

A Short Course in "Witnessing To Muslims"

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I am indebted to Dr. Nazir Yusaf, my late mentor, for much of the material in this course and much more in life. That is why I desire, with all respect, to dedicate this work to him. Dr. Nazir Yusaf committed his entire life to the study the Bible and the Quran to help Muslim friends gain the knowledge of the truth and to receive the salvation that is freely available through Jesus Christ and through Him alone. Dr. Yusaf also spent much time instilling the truths that he discovered in a generation that will follow in his footsteps; a task that is nearly impossible except through God's grace.

Dr. Yusaf, your memory shall live here on earth until the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. May you rest in glory with the One whom you faithfully served for nearly half a century. Be assured that your work will go on, your legacy will always stay alive and your vision of Muslims receiving Christ will come to pass... Rev. 14:13.

Lesson 1: Introduction

There are currently over one billion Muslims living in the world; meaning that on average, one person out of every five people you meet is a Muslim. Even in the US it is estimated that by 2010 AD the Islamic religion will be the second largest religion after Christianity. Around the world Muslims are evangelizing fervently to win people to their religion, as mosques are being built every day all around the world to meet the demands of this growing faith. Ironically, in the western world many church buildings are being converted into mosques. Though these staggering facts may reveal a movement of Muslims who are fanatic towards their faith, the fact remains that the majority of Muslims are very ignorant about their religious teachings and writings. The majority of Muslims have no understanding of the writings in the Quran, which is their holy book. They emphasize the correct religious reading of the Quran rather than an understanding of its context. If any Muslim questions the writings of Quran, they are accused of being an infidel. Generally, Muslims are encouraged to memorize the words of the Quran but not to inquire on the meaning or validity of the text.

What is our Christian responsibility toward Muslims in the light of the Bible? There is no question that we are called to approach them with the life changing Gospel of Jesus Christ. For most Christians, witnessing to Muslims is a daunting task. It is not uncommon for the Christian to feel that any effort will be in vain. However, that is most definitely not the case, and these lessons are to help better equip you to effectively reach the Muslims. However, these lessons are intended to give you a basic understanding of the religion of Islam, the belief of the Muslim and the Christian response; you are encouraged to investigate beyond these materials. For further direction refer to the list of resources at the end of the lessons.

It is important to understand that from childhood, the Muslims are indoctrinated with the belief in God. You will seldom find an atheist raised in a Muslim home. In addition, very few hold to the theory of evolution; they are taught to respect God and fear Him. However, they are never taught that He is a loving Father, who desires to reveal Himself to his people. They are unaware of why it was necessary for Christ's death on the cross. They are continuously discouraged from association with Christians due to political and cultural reasons. They also fear that association with Christians or even reading the Bible can convert them to Christianity.

In the midst of our fear and uncertainty let us look back to the scriptures where Paul in the Epistle to the Romans writes: "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the Gospel ..." (1:14,15). In Chapter 10:1-3 of the same epistle Paul pours out his evangelistic heart for the lost, who are trying to redeem themselves with their own limited power. Muslims are very much like the Jews in verse 2 for they have "...a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge." So let us follow the example of Paul who "... became all things to all men, that [we] may by all means save some" (I Cor 9:22b). It is necessary to emphasize that the only way to remove your reluctance and fear of approaching a Muslim, is to know his religion and where he comes from. Then you will be trained and equipped to shed light on his darkness and guide him to the life giving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Through twenty years of evangelizing to the Muslims, my excitement in seeing them receive the Lord with their whole heart has only increased. In the ministries of the Christian Iranian Church in Seattle we have witnessed hundreds of Muslims come out of the darkness and live in the

marvelous light of Jesus Christ. Most of them are the most fervent and passionate Christians I know.

Before a Christian begins to pursue the understanding to evangelize some considerations should be made.

I. When witnessing to Muslims we need to keep the following points in mind:

- A) For centuries Muslims have shown little response to the Christian Gospel due to a religious prejudice and clear misunderstandings.
- B) Muslims desire western advances but are strongly opposed to Christianity. Racial problems and moral degradation in the West has strengthened their hatred for Christianity.
- C) We must not lose hope but should persist regardless of all discouraging factors.
- D) It is difficult to win a Muslim to Christ, but it is more difficult to help a convert remain faithful. There are certain factors which dishearten and discourage the new convert:
 - a) Opposition from his family
 - b) Ridicule from his friends
 - c) Social, economical and government pressures (if in a Muslim country).

