

Christianity and Islam Are Irreconcilable. What Does the Church Do About it?

Islam, in so many ways, is in the news. Our country is engaged in a military action against an Islamic country. There are also several Islamic nations that are supporting this action, if not actively, tacitly. Tensions are high between those who “support Israel” and those who don’t. Currently, there are about seven million Muslims living in the United States, two billion Muslims worldwide. And then there’s this. Recently, Tucker Carlson made the following statement concerning our Lord Jesus: *the people in charge don’t want you to know this, but Muslims love Jesus*. He went on to say, “Islam reveres Him as a major prophet and messenger of the Lord, believes that He performed miracles, and states that He will return to Earth to defeat the Antichrist.” This got my attention. Is this true? What does Islam truly teach about Jesus?

I’ve been thinking about this article for a while, considering how to best approach this topic and serve my people. On one hand, I wanted to write a refutation of Carlson’s claims. Because what he says, and how he frames his statement, is not true. I personally do not at all like how President Trump has used images of himself and Jesus. It’s frankly blasphemous. That was what Carlson was responding to. Still...what he claims is not true. Carlson stated that any attack on Jesus is just as much an attack on Islam as well as Christianity. Really? What does Islam really believe about Jesus Christ? Do they believe Him to be the Son of God? Risen from the dead? True man and true God? The Savior of the human race? The only means to salvation?

That’s what I want to talk about, in part. The first half of this meditation will look at the incompatibility of Christianity and Islam, based on both religion’s claims. But as I reflected on this, I thought I needed to do more. To simply argue that Islam is a false religion is only half of the battle. What should the Church, namely rank and file Christians who live in and around Muslims, do? What is our calling as Christians to Muslim people? The answer to that is simple: preach the Gospel. But how? How are we to proclaim the forgiveness of sin in Christ alone to a Muslim? So, that is the second part of the article. I will suggest a method to do this, one that doesn’t start with Jesus, but the Bible...and the Quran.

Christianity and Islam Don’t Believe in the Same God, Much Less the Same Jesus

As we see from Carlson, there are Christians who claim that Muslims love Jesus. That we worship the same God. That essentially they’re similar, both are what have been called “Abrahamic” religions (the other one being Judaism!). I’ve heard this countless times...mostly from ignorant so-called Christians who really are asserting something like “all roads, all faiths, lead to heaven and to the same God.” *This is false*. It goes against Scripture (more on that in a moment!). James Talarico, running for senate in Texas, said recently, “All religions of love point to the same truth.” No...Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6) St. Paul says, “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be anathema.” (Gal 1:8). The fact is, both Christianity and Islam make *exclusivist claims*. Both could be wrong; but both cannot be true, logically speaking.

This fact is born out in a book by Michael Licona called *Paul Meets Muhammed: A Christian-Muslim Debate on the Resurrection*. In the book, Licona creatively pits St. Paul against Muhammed before a live audience for a debate. Each one uses their sacred book to present the case for their religion, faith claims, and doctrine, with the resurrection of Christ at the heart of the discussion. For the resurrection is the foundation of Christianity, as Paul says, “If Christ has not been raised from the dead, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain...and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.” (1 Cor 15:14,17) There are many stark assertions made by both religions, as Licona demonstrates. I have selected seven that make clear the differences:

Christianity: There is only one Gospel. Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world, and it is only through Him that one is saved. Even if an angel from heaven...

Islam: The Angel Gabriel spoke to Muhammed, directly contradicting that Gospel message.

Christianity: God has a Son, within a Trinity.

Islam: God has no son, and is not triune. In fact, Islam believes Christians to be “polytheists.”

Christianity: All mankind has inherited original sin. Sin is the inherent problem.

Islam: Man is inherently good, and “sin” is a result of individual choices, not man’s nature.

Christianity: All men, therefore, *need* a Savior and Redeemer.

Islam: Since man is good, no savior is needed. Men are to live by the will of Allah.

Christianity: Jesus died on a cross and rose from the dead.

Islam: Allah tricked the Jews, and Jesus (a prophet) escaped the cross. He did not die, and therefore, there is no resurrection.

Christianity: Christ will return again in judgment, but also to restore His creation.

Islam: Jesus will return to slay those who falsely claim that he is God’s Son.

Christianity: Salvation is secured by grace through faith in Christ alone, to all (any) who follow Him.

