

THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAM TO CHRISTIANS

1. A Spiritual Vacuum

Recommended reading: "A Christian's Pocket Guide to Islam" by Patrick Sookhdeo.

Remember that Muslims are made in God's image and that Jesus Christ died for them. Christians are called to save and serve others. They have a monopoly on saving but not on servicing. These messages are directed to Christians (the Church).

Trends in our Society ("isms")

- * Social
 - Materialism (money orientated society)
 - Hedonism (pursuit of pleasure, sex, comfort, health)
 - Secularism (religion not allowed in public life)

- * Mental
 - Truth is no longer revealed by God. Replaced with:
 - Rationalism (truth is discovered by our reason/mind)
 - Romanticism (truth is discovered through our heart)
 - Relativism (truth is discovered through preference - no absolutes)

- * Religious
 - Pluralism (multicultural/multi-religious society; Non biblical values of tact and tolerance prevail)
 - Syncretism (coming together of all religions for a common human purpose; the "faith community")

The above "isms" have resulted in a decline in the acceptance of Christianity in our society.

Most of society now has no church/biblical knowledge. This has left a spiritual vacuum in people's lives which is being filled by :

A human being - For example a sport, movie or pop star.

Pagan beliefs - For example witchcraft, the occult, Harry Potter.

Another religion - For example Islam

Islam in the World

Fastest growing religion (Four and a half times faster than Christianity).

One in every 5 people in the world is Muslim.

By 2055 half the global birth rate will be Muslim.

In 45 countries over 70% of the population are Muslim.

An Islam spokesman recently said: "In the next 50 years we will capture the western world for Islam. We have the men to do it, we have the money to do it, and above all we are already doing it".

England will become Islamic because the Church is UNREADY and UNAWARE. Note the parallel with the book of Habakkuk ("The just shall live by faith").

2. Islam's Attraction

Looking at Islam and Christianity from the outside. .
Why is Islam more attractive than "Churchianity"?

1. Islam is a **Simple Religion**

Simple doctrines - "There is no god but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet".

Simple scriptures - One book (Quran)

Simple theology - One god (creator, ruler and judge)

Good deeds weighed against bad deeds to determine your future (heaven or hell).

To become a Muslim just have to recite the creed.

Compare this with a more complicated Christianity. For example the Bible; the Trinity; the incarnation, atonement, resurrection, ascension and deity of Jesus Christ; the personality of the Holy Spirit; the steps to becoming born again.

2. Islam is an **Easy Religion to Practise**. (The five pillars of Islam)

- recite the creed
- say your prayers (five times a day)
- give alms to the poor (2.5%)
- fast for one month a year (Ramadan) - during daylight only!
- one pilgrimage in your lifetime to Mecca

Compare this with Christianity which relies on self discipline and self assessment. Christianity is not a religion of rules.

3. Islam is a **Moral Religion**

- Clear list of "don'ts" with punishment now and in the future for violations.

- Results in a healthy fear of god.

Christianity is in a state of moral confusion with no stable standards.

Deep down people want clear moral guidelines.

4. Islam is a **Recent Religion**

- Islam is a post Christian religion ("later is better").

Christianity can give the impression of an old religion (For example -buildings, clothing, language, music).

5. Islam is a **Masculine Religion**

- Society is largely shaped by men.

Christianity has become a religion for "the wife and kids".

6. Islam is a **Reverent Religion**

- Men kneel together corporately before god.

- There is respect for older people and their ideas.

Compare this with Christianity where often a fear of God is lacking and you "do your own thing" in worship rather than what pleases God.

The current situation in the western world is a result of compromised Christianity. The Church has been unable to stop social decline.

On the surface it would appear that in many ways we would be better off under Islam... BUT there is a downside

3. Sounding the Alarm

This talk deals with the darker side of Islam. (It is the easiest religion to get into, but the hardest to get out of).

Islam is not uniform throughout the world. No central control. Different denominations but all share the same book (Quran) with different interpretations. (Compare the similarity with Christianity).

What is real Islam like?

1. It is a Holistic Religion

- whole of life religion (individual, family, nation, world).
- no distinction between sin, vice and crime.
- no separation between "church" and state.

2. It is an Imperial ("missionary") Religion.

- Its goal is total world submission to Allah.

3. It is a Territorial Religion.

- territory more important than converts.
- if territory lost, can use any means to regain it (e.g. Israel).

4. It is a Militant Religion

- Jihad means effort or struggle with the enemies of Islam.
- the struggle is inward (moral) and outward (military).
- four types of Jihad (struggles) in the Quran:
 - of the tongue to spread your faith with others.
 - of the hand to do good deeds.
 - of the heart against temptation.
 - of the sword willingness to fight and die for your faith.
- Islam divides the world into a sphere of peace (those under Allah's law) and a sphere of battle (those not submitted to Allah).
- In the Quran a truce or peace treaty is temporary only. When strong enough, it is back to Jihad (e.g. Israel).
- In 2001 there were 30 military conflicts in the world, 28 associated with Islam.
- Many peace loving Muslims, but Islam is not a peace loving religion.