II. As mentioned earlier, in effective witnessing to a Muslim one should understand their worldview:

- A) The Christian witness must try earnestly to understand the Muslim viewpoint and prepare for his objections. Try to distinguish the basic differences between Islamic Theology and Christian Theology.
- B) A Muslim's fundamental difficulties in understanding the Christian Faith include: 1) The son-ship of Christ, 2) The doctrine of the Trinity and 3) The death and resurrection of Jesus. A Muslim will also direct his attacks against the credibility of the Bible. A common claim is that the Bible has been corrupted. A Muslim might question and attack the genealogy of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of Matthew and Gospel of Luke. He will say that why names of evil women are included there, such as Rehab the harlot and Bethsheba. He will question that there were fourteen generations from captivity to Christ, where only thirteen are recorded. Muslims will not admit that the prophets of God committed sin. Sins of the prophets mentioned in the Bible offend them. Ironically Quran repeatedly mentions that God ordered Muhammad to repent from his sins!
- C) Use the word "Hazrat" (meaning prophet) when referring to Muhammad. Don't say anything against him or his teachings, because this will offend the Muslim and will close his inquiring mind. If a Muslim asks you about your opinion about the prophet-hood of Muhammad, simply reply to him that the Bible does not teach anything about him. Clarify their thinking about the prophecy of Christ in the Gospel of John regarding the Comforter. Muslims are taught that Jesus prophesied about the coming of Muhammad in the Gospel of John 14:15. However, it is necessary to clarify to the Muslim that the Comforter was to be Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit, not another prophet.

III. Channels for evangelism

- A) Seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit on how to be effective. After all He is the one that will convict the sinner (John 16:8, 9) and will bring him to the cross.
- B) Don't consider a Muslim as the enemy; rather think of him as a friend who needs help in seeking the truth and receiving Christ. In reality most of them are very warm and friendly people.
- C) Demonstrate the Christian life through unconditional love and service. Christian schools, hospitals, and other good will institutions have been the main channels in many countries in showing the love of Christ to the Muslim people. These Christian institutions have paved the way for the Christian message to reach the hearts of many Muslims.
- D) Invite them to dinner or other gatherings to cultivate friendships through personal contact.
- E) Help them in times of need. Supply their needs in time of trouble.
- F) Teaching the English language to a Muslim is an excellent doorway to ministering and sharing.
- G) The distribution of Christian literature offers opportunities for discussion—though there are barriers, thousands of Muslims want to know more about Christianity.
- H) Some Muslims have an intellectual interest in Christianity. Hundreds of thousands of people from India, Pakistan, Iran and other Middle Eastern countries have taken Bible correspondence courses, to satisfy their curiosity or feed their intellect.

Lesson 2: A Brief Overview of Muhammad's Life

Muhammad (meaning, "Praised") was born in city of Mecca around the year 570 AD. Mecca was a shrine city, and was the pilgrimage center of Arabia. The shrine known as Ka'aba (meaning "Cube") is a cubic building made of stone, which Muslims believe had come down from heaven. Muslims believe that the Ka'aba was first built by Abraham and his son Ishmael for the monadic worship of Allah, but was later corrupted and used for pagan rituals until Muhammad once again established the "true" use of the structure. Muhammad's father, Abdullah (meaning "Slave of Allah") and his family were caretakers of the Ka'aba. Muhammad's father died before he was born, and his mother, Amina, died when he was six years old. The orphan was raised by his grandfather, and after his death by his uncle, Abu Talib. At the age of 25 Muhammad married a wealthy widow named Khadijah, who at that time was 40 years old. She was a trader, who traveled to sell her wares. Through these travels Muhammad was exposed to Jews and Christians, specifically in Syria and Palestine. It was through these trips that he was first introduced to the monotheistic theology. He was exposed to many stories from both the New and Old Testaments (there are large indications that Apocryphal texts influenced him as well), which he later retold to his followers as if they were revelations from God to him, through the Angel Gabriel. His first followers included his uncle, Abu-Talib, his friend, Abu-Baker, his wife Khadijah, and his adopted son, Zaid. Muhammad had nine wives and several concubines. However, he did not marry anyone else while his wife Khadijah was still alive.

After Khadija's death Muhammad married Abu-Baker's daughter, Aisha, when she was eight years old. Umar, a man of great physical strength and courage, became the second caliph. The third caliph was Uthman, and the fourth Ali, Muhammad's cousin. Muhammad died in 632 AD, apparently as a result of a poisoning. He died in the arms of Aisha, his beloved wife.

The word Islam means submission. Muhammad did not found Islam as the Quran states that Islam existed before the time of Muhammad. Rather God simply told him to follow the true religion. According to the Quran, Islam is the religion of Abraham and Adam. It is difficult to separate Islam from its political, social and cultural aspects. Islam is a religion that claims more than one billion people in Asia, Europe and Africa. It is the major religion of 43 countries and territories, and the average population of more than 90 countries around the world are 5% Muslim. This further indicates that Islam is not only a religion, but is also a geo-political system.