Islam: Outside of martyrdom, there is nothing a Muslim can do to know they’re saved. They can do works, such as the Five Pillars, but that does not grant salvation.

These are just a few of the differences. Anyone who says, “Muslims love Jesus” is talking about a *different* Jesus than the Second Person of the Trinity. In no way is Islam compatible with orthodox Christian doctrine, revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Islam denies Christ, denies the Trinity, denies the Gospel, completely contradicts the Bible. To claim that there is another way or path to God is a canard. No matter how winsomely or soft-spoken one says it. In fact, the religion of Islam is a demonic stronghold, not an “Abrahamic” religion.

The Way to Evangelize to a Muslim

So, is that it? It is helpful to clearly know that there are irreconcilable differences between Islam and Christianity, but do we stop there? That seems to be where many want to stop. But I've been thinking about this lately. What if, instead of dismissing them (there are after all, two billion Muslims), or pretending that they *are* compatible to the Christian faith (like Carlson and Talarico), what if we evangelized them? What if we shared the Gospel with them? The question then is *how*. How do we preach the Gospel to people who claim to "love Jesus" but don't believe Him as God? How do we reach people who despise Christianity and Christians?

The key is found in both religion's sacred books. The center of a Muslim's faith is the Quran. It is seen to be completely without error or corruption. Muhammed received the Quran (it is asserted) directly from Allah, through Gabriel. He could neither read nor write, but he received Allah's message like "water from a pipe." This is different from how we view the Bible. Our Scriptures are fully inerrant, fully authoritative, inspired by the Holy Ghost. But we also see the human interaction in its production. We, in fact, embrace it. The Bible authenticates that God directed men to write down what He said. The Bible is corroborated by history and archeology. So, again, the Quran and the Bible cannot *both* be true. For the Quran directly contradicts the Holy Scriptures. So, that is where we start. By discrediting their book.

This might seem a huge burden. But it helps to know a little about when and how the Quran was compiled. As I've said, it is seen to be a direct revelation from Allah.¹ But the Quran was written 600+ years after the last books of our canon. The Old Testament was written between 1500-400 BC, with the New Testament books completed before the turn of the first century AD. Now, Muslims claim that our Bible is corrupted...but how could that be if our Scriptures were written first? Their answer is that Muhammed received the *true* revelation, the correct version of events. But the differences between the two (the supposed corruption of the Bible) would have to be motivated by the Jews and then Christians. In other words, the biblical authors would have had to intentionally change the truth to conceal it, only later to have it revealed to Muhammed. This is implausible. The simple explanation for the differences between the two books is that what Muhammed "received" was wrong. Incorrect. Not factual. In fact, it was lies. That is the simplest, and obvious answer. Ockham's razor.

So, if Christians can demonstrate to a Muslim that the Quran is corrupted and not trustworthy, then it completely removes the central thing in their faith. This may sound like I am suggesting that we attack and undermine something holy and precious to a Muslim. I am. But it's the only way to prepare the devout Muslim to hear the Gospel. We have to remove the thing standing between lies and the truth. By using our true, authoritative, revelatory Scriptures to refute their book, we can demonstrate specifically how the Quran is not to be trusted and was either a product of Jewish mystics who Muhammed encountered, ones who did not know the Torah well

¹ For the sake of clarity, please note that when I use the name "Allah" I am not referring to the one, true God known by a different name. Allah and God are not the same.

and were anti-Christian...or that Muhammed actually had it revealed *directly* to him. Not by an angel, but by a demon. Once this is demonstrated, which may take some time and many conversations, then the message of prophecy of the Jewish Messiah can be shown in the OT, and its fulfillment in Christ alone preached, validated by the NT.

But this project takes an actual, robust knowledge of our Scriptures, mainly the books of Moses. For that is what the Quran mostly corrupts. For instance, the Quran asserts that Moses met his wife at a well in Midian. There were two sisters, and it says Moses was to serve two “terms of service” for both of them. The problem with this is, of course, that *that* is a corruption of the story of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel, conflated with Moses. Moses did meet a daughter of Midian by a well...but she was one of *seven* daughters, and Zipporah was given by her father Reuel to Moses as a wife. He did not have to complete any years of service for her. These details matter. For knowing them is how a Christian refutes the Quran. Both could be wrong. But both cannot be true. As we know, the Bible is God’s written Word, inspired and infallible. We just have to be conversant with the specifics to be able to show the Quran to be in error.

