

The Challenge

October 2001

One thing remains for the Church to do before the coming of the Lord. To stand. We have evangelized the nations, and will continue to do so. We have learned to pray and to praise and to war. One final test is upon us: to hold fast to the end. “But hold fast what you have till I come” (Revelation 2:25). It will take every tool we’ve learned, every gift of the Holy Spirit, everything we’ve preached for generations. Just to stand. And we will see the salvation of the Lord, for the battle is the Lord’s.

This material has been prepared by an Arab pastor who has ministered to Muslims for over 30 years in the Middle East, Europe, Southeast Asia, and America. Our intent is to expose the deception of the enemy, Satan, and to provide insight as to practical action that is appropriate and essential for the church of Jesus Christ in this day. We hope you are challenged. We pray you are strengthened as you seek to understand the Lord’s Word to the church today and respond personally to His will for your life in the days ahead.

I. Our Choice: Political Correctness or Truth

On Sunday, October 14, “CNN Presents” ran a two-hour special on “The Struggle of Islam.” A grander summary of the deceptions of the spirit of Islam could hardly be imagined. The media has taken the “politically correct” position of defending Islam since September 11. In this program, the tragedy was said to have “provided the opportunity to set the record straight” about the reputation of Islam among Americans. “We need to change the mindset of America toward Islam.”

Christian, do we hear what they are saying?

The war we find ourselves in the midst of is not merely a social or political struggle. It is a spiritual war, with the sides clearly defined: Islam versus Christianity. The spirit of Islam is one of the ruling principalities in the domain of Satan (read Ephesians 6 if this is not a familiar concept), and one of its declared goals is to win the Western world. To “win” does not mean simply to make converts to Islam, but to rule. Satan’s strategies are being planned out, as we saw on September 11, with precision and detail. This was not merely a human plan of attack, but its fierceness was at a level the world has not seen before because the ruling spirit of darkness has now launched an all-out offensive.

This demonic spirit speaks boldly through fanatics such as bin Laden, but it also speaks subtly through Muslim voices around the world with an amazing array of political and personal intentions. Individually, the sincerity of most of those who speak is quite real. However, the result is that Islam’s influence is steadily gaining strength in our schools, in our government, and in the media – as we saw in CNN’s twisted presentation and in so many others. The primary tactic, even beyond terror, is deception. Just as bin Laden’s terrorists bide their time, slowly integrating into society until their time comes, so the spirit of Islam seeks to win its way slowly into the fabric of American life and thought.

Why would such a religion appear attractive, even to thousands of Americans who have embraced it by choice, not by coercion? The moral code of Islam does put the West to shame in many ways. And just as Israel asked God to set a king over them rather than be ruled by God Himself, it is human nature to surrender to a ruler or set of rules, for the sake of apparent security and superficial peace, that will quiet one's conscience but not require a face to face encounter with the holiness of God Himself – and the cross. Islam offers religion, but not the righteousness of faith that comes through the atoning blood of Christ alone. It offers a pattern for living one's life, but it does not offer life itself.

“Unless we win London over to Islam, we will fail to win the whole of the western world...”

The Queen of England publicly welcomed Islam into her country in 1976. This statement was made at the International Islamic Conference in London a day or two afterwards. In 1945 there was one mosque in England; in 1976 there were 200. Today there are in the thousands and the influence of Islam in Parliament and British society grows steadily.

The death of Princess Diana was a tragic event, but more tragic would have been her marriage into a Muslim family. The West finds this difficult to understand, but in the Muslim mindset, such a marriage would have been understood as a declaration that Islam had conquered England. In anticipation of the wedding, the king of Saudi Arabia said publicly, “We welcome Diana into Islam.” Spiritually, this would have been a great defeat for that land. Many Middle Eastern believers, understanding the implications, felt it was the mercy of God that the fateful car accident took Diana before it was too late.

We have been warned, but has the church of America listened? We understand that the doctrines of humanism, evolution, Eastern mysticism, homosexuality, and tolerance (for everything but Christianity) have been deliberately and systematically woven into public school curricula. Do you know that Islam is also part of that list? It didn't just begin on September 11, but now would be a good time to add this to the prayer list for our schools, and begin to carefully discern the implications of Islamic philosophy as they are woven into social and civil life.