The form of government in most Muslim countries are various forms of Islamic dictatorship. This is substantiated by the fact that there is no country in the world that boasts a population of half Muslims and half non-Muslims; it is either dominated by Muslims, or Muslims are a minority. The above should not come as a surprise, since Muhammad himself was a militant conqueror and a political leader. After drawing his followers, Muhammad rapidly worked himself into a position of power. He attacked and plundered rich caravans and it was these riches that brought him political and military power. These attacks were justified through "revelations" that the booty of unbelievers belonged to the Muslims. As a result of this power nearby tribes began to profess faith in his teachings. In the eighth year of the Muslim era, Muhammad entered Mecca without resistance, accompanied by his ten thousand men. He cleared Ka'aba of its idols but preserved the building as a place of worship for Allah.

Muhammad was a strong leader who greatly influenced the culture of his time and reformed several practices; i.e. abolishing idolatry, prohibiting the burial of live baby girls, uniting quarrelsome Arabian tribes, and establishing civil brotherhood, and social rights of women.

Lesson 3: Muslim Living

Muhammad gave the following rules of living to his followers:

1. Repetition of the creed- “La Allah il Allah, Muhammeden Rasul Allah.” (Meaning, “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad his prophet.”)
2. Praying five times a day in the Arabic language.
3. Giving of alms to Muhammad’s family and to the poor.
4. Fasting during the month of Ramadan.
5. Pilgrimage to Mecca at least once a lifetime.
6. Jihad-Holy war.

The first five are known as the “Five Pillars of Islam.”

To become a Muslim, one needs only to repeat the simple creed “La Allah il Allah, Muhammeden Rasul Allah.” Following this, a Muslim must accept five main articles of faith:

1. Belief in Allah
2. Belief in angels
3. Belief in four inspired books: Torah, Zabur (meaning “Psalms”), Ingil (meaning “Gospel”) and Quran.
4. Belief in the 28 prophets of Allah
5. Belief in a final Day of Judgment.

These five articles are the best place to start witnessing to a Muslim. As an example, they believe that Jesus is actually the One that will finally judge the world, and not Muhammad. Their holy book, Quran, asks the reader to refer to the previous inspired books (Torah, Zabur, Ingil) for answers their questions. All three previous books refer directly to Jesus, and salvation only through Him.

Lesson 4: The Quran

1. It is the Sacred book of Muslims.
2. The Quran is derived from the Arabic word "Qara", which means, "to recite."
3. The Muslims believe that the Quran is an inspired book, revealed to Muhammad continuously and progressively by the angel Gabriel (Surah Al-baqared 91).
4. Muslims believe that the Quran is written on stone tablets in heaven.
5. Quran is Muhammad's miracle. Unlike Jesus, his only "miracle" is the recitation of the Quran since he was said to be illiterate.
6. The verses of the Quran were not compiled until after Muhammad's death.
7. The teachings of the Quran are similar to previous teachings and offer nothing new (Surah Ahqaf 10).
8. The Muslims are told to consult the people of the book (Christians and Jews), if they have any questions regarding the things written in the Quran, (Surah Yunus (Jonah), verse 94).
9. No one collected Muhammad's sayings during his lifetime. However, his sayings were memorized.
10. The Quran was compiled by Uthman, the third Khalifa (Caliph). He made a new Quran, and ordered other copies of the Quran to be burned. He asked Zaid-bin-Sabit to collect the Quran. He said, " I swear by God that if people had ordered me to carry a mountain from one place to another, it would not be heavier upon me than the order which Abu Bakr has given for collecting the Quran." After this all other copies of the Quran were collected and burned.
11. The present Quran has 114 Surahs (chapters); it is a little larger than the New Testament.
12. The Quran is divided into thirty Sparahs (parts). So the Muslims can recite the entire Quran during the month of Ramdan. It has 323,671 letters, and 6,616 verses.
13. It is written in Arabic. Muslims believe that the reader of the Quran earns blessings by reading the Quran in Arabic, as Arabic is taught to be the language of heaven.
14. Though one of the articles of faith is belief in the Torah, Zabur and Gospel, their understanding of these writings are different than that of the People of the Book (the Jews and Christians). The narratives of the prophets from the Old Testament in the Quran are inconsistent and confused. Muhammad might have heard these stories from his Jewish friends in Medina.
15. Muhammad's seventh wife, Raihana and ninth wife, Safia were Jews. His first wife Khadija had a Christian background. His eighth wife, Maryam was a Christian. She was a slave girl from Ethiopia. The governor of Egypt sent her along with her sister and a white mule to Muhammad as a gift. They undoubtedly shared with Muhammad much of the Old Testament and New Testament stories.

