

ISLAM 101

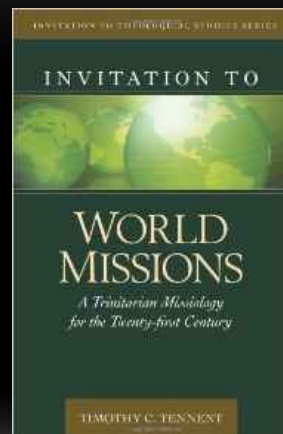
J. Scott Bridger, PhD
 Criswell College
 The Well Community Church

1

THE CHALLENGE TO CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

It is “quite astonishing that theological students in the West will spend countless hours learning about the writings of a few-well known, now deceased, German theologians whose global devotees are actually quite small and yet completely ignore over one billion living, breathing Muslims who represent one of the most formidable challenges to the Christian gospel today.”

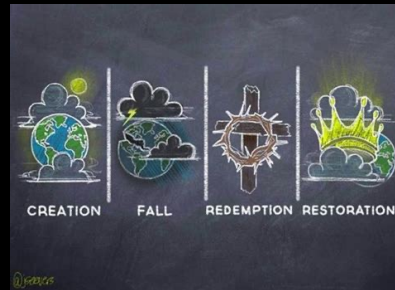
- Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Mission*, 192.



2

THE BIBLE'S STORY: A COMPREHENSIVE AND SELF-CONTAINED STORY OF THE COSMOS

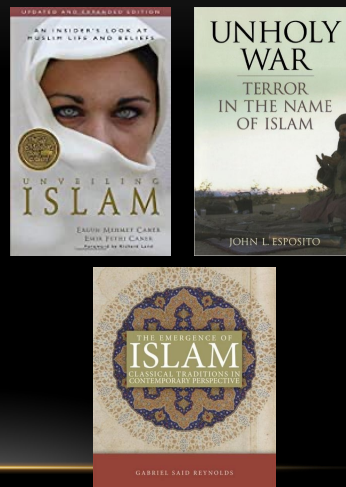
- Creation – Where do we come from?
- Fall – What went wrong?
- Redemption – What hope is there?
- New Creation (Restoration, Consummation) – What does the future hold?



3

HOW SHOULD WE AS CHRISTIANS GO ABOUT STUDYING WORLD RELIGIONS LIKE ISLAM?

1. Polemical Approach
2. Sympathetic Approach
3. Critical Approach
4. Critical-Theological Approach



4

ISLAM'S STORY

- Creation in six days
- Man created from clay "as a drop of fluid"
- *Iblis* (Satan) is commanded to bow to Adam but he refuses
- Adam disobeys God and eats from the tree and banished from Paradise
- "Guidance" on the "straight path" becomes the solution to Adam's "Fall"
- God sends prophets and messengers to lead humanity on the straight path
- Muhammad is God's final messenger
- Submission to God's law brings justice and peace
- Jesus is returning to fight the Anti-Christ
- His second coming is a sign preceding the final Day of Judgment

5

MUHAMMAD'S ROLE IN ISLAM'S STORY

- Muhammad born in Mecca around 570
- He begins receiving revelations at the age of 40
- The central message he proclaims is the "unity" or "oneness" of God (*tawḥīd*)
- The Meccans refuse his message so he leaves Mecca and travels to Medina in 622
- In 630 Muhammad conquers Mecca
- He dies in 632
- Arab conquests of North Africa, Middle East, Northern India, Central Asia, South East Asia
- Muhammad is the final prophet whom God used to reveal the final message contained in the Qur'an

6

TRADITIONAL MUSLIM SOURCES OF “REVELATION” – AN OPEN-ENDED CANON

1. Scripture (Qur’ān): late 7th century; early 8th century.
2. Biographical Literature (Sīra/Maghāzī): Ibn Ishaq’s (d. 767) *Biography of the Prophet Muhammad* (edited by Ibn Hisham in the 9th century)
3. Traditions of the Prophet (Ḥadīth): Bukhari’s (d. 870) Collection of *hadīth* (9th century); 6 canonical Sunnī collections
4. Commentaries (Tafsīr): Ṭabarī’s Commentary on the Qur’an (10th century); others.
5. Works of Islamic History: Ṭabarī’s History; Stories of the Prophets; others

