

# Is Allah Another Name for God?

## Is the Koran similar to the Bible?

Islam is not only Arabia's major religion, but also the fastest growing religion in the world. In the United States there are now over "6 million Muslims, more than thirty times the number of a decade ago."<sup>1</sup> This startling and phenomenal growth is a real challenge to Christians hoping to bring as many as possible to Christ before the Second Coming. Should we as Christians be concerned? How *does* Islam figure into God's divine plan of the ages?

One of the most widely accepted ideas about Islam is the belief that "Allah" is one and the same as the God of the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Bible. But, is it really true that "Allah" is just another name for the Jewish or Christian God? Is the *Qur'an* another inspired book which honors the revelation of what is called the Judeo-Christian Bible?

### The Rise of Islam

Mohammed was born in A.D. 570 into the Arabian tribe of Quraysh which was in control of the city of Mecca –where, incidentally, pagans would come to worship at the Kabaah stone<sup>2</sup>. Commonly understood to be afflicted with epileptic-type seizures, these attacks became the means of Mohammed's receiving visions and dreams<sup>3</sup>. When Mohammed was forty years old, he declared that Gabriel appeared to him in the name of Allah and commanded him to preach a true religion. Islam, the religion he taught, means full *surrender* to Allah.<sup>4</sup> In a hard and cruel Arabian culture saturated with laws of revenge, spirits and jinns, he taught a righteous Allah and exhorted a better morality to the people of Mecca.

Over the course of twenty-three years, these "revelations" from Allah were written down, – first by his wife, then by scribes—on palm-leaves and various other substances conveniently at hand. (Eventually these were compiled into 114 Suras or chapters with no particular chronological or subject order.) Mohammed announced that he was the "Comforter" Jesus promised to send<sup>5</sup> He made concessions to the Jews on celebrating the Sabbath and selecting Jerusalem as the point of direction in prayer. Also he appealed to them by claiming to be their Messiah. But when the Jews would not acknowledge him as Messiah—or even a prophet—he "retaliated with revelations in which Allah charged the Jews with corrupting the Scriptures, killing the prophets and rejecting messiah."<sup>6</sup>

As the number of converts increased, however, a fierce opposition to the new prophet arose from the chief pagan religionists. With his persecuted followers, Mohammed fled to Medina. Gradually Mohammed appeared in a new character – no longer content to convert his adversaries by words or concessions...he chose the sword. By attacking and

looting caravans,<sup>7</sup> Mohammed established his authority in Arabia and finally returned in triumph to rule Mecca. While claiming to restore the "primitive purity...lost by Jews and Christians...Unlike the Jews, the pagans preferred conversion to martyrdom."<sup>8</sup> Within a century after the Prophet's death, Muslim Arabs were administering an empire stretching from southern France through North Africa and the Middle East, across central Asia. Today the fear of the encroachment of Western society and materialism has renewed Islamic fundamentalism causing alarm to the West.

## Who is Allah?

Many people assume that the God of the Bible and the God of the Koran are the same God—just with different names. However, up until the seventh century when Mohammed announced Allah as the only one true God, "Allah" was the name of the widely worshipped moon god throughout ancient Mesopotamia.<sup>9</sup> This adaptation from pre-Islamic Arabia can be verified, "Allah is found...in Arabic inscriptions prior to Islam"<sup>10</sup>

In order to accommodate the pagan population in Arabia, he chose Allah, the prominent moon god (who was married to the sun goddess), from the many celestial gods. "Allah is a contraction of al-llah, an old Kaaba god."<sup>11</sup> It is no wonder the Arab scholar Nazar-Ali has observed: "Islam retained many aspects of pagan religion"<sup>12</sup> It is "heathenism in monotheistic form."<sup>13</sup> No wonder the crescent moon is the symbol of Islam! And no wonder a pilgrimage to the black Kaaba stone is one of the Five Pillars (requirements) of Islam till this day.<sup>14</sup> Mohammed's monotheism was merely the declaration that Allah was the greatest god in a pantheon of pagan gods! Although second- and third-century Christians had incorporated some pagan notions into their belief concerning the God of Abraham, Allah was *not* the further revelation of the true God of Jews and Christians.

But are there any similar character attributes between God Almighty of the Bible and Allah of the Koran? In the Bible, God is distinctly presented as not only all-powerful, wise and just, but also very loving towards mankind. In fact, He sent His only begotten Son to die for man so that mankind can be saved from the penalty of their sins—death. Though every chapter of the Koran begins with the words, "In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful," the terrors of hell are stressed—in fact, seven levels of hell for the unbelievers or the wicked (Sura 3:10, 63, 131; 4:56, 115; 7:41; 8:50; 9:63, etc.)<sup>15</sup> Who are the unbelievers? While Jews and Christians are referred to respectfully as the "People of the Book," because they do not accept Mohammed, they are actually condemned. "The unbelievers among the People of the book [Jews and Christians] and the pagans shall burn for ever in the fire of Hell. They are the vilest of all creatures" (Sura 93:1).

By contrast, the God of the Bible could never have permitted a literal, burning place of torment anywhere in His universe. Only the doctrines of men would misrepresent God's character and promote Satan's lie, "Thou shalt *not* surely die," instead of God's warning, "In the day that thou eatest thereof *thou shalt surely die*" (Genesis 3:4; 2:17). God's penalty for sin was death, *not eternal torture*. The Koran hundreds of times threatens with

hell those who reject Mohammed's appeal. "For those who have denied and scorned Our Revelations...Hell shall be their couch, and sheets of fire shall cover them" (Sura 7:41). For centuries—in one form or another—man has exploited other men with the fearful threat of hellfire. Islam, like "Christianity," has tragically misrepresented God's true character and plan.