Lesson 5: The Bible and The Quran

The Quran always speaks of the earliest books with respect.

- Surah, Al-Sajdah (the prostration), verse 23: "We verily gave Moses the scripture; so be not ye in doubt of his receiving it; and we appointed it a guidance for the children of Israel."
- "Surah, Al-Maidha (the table spread), verse 44: "Lo! we did reveal the Torah, wherein is guidance and a light ..."
- Surah, Al-Nisa (women), verse 163: "We imparted unto David the Psalms."
- "We gave Jesus the evangel, InJil." Surah Al-Maidha (the table spread), verse 46: "and we bestowed on him (Jesus) the gospel wherein is guidance and a light, confirming that which was revealed before it in the Torah (law)."
- Muhammad himself is bidden to believe in the scriptures and declare his faith in them: "Say, O Muhammad in whatsoever books God has sent down do I believe."
- Surah Yunus (Jonah), verse 94: "And if thou Muhammad art in doubt concerning that which we reveal unto thee, then question those who read the scriptures before thee."
- "and to thee (Muhammad) have we sent down the book of the Quran with truth, confirmatory of previous scriptures and their safeguard." Surah Al-Miadha (the table spread), verse 48.
- Surah Al-Imran (the family of Imran), verse 84: "We believe in that which was revealed unto ... Moses and Jesus ..."
- Surah Ahqaf, verse 10: " Say: 'See ye? If this teaching be from God, and you reject it, and a witness from among the children of Israel testifies to its similarity with earlier scripture, ...'"
- Sura-Hud, verse 46: "He (God) said: 'O Noah! Lo! he (Noah's son) is not of thy household; lo! he is of evil conduct.'"

Some typical passages that the Quran misquotes the Old Testament:

- Adam and Eve and their two sons. Surah Al-Ma-idah, (the table spread) 30-32: "Abel was killed by his brother Cain. His parents did not know how to bury him. Then Allah sent a raven scratching up the ground, to show him how to hide his brother's naked corpse."
- The Abraham in the Quran is different than the Abraham of the Bible. Surah Al-Saffat (those who set the ranks), verses 91-97: Abraham's father is wrongly called Azar in Surah Al-anam (Cattle), 74.
- In Surah Al-Saffat (those who set the ranks), 100-112, we read of Abraham's sacrifice of his son. According to Quran Abraham attempted to sacrifice Ishmael. However, in the Bible he attempted to sacrifice Isaac.
- The Quran mentions Moses in several places, but it contradicts the historical records of the Pentateuch. The Quran says the baby Moses was adopted by Pharaoh's wife.
- The Quran tells us that Haman was a friend of Pharaoh.
- The Quran tells us that God appeared to Moses in the valley of Tuwa.

- The Quran says that the golden calf worshipped by the Israelites in the wilderness was molded by a Samaritan.
- The Quran says the cow sacrificed by Moses was yellow.
- These are Just a few of the contradictions between the Quran and the Old Testament.
- The Quran states that Jesus spoke to men while in the cradle (Surah Maryam (Mary) 29-30). "Then she pointed out to him (Jesus). They said, "How can we talk to one who is in the cradle, a young boy? . . . Jesus spoke . . ."
- One of the most absurd misstatements in the Quran is the reference to Mary as the sister of Aaron, brother of Moses. Let us look at the verse; "Oh Sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a wicked man nor was thy mother a harlot." (Surah Maryam, verse 28)
- We are told in the Quran that the miraculous birth of Jesus took place under a palm tree (Surah Maryam, verses 22-26).
- Surah Imran, verse 49: "Lo! I come unto you with a sign from your Lord. Lo I fashion for you out of clay the likeness of birds, and I breathe into it and it is a bird, by Allah's leave."
- Surah Maryam (Mary), verse 35: "It befitteth not the Majesty of Allah that he should take unto himself a son . . ." Muslims think that Christians believe God had a son by physical conception; this misunderstanding persists in Islam.
- The Quran, in reference to the doctrine of the trinity teaches that the trinity is composed of God, Mary and Jesus. In Surah Almadha (the table spread). verse 116: "and when Allah saith: O Jesus, son of Mary! didst thou say unto mankind: 'take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah . . .' According to the Quran there is only one God, but there is explicitly no teaching regarding the Holy Trinity.