There are too many differences between the Bible and the Quran to detail them here. Just know that there are obvious differences. It doesn’t take a Bible scholar to know them. It just takes someone fully acquainted with God’s Word. For instance, in the Joseph story alone, there are 944 differences between the biblical account in Genesis and the Quran. A Muslim can be shown these differences, with the rhetorical point—*what would account for them?* What would motivate Moses, or a Jewish scribe, or a Christian to change the historical account of Joseph? To contradict Muhammed? Political reasons? Ethical grounds? Theological concerns with Islam? This is impossible to claim seeing that the books of Moses were written 2000+ years before Muhammed lived! Instead, what we can show is that Muhammed got crucial details wrong. The Quran says that there were only nine plagues visited on Egypt. They leave out the tenth one—the Passover of the Angel of Death. Connected to this, there is no Passover meal, which we know anticipates the coming of the true Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ. In fact, the Passover is mentioned in the Old Testament over seventy times. The Quran never mentions it.

The Goal of All of It

The goal of doing this, what we might call “deconstructing the Quran,” is not simply to undermine Islam and a Muslim’s faith, but so that we may *construct* the truth of God’s plan for salvation found in His Son, Jesus the Messiah. True God, true man. For this is the redemption story writ large throughout the pages of the Bible, indeed the Old Testament. By removing the false narratives contained in the Quran, a Christian can then point to the promises and prophecies in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in Christ, as witnessed in the New Testament. This approach works for a Jew as well! But by removing the obstacle of the Quran, the Gospel can come in full blast.

And in this is comfort. A Muslim has no real comfort in this life. Everything is fatalistically determined by Allah, and the only hope for an adherent of the Quran is to keep his will. This

might lead (in some cases) to an ethical life (of sorts), but it also leads to some terrible practices and a view of the world that is completely at odds with ours. It also leads to a hatred of Christians. Please note this. The Muslim worldview and the Christian one are completely incompatible! Apart from this though, Islam offers no message of comfort, of reconciliation, of redemption. There is no hope of resurrection. There is no Holy Spirit to regenerate the heart of man and make him a “new creation.” There are no Sacraments that offer life and salvation. *There is no forgiveness of sins.* The only thing a Muslim has is strict obedience to the will of Allah...or else. And if the greatest act of obedience is martyrdom, where does that lead?

What I propose, of course, cannot be done in a vacuum. It can't be practiced in the quiet of your home. So, I suggest two things. First, we must know our biblical stories, the intimate details of the historical Scriptures to such a degree that we can refute false accounts or corruptions on the spot. It's not enough to say, “Your book is wrong.” We have to show them specifically. This also means that we take the time to teach our children. Do your kids know the Biblical stories? Your grandkids? By knowing what our Bible says, and what our true doctrine is, Who Jesus is truly, we have the basis to give a witness to a Muslim we might encounter.

Which leads to the second thing. We use the relationships we have in our lives (families, work, school) to share *first* the deconstruction of the Quran and *then* the proclamation of Christ. We use the opportunities that God gives—the natural, normal, organic relationships already built-in to have conversations. No one is suggesting we drive to Dearborn, Michigan and start street preaching! But what if we convert and disciple someone from Islam to Christ? *They* would be the ones to go to places like Dearborn, London, Pakistan. If you look at the people already in our life, you might find an opportunity to start a dialogue with someone in your circle. And if you don't know any Muslims...just wait! You might meet one soon. There are seven million in the U.S. And counting.

What we cannot do is accept the false gospel of people like Tucker Carlson and James Talarico, who assert that the differences between Muslims and Christians are negligible and unimportant. That's a worldview that leads straight to hell. I don't say this out of hatred, but a sincere desire that all people would come to know the truth and be saved. But this sincere desire must not be translated into some kind of watered down “nicer than God” Christianity, where we remove all distinctions and say, “It's all the same!” We are to be aware of false doctrine and perversions of the Gospel, especially as it gets espoused within the Church. But if we can make disciples of Muslims, and turn them into apologists, ones who can then go to strongholds like Dearborn and beyond and convert others, then we can offer comfort and eternal life to millions of people who are now otherwise lost.