a chord in the hearts of Muslims to rally them to join the battle against the USA.

There is a great contrast between Islam and Christianity. We do not serve the same God. We have a wonderful message to share with those in the darkness of Islam. Look at the blessing

and prosperity God has blessed nations that allow the freedom of the Gospel. Look, too, at the poverty in Islamic nations, even ones with enormous oil income. The success of freedom and Christianity is a humiliating fact for followers of Islam. That may be a source of some of the extremist's anger. That Arabs have more rights in Israel than they do in Muslim states is also a humiliation. Let us share the liberating truth of Christianity. Let us be daily thankful for the freedoms and blessings we still enjoy. When people voice the opinion that we all serve the same god, we should lovingly inform them that the teachings of Mohammed and the teachings of Jesus are not even remotely similar. They categorically contradict each other. Also, let them know Christians love Muslims so much they risk their lives to tell them the good news of Jesus. Though so called Christians in the Crusades warred with Muslim people, they were disobeying the direct command of Jesus to love your enemies. Islam has no such command. What a wonderful God we serve – the God revealed to us in the face of Jesus Christ. We have so much to offer the Muslim people in Him.

Here is an interesting site to help Muslim's see that even the Qur'an encourages them to look to the Bible for the answers: <http://answering-islam.org/Mna/muslim.html>