Below are further inconsistencies between verses in the Quran and the Bible:

- a) Surah, Al-Qadr (Power) 97:3 -- "The night of power is better than a thousand months."
Psalm 84:10 -- "For a day in your courts is better than a thousand years."
- b) Surah, Al-Fatihah (the opening) 1:6 -- "Show us the straight path."
Psalm 27:11 -- "Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me in a straight path."
- c) Surah, Anbiya (the prophets) 21:105 -- "My righteous slaves will inherit the earth."
Psalm 37:1-719 -- "The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell in it forever."
- d) Surah Al-Hadid (the iron) 57: 3 -- "He is the first and the last, and outward and the inward; and he is the knower of all things."
Isaiah 44:6 "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no God."

Look up the following passages for more inconsistencies:

Surah Hud 11 → Psalm 14

Surah Yusuf 12 → Psalm 16

Surah Abraham 14 → Psalm 35

Surah Al-Hijr 15 → Psalm 5

Surah Al-Maidah 5, Surah Maryam 19, Surah Al-Imran 33 and several other Surahs are full of New Testament references.

The Quran mentions Christ 97 times. There are 131 passages in the Quran in which the Bible is referred.

Here are passages regarding Abraham and the inconsistencies in the Quranic account of his life story:

Refer to Surah Al-Anbiya 21:58-69; Al-Saffat 37:91-113

- a) Abraham did not have two sons, but eight (Gen. 25).
- b) He did not have two wives, but three: Sarah, Hagar, Keturah.
- c) He did not raise descendants in the valley of Mecca, but in Hebron (Gen. 13:6-12).
- d) His home town was Ur in Chaldea, NOT Mecca. He wandered through Haran (Gen 11:13); not Arabia.
- e) He went to Canaan as God instructed him in Gen 12:4-6, not to Mecca's Valley.
- f) There is no record that Abraham and Ishmael went to Arabia and built the Kabah in Mecca.
- g) In Surah Al-Saffat 37:100-112, we read of Abraham's sacrifice of his son Ishmael. Gen. 22 tells us about Isaac.
- h) God bestowed upon Abraham Isaac and Jacob Surah Al-Anbia 21:72, and we bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob as a grandson. Each of them we made righteous.

Lesson 6: Quranic Versus as Tools in Witnessing to Muslims

Following are some Quranic versus to help Muslims see the Biblical truth:

1. According to Surah Ankabut (spider), verse 27 the prophethood should come through Isaac's descendants, however, Muhammad, is from Ishmael's descendants, like all Arab nations, and Jesus is from Isaac's descendants.
2. Surah Anam, verse 161, Muhammad was not to introduce a religion, but to follow Abraham's. Surah Ahqaf, verse 10, indicates that the religion that Muhammad brought is similar to the religion of the people of Israel, and nothing is new in the teachings of Islam.
3. According to Surah Nisaa, verse 171, Jesus is the Spirit of God and the Word of God. However, Muhammad has never been given a name higher than messenger (apostle) of God. This makes Jesus the One without a beginning and an end (indication of Jesus' deity), and Muhammad merely a man.
4. According to Surah Maida, verse 113-114, Jesus made bird figures out of clay and breathed in them and made them fly (this is not recorded in the gospels, but is found in the Apocryphal book of Thomas). However, according to Surah Hajj, verse 73 no one but God can create even a fly. Another indication from the Quran of the deity of Jesus.
5. According to Surah Maida, verse 113-114, Jesus healed the lepers, gave sight to the blind, gave life to the dead. However when Muhammad was asked what sign God had given him, in Surah Ankabut, verse 46, he responds that the Quran is his only miracle.
6. The virgin birth of Jesus is testified to in Surah Maryam, verses 16-30. In verse 19 Jesus is referred to as a Holy Son.

The Trinity is indirectly referred to in Surah Nur (light), verse 35 "God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of his light is as if there were a niche and within it a lamp: the lamp enclosed in glass: the glass as it were a brilliant star: lit from a blessed tree an olive, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it: light upon light! ...". The Quran is describing God, who is light, in this parable. Indicating for the light to shine there is 1) a niche, 2) a lamp, and 3) oil. Interestingly, three separate objects are used to describe God who is one. Moreover every Surah of the Quran except one starts with three names of God; in the name of God, Most gracious, Most Merciful. Muslims, having ninety nine names for God, should question why the same three names of God are used in the beginning of all these Surahs.

