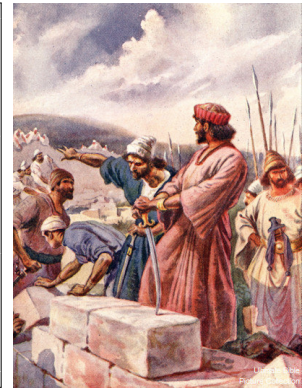


The Sword and The Trowel

They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded (Nehemiah 4:17-18)

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The Truth About Islam

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil really opened eyes about Islam. The further we get away from that fateful day, the more changed the truth becomes. We are told a number of things that just are not so. It is said that the United States caused or somehow incited these attacks because of our actions in Islamic countries. History will reveal to you that Islamists (or Muslims) need little provocation for what they do. The core message of the Quran (Koran) is the conversion of the world to Islam. Those that will not convert will be eliminated. I wonder how many people in the World Trade Center had an opportunity to be converted to Islam before they were massacred? Eventually you find out that massacre trumps conversion in some cases!

We are also told that Islam is a peaceful religion emphasizing duty, love, and allegiance to God. Again, history will reveal that Islam has long had an allegiance to a man—Mohammed, a duty to conquer, and a love for slaughter. Has anyone ever heard of the Crusades? It was the rapacious encroachment by Muslims that caused European kingdoms to react and send armies to the Middle East. They were disguised as “religious works”, but were in reality a pre-emptive strike to halt the spread of Islam. It was a move generated by fearful, not religious, people.

What Is Islam?

The name is derived from *al-islam*, which means the act of committing oneself unreservedly to God. A Muslim is one who makes this commitment. It is believed by Muslims that the Koran describes “the religion of Abraham.” Islam dates back to the lifetime of the

prophet Mohammed (570-632 AD). Abraham lived circa 2000 BC. Thus, Abraham precedes Mohammed by about twenty-six *centuries*. It is odd that “the religion of Abraham” waited so long to be brought to light by Mohammed. Islam has grown exponentially for almost fourteen centuries. It is estimated today that there are 800,000,000 Muslims in the world. Like most religions in the world, Islam finds itself divided into different factions which will be explained later in this article.

Mohammed And His Message

The prophet Mohammed was born about 570 AD in the city of Mecca. He was raised by his grandfather and an uncle who was the head of the powerful Hashim clan. At the age of 25 he married a rich widow and was set for life. About 610 AD, while alone in a cave on Mt. Hira, Mohammed claimed he had a vision from God to preach His message. He had intermittent revelations the remainder of his life. These are all recorded in the Koran.

Mohammed’s message was not well received at first. He did preach there was only one God and that idolatry should be destroyed. He preached this among polytheists (worshippers of many gods) and idolaters. Soon the polytheists were at war with Mohammed and his converts.

I am satisfied that much of the violent nature of the Koran was directed at the polytheists they fought. The Koran justified their “holy extermination” of the infidels. However, after this particular brand of infidel was dispatched more were found and so it has gone for over a *thousand* years!

The following are excerpts from the Koran dictating how to deal with those who are viewed as the enemies of Islam:

Fighting is obligatory for you, much as you dislike it. But you may hate a thing although it is good for you, and love a thing although it is bad for you. God know, but you do not...fight for the sake of God those that fight against you, but do not attack them first. God does not love the aggressors. Slay them wherever you find them. Drive them out of the places from which they drove you. Idolatry is worse than carnage. But do not fight them within the precincts of the Holy Mosque unless they attack you there; if they attack you put them to the sword. Thus shall the unbelievers be rewarded: but if they mend their ways, know that god is forgiving and merciful (Surah 2:190ff).

Those that make war against God and His apostle and spread disorder in the land shall be put to death or crucified or have their hands and feet cut off on alternate sides, or be banished from the country. They shall be held up to shame in this world and sternly punished in the hereafter: except those that repent before you reduce them. For you must know that God is forgiving and merciful (Surah 5:31-34).

In today’s post-Mohammed world anyone who is not a Muslim is an enemy of God.

As a side note, Muslims have not always been as zealous to eliminate the ones they capture. They soon learned that there was money to be made selling their infidel captives to the infidel Europeans. For almost two centuries the majority of Africans sold into slavery were sold by Muslim Africans. This is largely ignored by history revisionists.

Two Groups Of Islam

For the sake of brevity, I will not run down every division of Islam. Suffice it

to say that there are two main groups—Secular Islamists and Fundamental Islamists.