5. It is an Intolerant Religion

- no friendship allowed with Jews or Christians (in Quran).
- Christians and Jews are free to practise but not propagate.
- 1/4 million Christians are martyred each year, the majority in Muslim countries.

* What is the **Source** of Islam?

(a) Divine inspiration

- claimed by Mohammed but no outside evidence to support.

(b) Human imagination

- Mohammed from a multi god society and recognised need for one god.
- Kept the moon god Allah.
- Quran is inconsistent and contradictory.

(c) Satanic imitation

- Mohammed originally thought the revelations were a demonic deception but his wife convinced him they were divine.
- Enough truth in the Quran to deceive.

* If Islam is a **Demonic Deception**:

- Muslims are not the enemy but the victims.
- Have compassion for Muslims.
- Warfare is spiritual not physical.
- Expect demonic reaction.
- Muslims need the Gospel and Salvation.

4. Reality

The Christian response to Islam - the Church must be strong enough to SAVE.
Three aspects for the Church to concentrate on. This talk - REALITY.

* **The Gospel is reality (truth)**

Real truth is fact - whether you believe it or not.

Christianity based on fact.

All the religions of the world could be wrong, but only one can be right.

* **What kind of a God do you believe in?**

Which one is real?

Is your god a person, a thing, or a force?

Allah has a different name and a different nature from the God of the Bible.

***The Trinity**

The Trinity is Christianity's greatest asset.

- If God is only one person He cannot be love.
- One person on their own cannot be love.
- "God is love" only mentioned in the New Testament.
- Love not mentioned in the Quran.

The trinity is the biggest difference between Christianity and Islam

- The Quran does not call Allah father.
- The Quran says "God has no son".

Therefore: Allah and the Father of Jesus are not the same god
so one of these gods is not real.

* **The Living God**

The Bible is a history book (His story). What God had done in history.

Only Jews and Christians have a living God who is active in the world today.

Miracles are what God has DONE through history.

Shows God in control of nature and nations.

Prophecy is what God has SAID through history. (735 Bible verses contain a prophecy, 596 of these have already come true).

Miracles and prophecy show us what God is like - that He is REAL.

* Truth

Christian confidence in the Bible is being undermined by the teachings of the church e.g. "the Bible teaches values through myths and fables not facts."
Christians need to recover confidence in the Bible to survive attacks from Islam.
The Bible deals with absolute truth and ethics. (light/darkness, lies/truth, right/wrong, death/life).

If you believe in absolute truth, you will also believe in the opposite
- absolute untruth.

Jesus is the ONLY way of salvation - absolute truth for everyone.

We may have to die for the truth - but firstly we have to live the truth.

5. Relationship

Christianity is not a religion but a relationship. (a two-way relationship)
"I will be their God, and they will be my people".

Truths about the God of the Bible

1. God is a relationship.

He is love (three in one).

We are made in His image for relationship.

2. God wants a relationship with us.

God wants us to know Him as well as He knows us.

God created us to seek Him and find Him.

3. God took the initiative to establish the relationship.

God came looking for us first.

What is the barrier between us and God?

SIN - I've broken God's moral laws

- I've done my own thing

The Bible gives God's answer to HIS problem, not an answer to OUR problems.

God's problem - to act consistent with His nature.

- to be a God of Justice AND Mercy.

- how to deal with rebellious people.

God's solution - Innocent person to suffer punishment for the guilty.

Forgiveness is not letting us off, it is God telling us that sin has been paid for.

Jesus paid the penalty - atonement (Romans 3).

The cross proves that God is just and the justifier of those who believe.

(No assurance of salvation in Quran - except those who die in Jihad. Quran has no atonement. In Quran you atone for bad deeds by doing good deeds.)

A condition of forgiveness is **Repentance** - Being sorry enough to stop.

That is, we must believe not only that sin has been paid for,
but also be willing to finish with it.

The past has now been dealt with by God, so a relationship can begin.

Baptism in Water deals with your past. It is two things:

- a bath for dirty people (cleans you up).

- a burial for people who are now dead (goodbye to your old life - your funeral).

Once baptised, can still sin. But only need your feet washed (John 13).
(When a Muslim converts to Christianity, it is the act of baptism that is seen as finally separating them from their old faith - and so persecution begins in earnest.)

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is for the future - keeps you clean.

(Quran says we are basically good people who do bad things.)

Bible says direct opposite (Matthew 7 v11).

So without further help we will go back to our old ways.

You don't need a new start in life, but a new life to start with.

We need Christ's life as much as His death to be saved from sin.

- Justified (forgiven) by His death. ("God, He say him alright.")
- Saved by His life. (Romans 5).

The resurrection is essential to the Gospel.

The Holy Spirit brings the life of Christ into your life and reproduces the character of Christ in you.