Submission in Islam

“Islam” means “submission,” which really means “subjection.” Any peace that it offers is conditional; safety is assured only to those who embrace Islam and submit to its rule. Even then, we see the strife between sects and factions in every Muslim-ruled country, so should the promise of peace under Islamic rule really convince us? Indeed, most sincere Muslims hope for peace, and individually try to live honorable lives, but there is no peace in the spirit that rules over them.

Christians are killed daily in many Muslim countries for the profession of their faith in Christ. It is clearly stated in the Quran and by many clerics of Islam that one who converts from Islam, and the infidel who misled him, should be killed to keep the influence of Christianity from spreading any further. The use of a pen name for what I am writing to you is testimony to the fact that my freedom to travel in the Middle East will be ended, and my life will be threatened even in America, having made these bold statements as an Arab. The spirit of Islam has no tolerance for truth, for there is no truth in it.

Satan Knows the Power of the Cross

Islam is the only religion that confronts Christianity head-on. Muslim leaders know the Christian's arguments are convincing, and they have no power but fear to keep their people submitted. The God of the Bible convinces through His display of love; Allah convinces through the fear of death.¹ The Muslim leader who said on the CNN report that a "good Muslim is not really different from a good Jew or a good Christian" forgot a very significant difference: the cross of Christ. In my country, born-again Christians ("believers") are very clearly understood as being different from nominal Christians. They are known for their integrity and for the power of the God they serve. Perhaps the Muslims of America have yet to see this kind of Christianity in their neighborhoods?

The cross will always be a stumbling block (see 1 Corinthians 1:23). I sat with an imam (Muslim leader) who longed for peace between Muslims and Christians. "If you Christians could just leave out the cross, we have so much in common!" Our answer, of course, is that there would be no Christianity without the cross. "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:14)

Likewise, the central role that Israel plays in the redemptive plan of God is at the heart of Islam's hatred for the Jew. The fierceness of their adversity can be explained no other way. Without defending or condemning the individual or corporate actions of Arab or Jew, it is sufficient to say that at the root of this conflict is the central spiritual battle of the end times.

The media has presented us with countless assurances from Muslim leaders that the Quran does not call for the death of Jews and Christians. First let's clarify what is being quoted from the Quran. When Mohammed started in Mecca with a handful of followers and much opposition, he declared friendship with the Jews and Christians, and Allah's instructions along these lines were recorded in various suras (books) of the Quran. When he later moved to Medina, gathering an army of followers and gaining strength, his position was revised. Allah had given him a new strategy, to now kill and conquer the infidels (Jews and Christians), and the suras given in Mecca were no longer to apply.

The historian on the CNN program said exactly the opposite, that Mohammed was justified in defending himself against opposition when he started out in Mecca, but after moving to Medina "he abandoned violence once he had gained a position of dominance." What Quran and what history book is she reading from? Islam was just revving up at that point in its progression to take over the Middle East by the sword.

It is fortunate for us that peace-loving Muslims take great pains to interpret their book in a manner that makes for coexistence. However, the strategy of Islam is the same now as it was from the beginning: When it is expedient, befriend the local people; when an upper hand is gained, take control. The bottom line is zero tolerance for other religions but Islam. Writings of Middle Eastern clerics clearly specify that this is their intention with America. One of the more gracious writings suggests that once sincere Christians

¹ The name "Allah" is the Arabic word for God that may also be used by Arab Christians. We are referring here specifically to the god of Islam. Though we use the same word, the Muslim's concept of God is not the same as Elohim, the God of the Jews and Christians.

see the truth of Islam, Christianity will be cleansed from its errors and united with the true Islamic religion, at which point Islam will rule.

The strategy of the spirit of Islam as it's playing out today goes something like this...

Step one: "We need to change the mindset of America..." Take advantage of America's tolerance, openness and ignorance of the Muslim world.

Step two: The spirit of fear that keeps Muslims under oppression was released with fresh force on America on September 11, sustained with the threats of continued attacks. Fear of stirring up more conflict within and abroad should keep our "politically correct" mouths shut against speaking against Islam at large.

What Next?