Lesson 7: Additional Quotations From the Quran

The following points will further equip you for evangelizing the Muslims:

1. Muhammad was shown the straight path, the religion of Abraham.
Surah Al-Anam, verse 162: "Say, Lo! As for me, my Lord hath guided me unto a straight path, a right religion, the community of Abraham, the upright . . ."
2. Muhammad was asked to follow the religion of Abraham. He was not to introduce Islam.
Surah Al-Imran, verse 95: "Say, Allah speaketh truth. So follow the religion of Abraham, the upright."
3. One who forsaketh the religion of Abraham is a fool.
Surah Al-baqarah, 130: "And who forsaketh the religion of Abraham save him who befooleth himself."
4. Every Muslim prays daily.
Surah Al-Fatihah, verse 5 (A Muslim daily prayer); "Show us the straight path, the path of those whom thou hast favoured."
5. Prophethood and the scriptures are established in the seed of Abraham and Isaac.
Surah Al-Ankabut, verse 27: "And we bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob, and we established the prophethood and the scripture among his seed. . . ."
6. Interesting preferences in the Quran:
 - a) Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 47: "O children of Israel! remember my favor wherewith I have favored you and how I preferred you to all creatures."
 - b) Mary, the mother of Jesus, preferred above all the women of the world: Surah Al-Imran, verse 42: "O Mary, Lo Allah hath chosen thee and made thee pure, and hath preferred thee above all the women of creation."
 - c) The followers of Jesus are preferred to infidels. Surah Al-Imran, vs. 56-. "I am setting those who follow thee above those who disbelieve until the day of resurrection."
7. Miraculous Conception,
Surah Al-Tahrimi (Banning), verse 12: "And Mary, daughter of Imran, whose body was chaste, therefore breathed therein something of our spirit - And she put faith in the words of her Lord and his scripture, and was of the obedient."
8. A miraculous birth of Jesus
Muslims believe Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, apart from a human father.
Surah Maryam, verses 19-21. Verse 21: "He (the angel) said: So it will be. Thy Lord saith: it is easy for me. And it will be that we may make of him a revelation for mankind and mercy from us, and it is a thing ordained."
9. Jesus spoke at His birth.
The Quran tells us of a fantastic miracle regarding Jesus Christ's speaking at His birth.
Surah Maryam, verse 29-30: "There she (Mary) pointed to him (Jesus). They (Jews) said: 'how can we talk to one who is in the cradle, a young boy?' I He

(Jesus) spoke: 'Lo! I am the slave of Allah. He hath given me the scripture, and hath appointed me a prophet.'

Surah Alzukhrof, verse 59, Jesus is the pattern of God's power.

10. Jesus was endowed with the Holy Spirit.

The Quran, says that Jesus is the anointed one of Allah.

Surah Al-Imran, verse 45: "When the angel said: O Mary! Lo! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a word from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, illustrious in the world and the hereafter.

Surah Al-Nisa, verse 171: Jesus the Word of God and Spirit of God; "O people of the scripture... the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah and His Word... and a Spirit from Him..."

Surah Al-bagarah, verse 253: "We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs and we supported Him with the Holy Spirit."

11. Jesus, the sinless prophet of Islam

The Quran claims Christ's sinlessness.

Surah Maryam 20, Al-Imran 36-48. Muslims believe that prophets are sinless, but the sins of the prophets are mentioned in the Quran.

- a) Adam's sin is mentioned in Surah Al-Araf, verse 19. "And O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the garden and eat from whence ye will, but come not nigh this tree lest ye become wrongdoers.
- b) Abraham: Surah Al-Anbia, verse 63
- c) Moses: He has been guilty of a crime in Egypt. Surah Al-Qasas (the story), verses 15-16. Moses asked forgiveness of his sin and was forgiven.
- d) David (Surah Sad), verses 23-24. David's sin and his confession is mentioned. David repented and he was forgiven.
- e) Muhammad's sin is mentioned in Surah Muhammad, verse 19: "So know (O Muhammad) that there is no God save Allah and ask forgiveness for thy sin. . . ." Surah, Al-Fath, verse 2: "That Allah may forgive thee of thy sin that which is past and that which is to come. . . ."

Muhammad feared mankind more than God, and was hiding something in his heart which Allah knew, that was regarding the wife of his adopted son Zaid's wife. Surah Al-Ahzah, verse 37-39: "And thou hidest in thy mind that which Allah was to bring to light, and thou didst fear mankind... thou should fear Allah." Imam Gazali says that when Jesus was born, all the idols had bowed their heads.

People asked Muhammad if there has been any child who was not touched by Satan at his birth? Muhammad replied, "Jesus and his mother Mary."

Hadith (Sayings of Muhammad): Every newborn child cries at his birth - because Satan touches him -- Jesus and his mother were not touched by Satan.

12. Jesus the Mediator

The Quran tells us that unto Allah belongeth all intercession.

Surah Al-Zumar 44: "Say- unto Allah belongeth all intercession."

Surah Maryam, verse 87: "They will have no power of intercession, save him who hath made a covenant with His Lord."