Allah is not a further revelation of the God of the Bible, but declared as the one and only greatest of the celestial pre-Islam gods of Arabia—altogether different in person and character from the Lord God of the Bible.

## The Koran (Qur'an)

There are many correspondencies between the Bible and the Koran (which was completed centuries later). What accounts for these similarities is that "Mohammed had connection with Jews and Christians of every quarter of the civilized world"<sup>16</sup>. But the contradictions are many, such as, the Koran teaches Jesus was *not* crucified and that he is *not* the son of God (Sura 4:156). "Far is it removed from Allah's transcendent majesty that He should have a son" (4:171). While Mohammed acknowledged the Pentateuch of Moses, the Psalms of David and the Gospel of Jesus—he taught that "because these scriptures have suffered such corruption, they can no longer be trusted; and the Koran now replaces them."<sup>17</sup>

In the Koran, Paradise is pictured as one vast garden—otherwise very sensually described as providing for each "blessed male" plenty of wine and "dark-eyed virgins for his pleasure" (Sura 56:12-37, 56). This view of reward to the faithful hardly compares to the Christian's hope—nor even to a Jewish vision of a messianic kingdom on earth. It is more likely the imagination of a seventh century Arabian culture's polygamy. While the Koran allowed for four wives (Sura 4:3), according to the Muslim scholar and statesman Ali Dashti, Mohammed had twenty two.<sup>18</sup> No problem, Mohammed had later received a special revelation from Allah allowing for his exception (Sura 33:50). Actually, later revelations were allowed to "abrogate" earlier ones (Sura 2:106).

The Hebrew Scriptures elevated women (Deut 21:14-16); the Christian Scriptures teach: "There is neither male nor female...ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28) While the Koran provided for certain privileges Arab women had not enjoyed before, how much more justification does one need for wife beating than the Koran? Sura 4:3 says, "Men have authority over women...as for those from whom you fear disobedience...beat them." Sadly, the record shows a consistent subjugation of Moslem women through the centuries. Moslem women are rarely seen in public, and if so covered completely. She would risk her life appearing not completely covered. (Satan, it is believed, can be seen in "a lock of woman's hair emerging from under a headscarf" as much as in "the occupation of Palestine by the Jews"<sup>19</sup>.)

Although many Muslims desire to live peaceable lives, many other "Islamic Fundamentalists" draw inspiration from the Koran, "God may know the true believers

and choose martyrs from among you...that God may test the faithful and *annihilate the infidels*" (Sura 3:40,41).

The disjointed, contradictory and sensuous verses of the Koran can hardly be compared to the progressive, orderly harmony of the 66 books of the Bible which have one consistent theme of salvation for all mankind.

## The Sword of Islam

Jihad means "struggle"...for Islam. This struggle exists inwardly against self, but also outwardly. Against Arab unbelievers who did not peacefully submit, Mohammed preached the *jihad* or holy war, a crusade in the name of Allah. "The preponderant tone of the Koranic passages dealing with unbelievers," admits one author appealing for understanding of Islam, "is aggressive... 'Those that make war against Allah and His apostle...shall be put to death or crucified or have their hands and feet cut off on alternate sides or be banished from the country.' (5:36)"<sup>20</sup> Jesus never taught or used physical violence to force people to believe His message or accept Him as the Messiah. When Peter took out his sword, Jesus told him to put it back in its sheath (Matthew 26:51-54).

Alas, Christianity through history has also used violence of every sort on unbelievers—but its Founder never taught it. Clearly the Koran encourages violence upon "infidels." From Sura 48:29, "Mohammed is Allah's apostle. Those who follow him are ruthless to the unbelievers but merciful to one another."

## Conclusion

Islam, therefore, is not compatible with Christianity or Judaism. Allah is not the same as the God of the two Testaments of the Bible. The Koran borrows from the Bible but at the same time contradicts it. On the other hand, Christianity and Judaism are harmonious and provide for a universal Kingdom. Furthermore, those who have *now* rejected God and His Bible will have an opportunity to come up to Jerusalem to "learn" of Jacob's God (Isaiah 2:1-4) and live forever in a Paradise on earth. Faithful Christians will be "kings and priests" in heaven to bless all those on earth—including Moslems who *submit* to the loving God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Thomas W. Lippman, *Understanding Islam* (New York: Meridian), 134.
2. *Holy Wars, The Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism*, Dilip Hiro (New York: Routledge), 1989, 5.
3. *The Story of Civilization, Vol. IV*, Will Durant (New York: Simon and Schuster) 1950, 169.
4. *Ibid*, 161, 163.
5. McClintock & Strong, *Ecclesiastical and Biblical Cyclopedia*, Vol. VI, 407.
6. *The Story of Civilization*, 169
7. *Understanding Islam*, 115.
8. Jacques Jomier, *How to Understand Islam* (New York: Crossroad), 15,16.
9. The Moon-god Allah, In *The Archeology of the Middle East*, Dr. Robert A. Morey, Research and Education Foundation, 3.
10. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, I:643.

11. The Story of Civilization, 184
12. Michael Nazar-Ali, Islam: A Christian Perspective (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 21
13. Augustus H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1976), 186.
14. John L. Esposito, Islam: the Straight Path (New York: Oxford University Press), 1988, 93
15. The Story of Civilization, 177-179.
16. McClintock & Strong's, "Muir's Testimony," pp. 118, 119, 153
17. al-Maqqari, Ahmed ibn Muhammad, History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain, ii, 146.
18. Robert Morey, The Islamic Invasion (New York: Harvest House), 85,86
19. Rah e Ma (Our Path), Party of Allah "Theoretical Booklet," Tehran, 1982, 22,23
20. Understanding Islam, 120.

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