What happens when we do quench terrorism to some extent? How much destruction will still be inflicted? The greatest damage is not done with bombs, but with lies, as millions more of every race embrace a religion of works and spiritual death. The same brainwashing that we see at the religious schools of Pakistan (led by extremists who are not typical Muslims, we're told) is happening at schools and in front of TV sets across America. Satan doesn't have to wipe us off the map to succeed – he really only needs to keep our children and youth shut off from the truth of the Bible.

Counter-Strategy: The Praying Church

As always, Satan underestimates the power of a praying church, because he cannot comprehend it. The true strength resting within the Bride of Christ is hidden from him.

Almighty God, our triumphant, resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, our Commander-in-Chief, also has a plan and a strategy. The Lord's sovereign plan that must be worked out in this last generation is racing quickly toward its culmination.

Aware of the strategy of the enemy, armed with the Word, equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit, the church of Jesus Christ, not the government or military, has the ultimate responsibility for this battle. As the return of the Israelites from Babylon depended on Daniel's prayers, many details of the events between now and the return of Christ depend on you and me.

Saints of God, I believe Islam is eventually going to fall. The attacks on America have served one great purpose: to awaken the American church to pray as they've never prayed before. It is time for repentance, for embracing the cross in our lives, for walking daily in obedience. Pursue Him above all else. It is a time to listen, a time for discernment, a time to know the mind of the Lord.

Fear the Lord

How do we resist the fear and terror that would grip us? Dead men don't have to fear death, do they? A life that is crucified with Christ is triumphant in all things. Got it?

The Battle for Young Minds

The battle for our children is in the hands of believing parents. As for any of the multitude of lies and perverted philosophies that we fight in this generation, here's a simple principle: ***The best defense against a lie is a solid foundation in the truth.***

II. God's Strategy and Our Mission

Some Christians in the Middle East don't understand why America has welcomed Muslims to our shores with wide-open arms, knowing the deception of Satan that comes with it. It seems utter foolishness to them! Why would we compromise the freedom that they would love to have?

They also don't understand the plan of God for this country. God has brought Muslims from every corner of the world to a place where there is freedom to hear the Gospel of Christ. When they return to their home country, the Gospel has been carried with them to places Western missionaries have never reached.

The Door is Open

It's pretty sure that your Muslim neighbor or co-worker is more anxious than ever about his own safety. It's time for a cup of coffee, my friend!

The things we've shared with you so far are for the Christian, to understand the spiritual nature of the battle. Now let's turn briefly to understanding your Muslim friend a little better.

There are only a few things you really need to know for effective witness, and for the average person, searching out the depths of the darkness of the Quran is not on that list.

1. The average Muslim knows very little about the Quran, and if your arguments make him think you know more than him, he might just go digging deeper for himself. Be wise. With some knowledge, you can ask leading questions, to gently stir his thinking. In the context of true friendship, there will be time also for a well-placed challenge.
2. Know the common misunderstanding Muslims have about Christianity. There are many good resources in your Christian bookstore and on the internet.
3. Ask questions to learn about your friend's culture. The food is marvelous, regardless the country! You have a lot to learn, so let him be your teacher.
4. Become sensitive to the issues that are very real concerns to your friend. To accept your Christ will require that they pay a great price. A woman may be very guarded when her husband is present, but eager to talk one on one. This is very important: Women minister to women; men minister to men.
5. Be aware of the occult influences within Islam. Witchcraft is deeply woven into many cultural practices, like reading one's fortune from a coffee cup. Don't be skittish, but don't participate, just graciously decline. Superstitions driven by fear reinforce the spiritual bondage, so these can provide insight for your prayers as you seek to break those bonds.
6. Be a true friend. Will you love them even if they do not receive Christ? Will you wait and pray for the years that it may take? Will you cry with them and rejoice with them? Missionary Raymond Lull wrote hundreds of years ago that "by love, by tears, by prayers and by the giving of oneself" are Muslims brought to Christ.
7. PRAY. Pray in groups, covering yourself and each other, for Satan will attack. This will be one of the strongest spirits you will have ever tried to resist. Watch

in your own life and in your family for such things as oppression and division, using the Word of God to overcome. Psalm 91 is very key for this ministry. “No weapon formed against you will prosper.” (Isaiah 54:17) “They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives even unto death.” (Revelation 12:11)