Surah Al-Imran, verse 45: "O Mary! Lo! Allah giveth thee good tidings of a word from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, illustrious in the world and the hereafter, and one of these brought near unto Allah." Jesus is the one who intercedes for his people.

Muhammad won't intercede for his people. Surah, Al-Taubah, verse 80: "Ask forgiveness for them (O Muhammad) or ask not forgiveness for them; though thou ask forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah will not forgive them."

13. Jesus died and rose again from the dead.

The death of Jesus Christ on the cross is one of the most controversial subjects among Muslims and Christians.

- a) Surah, Al-Nisa, verses 151-158: Muslims deny the fact of Christ's death, but he died.
- b) Surah, Maryam, verses 33-34: "Peace be on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive. Such was Jesus, son of Mary."
- c) Surah Al-Imran, verse 53: "And remember when Allah said, : O Jesus! Lo! I am gathering thee and causing thee to ascend unto me . . ."
- d) Christ is the sign of the resurrection. Surah Al-Zukhruf, verse 61.

14. Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven and will return.

Muslims believe that Jesus would return to this earth, where he will marry and have children and die at Medina, where he will be buried.

The Muslims also believe that Jesus will reign for 40 years and will establish Islam in the whole world (the work which Muhammad failed to do Christ will do).

Surah Al-Imran, verse 53: "I am gathering thee and causing thee to ascend unto me."

From the Quran Christ emerges as a very formidable, fascinating and divine figure indeed.

Jesus is the only one to be worshipped. Surah Al-Zukhruf 45: "And ask those of our messengers whom we sent before thee: 'did we ever appoint gods to be worshipped beside the beneficent?'"

Lesson 8: The History of Christianity in Iran

In the Book of Ezra 1: 1-11 it reads;

“In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you—may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem. And the people of any place where survivors may now be living are to provide him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem." Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. All their neighbors assisted them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with valuable gifts, in addition to all the freewill offerings. Moreover, King Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god. Cyrus king of Persia had them brought by Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. This was the inventory: 30 gold dishes, 1000 silver dishes, 29 silver pans, 30 gold bowls, 410 matching silver bowls, 1000 other articles. In all, there were 5000 articles of gold and of silver. Sheshbazzar brought all these along when the exiles came up from Babylon to Jerusalem.”

During the reign of Cyrus the great, the official religion of Iranians was Zoroastrianism. Zoroaster established three life giving main principles of the creator of the world. These principles were living by pure and good thoughts, pure and good words, and pure and good deeds. Jesus Christ was born during the rule of Seleucid Empire (Parthians) during the reign of king Farhud the Fifth. And during the reign of Ardavan the Third of the Seleucid, the way of Christ started propagating throughout Iran. The exact date of the beginning of Christianity in Iran is unknown, but we can recount the story of three Magis (Zoroastrian Priests) who had gone to Jerusalem for the time of the birth of Christ to worship him. Intuitively, they shared the Good News of the new birth with the Iranians in their homeland.

The next period to consider in the history of Christianity in Iran is the time of Pentecost. As documented in the book of Acts 2:9, we read "Parthians and Medes (a nation in western Iran) and Elamites (name of the people in a province of western Iran), those dwelling in Mesopotamia (was under the Persian empire) ... and Asia (southwest and central Asia is occupied with most of the Iranian nations and tribes)," all received the words of the Lord spoken through his servant Peter, and were filled with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Certainly when they returned to the Iranian lands they took with them the Good News of the saving power of Christ, and the descent of Holy Spirit that they had witnessed with their own eyes, and heard with their own ears. Many from Iran who were amongst the three thousand on the day of Pentecost were baptized according to the book of Acts 2:4. During the reign of the Seleucids, Iranian Christians were able to exercise many civil and religious freedoms. In fact, many Christians who were residing in the Empire of Rome and were persecuted had escaped to Iran for refuge. This had strengthened, and advanced the church in Iran. But, the Zoroastrian leadership in Iran attempted

to contain the Christian church there. In the year 123 AD they martyred Shamsnoon, the high priest of the church in the city of Arbel. He was the first Christian martyr that the chronicled in the records of the church in Iran.