Secular-Islamists are those who claim to follow the Koran, but are for the most part non-violent. They will live and prosper among 21st century culture in all nations except where Fundamental Islamists are in power. Secular Islamists will dress in Western style clothing, enjoy modern social activities, and live in modern dwellings.

Fundamental Islamists also claim to follow the Koran and are as unstable as nitroglycerin in a Glad Bag! They live and dress and move as though it were still 610 AD! They view everyone who is not a Fundamentalist, including their Secular “cousins”, as Godless infidels. They still hold that the answer to the infidel problem is the sword.

It is Secular Islamists who say the Koran is a book extolling love and peace. They just ignore all the other things in the Koran and, apparently, believe history to be a lie.

Fundamentalists, on the other hand, make no such claim and are currently striving to develop nuclear weaponry. The better to deal with the infidel problem.

All Of This Versus The Gospel

God spoke to the prophets in times past (Heb. 1:1). That is before Mohammed so he doesn't qualify. God speaks to us today through His Son (Heb. 1:2). That also disqualifies Mohammed who arrived after Jesus. Jesus, not Mohammed, is the Prophet who was to come (Deut. 18:15-18; Acts 3:19-23). Paul said that the coming of the revealed word would cause prophecy to fail (1 Cor. 13:8-12). This means prophecy did not exist past the first century. Mohammed's alleged prophecies took place five hundred years after the cessation of prophecy.

There were plenty of those who did not convert to the teaching of Jesus and His apostles. There is not one word or instance where they ever dealt out violence toward non-converts. Jesus taught to “turn the other cheek” and “wipe the dust from your feet.” It was never violence. There was a time when a Samaritan village refused Jesus (Lk. 9:51-52). James and John wanted to punish the village (Lk. 9:54). Jesus REBUKED

then and they simply moved on to another village (Lk. 9:55-56). Jesus did not employ the retaliatory tactics of the so-called “Prophet Mohammed.” Neither should the followers of Jesus do so.

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Read The Bible!

I know as a preacher that I encourage the reading of the Bible. I am sure that there are many other members at Tuckerman who encourage the same. We probably all understand the value in doing so. We also realize how important it is to read the Bible. Unfortunately, we just may not be getting the job done. We stress reading the Bible, but fall short in actually doing it seems like a paradoxical situation.

Now I am sure that we can come up with more than a few explanations as to why we fail to read the Bible like we know we should. I am sure that it would be something like time management, opportunity, family matters, employment, school functions, etc. Some, if not all, of those are indeed probably hindering some from reading the Bible like they might desire to do. Notwithstanding, I want to point out a real issue that prevents us from reading the Bible. We fail to read it because we have no plan to read it. You see, just opening the Bible and reading somewhere is OK, but probably will not work out for longevity.

There are any number of schedules for reading the Bible available in a number of venues. Usually they are arranged for a year, beginning at the first of the year. You can pick one up at a bookstore. Sometimes they are printed in some magazine. I know I could go on the Internet and find several. There is little doubt that these will not get the job done. One plan is probably a dandy and will fit someone in just the best way. However, each person needs a plan that will work for them. Some will not do it. If it is perceived that it will not work, then it likely will not work. In my opinion, the best plan is one that you come up with yourself and then determine to stick with it.

This past Holiday Season I received some gift cards from friends and family. I do what I always do with such gifts—I bought books. I bought books on his-

tory, on Bible subjects, biographies, etc. I bought a couple copies of the English Standard Version (ESV) since I did not have any in my collection of Bibles. I must admit I was impressed with this newest of translations and I am a tough sell when it comes to newer translations of the Bible.

I mention this because I had a plan to read through the Old Testament starting the first of the year. I thought I would cover at least three chapters a day. If I did that I would be able to finish the Old Testament with time to spare. I also planned to do my reading using the ESV. Now I realize that some days I might read more than three chapters. I would still read in sets of three—three, six, nine, etc. There would also be some days where I might be too busy to read, but those would be few and I would need to continue the next day. As of this writing, I have just finished the book of Deuteronomy. I am way ahead of schedule.

I can't tell you how invigorated I feel with this reading of the Old Testament. I have seen some things I never noticed before. I am reading some things I seem to have forgotten. It has stimulated my thinking. It has renewed my love for God's word. Most importantly, it has strengthened my faith in God.

I am reminded of the Psalmist and his outpouring of love and appreciation for God's word. It goes without saying that such an affinity simply cannot exist unless one has a bond with the revealed word. I do not know any other way that this can be established and developed except by reading the word and reading it often. I am so glad I am doing this.

“Consider how I love Your precepts; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness. The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever” (Psa. 119:159-160).

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