8. Present the teachings of Christ. A study of Matthew 5-7 could be a starting place. The deity of Christ can only be revealed supernaturally, it is such a stumbling block. But a former PLO terrorist told me after he had read through the Arabic Bible he received in an American prison, “Anyone who could forgive me for the things I’ve done, must be God.” What a marvelous transformation he had!
9. Minister to them in your home or theirs, rather than inviting them to church. Provide them with a New Testament or Gospel of John, preferably in their language (remember that most of the world’s Muslims today are not Arabs).
10. Seek the Lord for discernment and pray against the bondage of Islam in your friend’s life. Most Muslims who are saved have had supernatural revelation or an actual visitation of Christ Himself. You can pave the way, but the Lord Himself will do the work.

Reaching the Rest

Each Muslim has different needs. Some will never meet a committed follower of Christ, particularly in foreign lands. Millions speak only the Arabic language; multitudes cannot read any language. Most say they accept some parts of the Bible, but are skeptical because they’ve been told Christians have added to the text. Radio, television, correspondence programs, Scripture distribution, cassettes and videos are all powerful tools being used by God. The enemy understands the power of the media to stir up hatred, fear and deception. God understands the power of the media to spread His love and truth. Direct your prayers toward filling the airwaves with the Word of God.

III. Exposing Islam: What Does the Quran Say?

This final section provides some Quranic verses supporting a few of the points that have been made earlier.

There is No Love in the God of the Quran

Muslims say that the divine names of Allah are ninety-nine, which are recorded on the palm of our hands. Examples of these names are “Great,” “High,” and “Holy.” But one name is not mentioned: “God is Love.” The Quran says that Allah loves those who are good, but hates the unbeliever, i.e., all who are not Muslims, and declares war upon them.

The Quran teaches Muslims to love their brothers, but to overcome their enemies (non-Muslims). Those who leave the path of Islam should be killed, being seen as idolaters. The book is full of violence and hatred.

“...Then slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them, and lie in wait for them in ambush everywhere for them.” (Al-Tauba 9:5)

“Remember thy Lord inspired the angels (with the message): I am with you; give firmness to the believers; I will instill terror into the hearts of the unbelievers; smite ye above their necks and smite all their fingertips off them.” (Al-Anfal 8:12)

“Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Apostle have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, out of those who have been given the book (Bible), until they pay the tax in acknowledgment of superiority and they are in a state of subjection.” (Al-Tauba 9:29)

“O Prophet! Urge the believers to war.” (Al-Anfal 8:65)

“Therefore, take not from among them (unbelievers) friends until they fly in Allah’s way; but if they turn back, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them; and take not from among them a friend or a helper.” (Al-Nisa 4:89)

“Mohammed is Allah’s apostle. Those who follow him are ruthless to the unbeliever but merciful to one another.” (Al-Fath 48:29)

“If any one desires a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted of him.” (Al-Imran 3:110)

Contrast this with the Bible:

Jesus said: “...love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?” (Matthew 5:44-46).

“These things I command you, that ye love one another.” (John 15:17)

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.’” (Romans 12:19)

Forgiveness and Hope

Islam offers no true hope or assurance of eternal salvation for its faithful. Although the Quran teaches that God is the Forgiver, “Al-Ghaffar,” man’s sins do not disappear but remain until the Day of Judgment when all man’s works will be weighed.

“And the measuring out on that day will be just; then as for him whose measure (of good deeds) is heavy, there are they who shall be successful. And as for him whose measure (of good deeds) is light, there are they who have made their soul suffer loss...” (Al-A’Raf 7:8-9)

“Surely good deeds take away evil deeds...” (Hud 11:114)

But how can God forgive if the sins are still there, and man still has to work hard to cover his bad works? It would seem for the Muslim that forgiveness does not exist. Forgiveness in the Bible is complete, as God’s response to true repentance:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” (Hebrews 8:12)

There is no assurance in the Quran that a person will ever really gain the reward of his good deeds. God has the final decision, and God does what He pleases; granted that the good deeds do carry more weight than the bad deeds, one still can only hope.