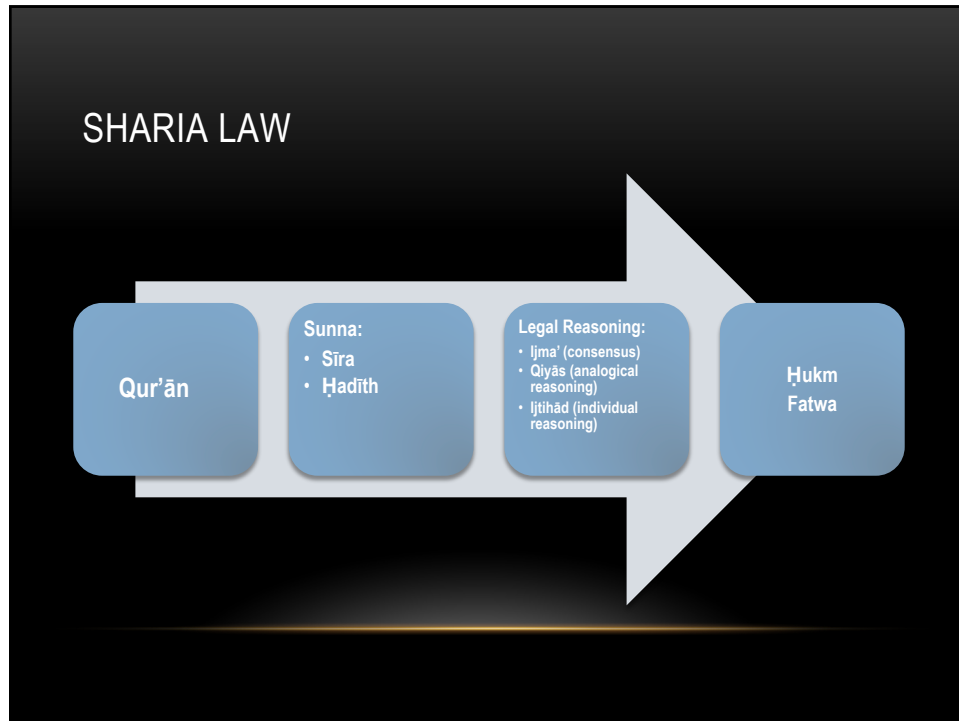


7

BASIC BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

- 5 Pillars:
 1. *Shahadah* – Confession
 2. *Salat* – Prayer
 3. *Ramadan* – Fasting during the holy month
 4. *Hajj* – Pilgrimage to Mecca one time during a Muslim’s life
 5. *Zakat* – Charity and almsgiving
- Basic Beliefs:
 1. God
 2. Angels and Spirits
 3. Prophets
 4. Books
 5. Judgment
 6. Decrees

8



9

CHALLENGES WHEN STUDYING ISLAM

- The problem of the traditional Islamic sources (late, unreliable)
- The problem of the Qur'an's language (allusive, ambiguous)
- Unlike the Bible, the Qur'an does not present to us a comprehensive and self-contained story; the Qur'an lacks narrative formation (it presumes its audience is familiar with its content)

"First of all, the Qur'an deliberately ignores mentioning not only the time and place of the historical incidents in its stories, but also some of the characters. Second, in dealing with some historical stories the Qur'an selects some events and omits others. Third, the chronological arrangement of the events is violated. Fourth, the Qur'an sometimes relates certain actions to some characters and sometimes relates the same actions to different characters. Fifth, when the story is repeated in another chapter of the Qur'an, the dialogue related to the same character is not the same as in the first case. Sixth, the Qur'an sometimes adds to the story some incidents that are supposed to happen chronologically afterward."

-Nasr Abu-Zayd

10

SUBVERSIVE BELIEFS EMBEDDED IN ISLAM'S STORY

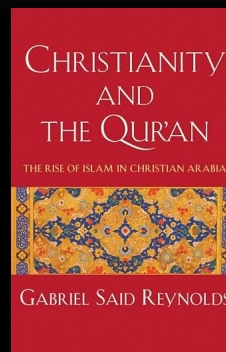
1. Belief in the Trinity is *shirk*
2. Belief in substitutionary atonement is illogical and immoral
3. The Incarnation is impossible
4. Jesus didn't really die on the cross
5. The Bible is corrupt



11

QUR'ANIC APPROPRIATION OF BIBLICAL "TURNS OF PHRASE"

- Q2:88: "And they say, 'Our hearts are uncircumcised.'" (Lev 26:41; Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4; Acts 7:51-53; Rom 2:28-29; Phil 3:3; Col 2:1)
- Q 21:47: "Not one soul shall be wronged anything; even if it be the weight of one grain of mustard-see We shall produce it." (Matt 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-31; Luke 13:18-19)
- Q9:80: "Ask pardon for them, or ask not pardon for them; if thou askest pardon for them seventy times, God will not pardon them." (Matt 18:21-22)



12

AN ARABIC QUR'ĀN

وَمِن قَبْلِهِ كُتِبَ إِيمَانًا وَرَحْمَةً وَهَذَا كُتِبَ
مُصَدِّقًا لِّسَانًا عَرَبِيًّا **Q 46:12**

Yet before it [Qur'an] was the Book of
Moses [Torah] as a model and mercy;
and this is a Book confirming (it) in the
Arabic language...