During the Conquests of the Islamic Arabs in Iran, the Christians were banned from serving in the government, and were forced to pay twice the usual taxes unless they denied Christ and accepted Islam. Only then would they receive equal rights with the Muslim citizens of the land. During this time the construction of new churches was illegal and the performance of any religious traditions was strictly forbidden, even the sounding of bells by the church was banned. All this created a vacuum in the Christian sector, and as a result Christianity in Iran began a steep decline. Clearly, Islam propagated and caused the destruction of the church in Iran. It is ironic that a religion that made monotheistic claims and joined itself with the Christians in its book was suffocating the growth of the church. The persecution of the Christians motivated many faithful to immigrate to the lands of the Eastern Roman Empire and to other surrounding areas. This further decreased the Christian presence and influence in Iran. However, the migration contributed to the propagation of the good news amongst the surrounding Turkish speaking people, the Mongols, Tartars, Chinese, Indians, and the Central Asians. The Bible had been distributed amongst the Mongols. As a result many Mongolian Leaders came to support the Christians. In fact, the wife of one of the Mongol Conquerors in Iran was a Christian. However, during the Mongol Invasion of Genghis Khan many of the cities with large Christian populations were decimated. Ghazan Khan, a Mongol ruler in Iran, ordered the destruction of the Christian prayer chapels. The persecution did not end there. It is documented that during the Mongol era nine million Christians lost their lives. Interestingly, the Iranian witness spread to Arabia as well, documented by Marco Polo some two hundred years later in the twelfth century AD as he witnessed a thriving Christian community there.

In addition to these historical factors there were three important principles that caused the destruction and decline of the church in Iran. First, there was an ascetic movement amongst the Christians, as many were encouraged to disassociate themselves from worldly affairs and material possessions. Second, due to social pressures, Christians began to deny Jesus as a member of the Godhead. Third, there were no real copies of the scripture in the common languages spoken in Iran. In the Sixteenth century, long after Islam had established its roots in Iran, during the reign of Shah Abbas Safavi, a command was decreed that any so called Christian who would declare her/himself a Moslem could acquire all the worldly goods of his or her Christian relatives back to seven generations. Because of this royal command almost fifty thousand so-called Christians converted to Islam. A small number of Armenian Christians in Iran did the same. During the era of the Afshar dynasty in the seventeenth century, and in following dynasties including the Zend dynasty, many followers of the Catholic church from surrounding countries attempted to go to Iran to spread the good news, and establish a system of conversion with great difficulty.

During the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth century, during the dynasty of Ghajar, Christians, and missionaries fared better than previous eras. They were allowed to establish Christian schools for both boys and girls in Iran. Two German missionaries and later a British Protestant missionary named Mr. Henry Martin made a significant impact in the church in Iran. A significant event in 1822 AD was the conversion of the son of the Iranian prime minister, Valiaht Mirza, during the reign of Fatahli Shah of Gajar. The first American missionary to travel

to Iran was Mr. J.L.Merick who joined two other German missionaries to Tehran, Esfahan, and then Shiraz (three major cities in Iran). The first missionary couple who went to Iran were Mr. and Mrs. Perkins in 1834. During that era, Christians did not have common rights like riding on a horse, so they were forced to travel on foot, or using a more menial beast like a donkey.

Christians at that time were prohibited from trading, and were allowed to only hold menial jobs. The first Protestant church was established in the city of Rezaieh (on the Northwestern corner of Iran) in 1855. And eventually during the reign of the Pahlavi Shahs in the middle of the twentieth century, Christians enjoyed the most freedoms as any other era. During the reign of the Pahlavi Kings, Christians were able, and indeed did, hold important posts in government, and in the marketplace. It was not uncommon to see a Christian exercise their skills as parliament members, engineers, doctors, and secretaries of different ministries within the government.

After the revolution in Iran, in 1979, the situation for all minorities in Iran became extremely strained. The minorities became subject to open persecutions, torture, and extermination. The doors of church after church in Iran were forced shut as the government made outrageous claims that these places of worship were nests for the spies of western governments. The taskmasters of the autocratic Khomeini launched inhumane attacks on the leaders of many congregations resulting in the modern day martyrdom of our brethren. As a result, a vacuum was left in the persecuted church for leadership. The only Christian layman left was Mr. Haik Hovsepian-Mehr who continued without to fearless advance in his ministry in Iran. He stood against the attacks of the government with steadfastness, and fortitude until Jan. 1994 when he was tortured and stabbed to death repeatedly. Since that date several church leaders and members have suffered at the hands of Islamic fundamentalists--being tortured and killed for the cause of Christ. However, we confidently know that all of them are standing with our Lord and Savior, and have been rewarded as a result of their desire to die like their Master. There is a precious promise in the Old Testament that gives hope to every Iranian Christian that says God has not yet completed his work in Iran. We are waiting for the promise of our Heavenly Father, the Almighty God, through Jesus Christ who tells us that " In the last days, I will bless Iran". Jeremiah 49:39, "But it shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the Lord." Amen.

This section is partly based on the "History of the Church in Iran" by Z. Behraves, in Persian. The summary from the reference cited above is prepared by N.S. and F.C.

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