That is, the fruit of the spirit (one fruit, nine flavours) all grow together in one who is filled with, walking in, and led by, the Spirit.

So your future can be different from your past.

The Trinity is central to the gospel - enables us to handle the past and the future.

Christianity is the only religion that believes God takes up residence in those who worship Him - working from the inside - overcoming.

Becoming a Christian is far more complicated than becoming a Muslim, as you need to be related to all three persons of the Trinity if it's going to work.

You need to:

- Repent towards the Father
- Believe in the Lord Jesus
- Be baptised in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- Receive the Holy Spirit (who has taken Jesus' place on earth).

The Trinity makes our salvation possible:

- * the Father planned it
- * the Son purchased it
- * the Holy Spirit effects it within our hearts.

This produces a **Relationship** that no other religion can match.

Christians must have this intimate personal relationship, otherwise we have nothing to offer the Muslim.

For that relationship to be effective in witness it must be:

- a personal, individual, conscious relationship.
- a present relationship (cultivated, walked in, led by and empowered by the Holy Spirit).
- a shared relationship (the proof that I know God and love Him is that I can recognise Him in those in whom He dwells).
- a priority relationship (above our nearest and dearest).

The Gospel we have to preach and practise, declare and demonstrate is a Gospel of **reality**. We must be confident it is based on the facts - the history of God's words and deeds.

A loving intimate **relationship** with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the heart of the Gospel.

6. Righteousness

Three things Judaism, Christianity and Islam agree on:

- God is righteous in Himself.
- God requires His people to be righteous (right living).
- God will judge the unrighteous - and will judge by works.

But two huge differences between Christianity and Islam are:

1. What is the standard or measurement of righteousness?

How good do we have to be to pass?

In Islam on the day of judgement God will balance your good deeds against your bad deeds to determine paradise or hell.

Some Christians think the same. Or alternatively - "Do your best and God will forgive what you don't manage".

The standard of righteousness in the New Testament is much higher than in the Old Testament or the Quran. It is 100%!

God will judge us not only on our deeds but also on our words, thoughts, and feelings.

- Consider Jesus' teachings on remarriage after divorce, adultery and murder (stricter than the law of Moses).
- Jesus told His followers that their righteousness was to exceed that of the Pharisees or they would not enter the Kingdom (Matthew 5 v 20).
- Jesus' teachings have been compromised to "ideals" to avoid His high standards.

Sin is falling short of the glory of God - no matter how little.

- Christian standard is to be as holy, perfect and righteous as God.
- We are not innocent good people (Luke 13 v 4&5).

2. What is the Source of Righteousness?

How do I achieve the righteousness God expects?

In all religions other than Christianity YOU have to do it.

Self righteousness is a bigger barrier to an intimate relationship with God than almost anything else.

God's anger is simmering against the unrighteous (Romans 1).

But God is willing to share His righteousness with us.

- Whoever hungers and thirsts after righteousness will be filled - with God's righteousness (Matthew 5 v 6).

Everyone deep down wishes they could live a better life.

The good news is that you CAN be better - but not on your own.

A double substitute - Put your sins on Him, so He can put His righteousness on you (2 Corinthians 5 v 21).

Firstly **Repentance** :

Repent of our good deeds as well as our bad deeds
(Isaiah 64 v 6 and Philippians 3 v 6-8).

Easier to preach gospel to bad people - they know they are bad!

Average person thinks being a Christian is being good, but must repent of your good deeds and turn to the righteousness of God.

Need **Forgiveness and Holiness** - both come from God.

1. The righteousness of God is imputed to us (to our credit) as soon as we are justified (forgiven). God sees His righteousness in us.

2. The righteousness of God is imparted to us (fills our lives). Sanctified. God will create new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. That is, righteous people in a new universe forever.

We have no proof that we have good news unless:

* We are sure of the **reality** of our faith (facts), and believe the record of divine words and deeds.

* We maintain an intimate personal **relationship** with God, shared together.

* We demonstrate a **righteousness** that goes beyond the righteousness of the most devout Muslim.

The church must be strong in these areas if it is to survive.

Will Christians **suffer** for righteousness?

Yes. Jesus told us we would (Matthew 5 v10-12).

The Church gets stronger through persecution.

Will Christians **survive**?

Yes. The just (righteous) shall live (survive) by faith (faithfulness). Hab. 2:4.

Must go on trusting, despite everything that happens to us.

God has delegated the final **judgement** to a human being - Jesus. (Acts 17:31).

Jesus will decide the eternal destiny of every human.

One of the principles He will use is:

How did you treat My brothers? (Matthew 25:31-46).

Brothers = His followers (disciples).

God is bringing **Islam** and the Muslims here to sort out His people (as in Habakkuk's time God brought the Babylonians to Israel), so that He may find the righteous who will survive by being faithful to Him.

Even as we face the worst, we can say: Yet will I rejoice in God my Saviour. (Hab. 3).

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