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ **Q 43:3**

...an Arabic Qur'añ, so that you may understand

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ **Q 12:2**

Surely We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'añ,
so that you may understand.

...وَهَذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُبِينٌ **Q 16:103**

...but this language is clear Arabic

قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ **Q 39:28**

...an Arabic Qur'añ, without any crookedness

13

THE BIBLICAL STORY VS ISLAM'S STORY: CREATION

Some similarities with the biblical account, but there's a
lack of narrative detail regarding the God's relationship with
creation; the creation of humanity (male and female) in
God's image; the role of God's Spirit and Word at the time
of creation.

14

THE BIBLICAL STORY VS ISLAM'S STORY: FALL

God and Satan are depicted as being in some sort of contest; Adam and his wife (Eve) eat from the tree and violate God's command, but their sin is not depicted as rupturing their relationship with God, the Creation, other people, or themselves; the language used to describe what happen is much weaker than that found in Scripture.

15

THE BIBLICAL STORY VS ISLAM'S STORY: CREATION: REDEMPTION

"Guidance" through law-keeping becomes the theme that Muslims use to interpret all of God's dealings with humanity; no moral, spiritual, or rational incapacitation from sin; naïve utopian vision of what humanity can achieve under Islamic law due to no doctrine of original sin

16

THE BIBLICAL STORY VS ISLAM'S STORY: CREATION: RESTORATION

Jesus is returning but not to usher in the fullness of God's Kingdom; he's returning because he didn't die the first time he was here according to traditional Muslim belief (but not according to the Qur'an itself); there is a final Day of Judgment and eternal Paradise for those whose good deeds and faith in the oneness of God outweigh their bad deeds.

17

OUTREACH TO MUSLIMS: NARRATIVE CONTROL

We must allow the Bible exert narrative control in shaping the Muslim's understanding of the true identity of God, the prophets, and Christ. It alone presents a **comprehensive, self-contained narrative** that is *the* story of the world, and it alone has the power to enact **metanarrative replacement therapy**

18

OUTREACH TO MUSLIMS: APOLOGETICS

We must equip the church to engage Muslims in a bold, culturally sensitive, and non-coercive manner.

19

APOLOGETIC ISSUES

DEFENSE

- Muslims usually want Christians to defend the logic and doctrines like the Trinity (Jesus' divinity), the incarnation, and the atonement
- The integrity of the Bible - multiple translations, variants, etc.
- The historicity of the Crucifixion

OFFENSE

- Sources/historicity of accounts related to Muhammad (hadith, biographies, etc.)
- Qur'anic textual transmission
- Qur'anic teachings (e.g., beating your wife; the worth of women; violence against non-believers)

20

OUTREACH TO MUSLIMS: ETHICS, LAW, POLITICS

We must be explicit in expressing how our faith shapes our view of culture, politics, education, law, society, etc. We must show in word and deed that the gospel is public truth

21

OUTREACH TO MUSLIMS: RELATIONSHIPS AND HOSPITALITY

Invite Muslims into your home, for coffee, church, sports, etc. Show Muslims hospitality in culturally sensitive ways. We must take time to learn what this means.

22

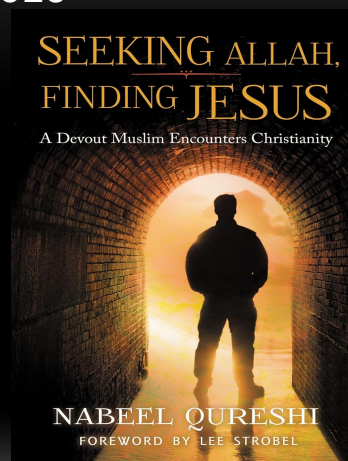
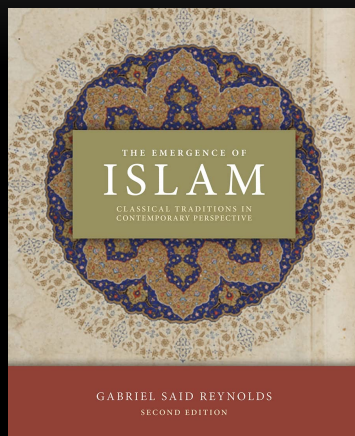
CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

- Is 'Allah' God?
- Is Islam an 'Abrahamic' religion or faith?



23

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



24