“Allah sends astray whom He pleases, and He guides whom He pleases.” (Ibrahim 14:4)

“He forgives whom He pleases and torments whom He pleases.” (Al-Imran 3:129)

“...whom Allah pleases, He sends astray, and whom He pleases, He puts on the right way.” (Al-An’am 6:39)

In contrast, what a wonderful assurance we have in the Bible.

Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled...I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:1,3)

“For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Romans 10:11-12)

Eternity

A Muslim friend of mine wondered why after struggling to do good deeds, the reward was not worth it. The Islamic reward is a “paradise” garden full of physical pleasures, fruit and rivers.

“And convey good news to those who believe and do good deeds, that they shall have gardens in which rivers flow; whenever they shall be given a portion of the fruit thereof, they shall say: This is what was given to us before; and they shall be given the like of it, and they shall have pure mates (wives) in them; and in them they shall abide.” (Al-Baqarah 2:25) (See also Al-Imran 3:15)

“...And you shall have therein what your souls desire, and you shall have therein what you ask for.” (Al-Sajdah, Faslat, 41:31)

“...In them shall be those who restrained their eyes (virgins), before them neither man nor jinn (spirits) shall have touched them...” (Al-Rahman 55:46-78)

“And with them shall be those who restrain the eyes, having beautiful eyes; as if they were eggs carefully protected...A speaker from among them shall say: Surely I had a comrade of mine.” (Al-Saffat 37:40-52)

These and other verses are interpreted in a variety of ways (so it’s still hard to know what your reward will be!) A man will not have his own wife in paradise, but newly created virgins. He may look forward to anywhere from 40 to 1000 virgins, depending on who you believe. To last for eternity, some say the women will become virgins again after each intercourse. Muslim men can fantasize about the sex they will enjoy forever.

How can a Holy God live in such a place?

“For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.” (Matthew 22:30)

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away...And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men,

and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God...But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murders, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:1,3,8)

“And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 22:4-5)

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9)

The Life and Fate of Women

While the rewards of paradise are spelled out for men, women are not included. What will their reward be, if any? Quranic teaching about women leaves room for interpretation, and Muslim scholars revise their interpretations regularly to suit society. The following verses from the Quran give you a picture of its basic teaching about a woman’s position.

Marriage: “If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your own desire: two or three or four.” (Al-Nisa 4:3)

“And you have it not in your power to do justice between wives...” (Al-Nisa 4:129)

Treating wives: “The male has the equal of the portion of two females.” (Al-Nisa 4:11)

“...Admonish those of them on whose part you apprehend disobedience, and leave them alone in their beds and chastise them (beat them).” (Al-Nisa 4:34)

“And if you desire to take a wife in place of another and you have given one of them a treasure, take not back aught therefrom.” (Al-Nisa 4:20)

Divorce: “There is no blame on you if you divorce women when you have not touched them or appointed for them a portion.” (Al-Baqarah 2:235)

“And if you divorce them before you have touched them and you have appointed for them a portion, then (pay to them) half of what you have appointed.” (Al-Baqarah 2:237)

Remarriage: “So if he divorce her, she shall not be lawful to him afterwards until she marries another husband: then if he divorce her, there is no blame on them both if they return to each other.” (Al-Baqarah 2:230)

Compare Biblical teaching:

Marriage: “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh” (Ephesians 5:31).

Treating women: “Nevertheless, let everyone of you in particular so love his wife, even as himself” (Ephesians 5:33).

“...That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

Divorce: “But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery...” (Matthew 5:32).

“But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female...What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mark 10:6,9).

I believe that women will be the ones to bring Islam down in the end. Women are the heart of the Muslim home, and are training up the next generation. Christian women are also rising up to see the role they have within ministry. As the Lord is teaching men and women about proper relationships within the home and church, women are being released to play a powerful role in bringing the Gospel to the Muslim world.

In summary...

- This is a spiritual war, with the lines clearly drawn.
- Don't be deceived by the propaganda being fed to the American media.
- Do establish the next generation in truth.
- Believers in Jesus Christ have the weapons that will bring Islam down.
- The hearts of Muslims are more open today than ever before.
- Women reaching women will be one of the most important strategies for personal evangelism.
- Media will be our most important strategy for mass evangelism of the Muslim world.
- You are already making a difference, as a believer in Jesus Christ. Believe God that there is a great role for you to play in this generation, right where you are.
- Stand fast for the truth!