

THE 10 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ISLAM

RON
RHODES



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS

EUGENE, OREGON

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Verses marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible®, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

Verses marked kjv are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

All Quran quotations are taken from Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran* (Decatur, IL: Axum Publications, 2006).

Cover photo © Sylvester Adams / Photodisc Red / Getty Images

Cover by Terry Dugan Design, Minneapolis, Minnesota

THE 10 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ISLAM

Copyright © 2007 by Ron Rhodes

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97402

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Rhodes, Ron.

The 10 things you need to know about Islam / Ron Rhodes.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7369-1909-8 (pbk.)

ISBN-10: 0-7369-1909-0

1. Islam. 2. Islam—Doctrines. 3. Islam—Relations—Christianity. 4. Christianity and other religions—Islam. 5. Islam—Controversial literature. I. Title. II. Title: Ten things you need to know about Islam.

BP161.3.R47 2007

297—dc22

2006021724

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

07 08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 / BP-SK / 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS



The Global Explosion of Islam	7
1. Unity and Diversity Among Muslims	13
2. The Quran: The Scripture of Islam	21
3. Muhammad: The Prophet of Islam	35
4. Allah: The God of Islam	49
5. Muslims' Five Primary Duties	63
6. Allah and Salvation	73
7. Judgment Day, Heaven, and Hell	85
8. Has the Bible Been Corrupted?	97
9. Was Jesus Merely a Prophet?	111
10. Dialoguing with Muslims	125
Notes	139
Bibliography	153



THE GLOBAL EXPLOSION OF ISLAM



THIS BOOK IS INTENTIONALLY CONCISE. There is something to be said for brevity. However, brevity should not be confused with superficiality.

In an age of information overload, this book is intended to provide you with the most relevant and helpful information on Islam in the briefest possible fashion. In the short time it takes you to read this book, you will become well-versed in the Muslim worldview, Muslim theology, Muslim ethics, and the Muslim view of Christianity. Consider this book to be a crash course on the controversial world of Islam.

The Birth of Islam

Islam is a monotheistic religion that arose in the seventh century AD under the leadership of Muhammad (also spelled *Muhammed* and *Mohammed*). Muhammad was allegedly the greatest of a long line of prophets that included Moses and Jesus. His primary revelation was that the one true God is Allah. Allah's revelation to Muhammad occurred over a 23-year period and is recorded in the Quran (Islam's holy book, also spelled *Koran*). *Quran* means "that which is to be read."

Islam literally means “submission to the will of Allah.” Members of Islam are called *Muslims* (“those who submit”). The word *Muslim* expresses the inner attitude of those who have harkened to the preaching of Muhammad.¹ The word conveys a perpetual and ongoing submission to God.

By its very form [as a verbal noun] it conveys a feeling of action and ongoingness, not of something that is static and finished, once and for all, but of an inward state which is always repeated and renewed...One who thoughtfully declares “I am a Muslim” has done much more than affirm his membership in a community...[He is saying] “I am one who commits himself to God.”²

Islam involves beliefs (the five doctrines of Islam) and obligations (the five pillars of Islam), which I will discuss in greater detail throughout the book.

The Mosque: The Muslim Place of Worship

The word *mosque* comes from the word *masjid*, which literally means “a place of prostration or prayer.” The Muslim mosque is considered a place of worship, prayer, and fellowship. Muslims believe that prayer in a mosque is far more effective than prayer anywhere else (Hadith 1:620).

Muslim mosques come in a variety of shapes and sizes. They typically have a prayer room with rugs for sitting and kneeling during prayer rituals. A niche in the wall indicates the direction of Mecca (a Saudi Arabian capital toward which worshippers offer prayers). Muslim leaders deliver sermons from an elevated platform. Larger mosques may include a library with Islamic literature, a social hall for fellowship, rooms dedicated to Quranic study, and living quarters for resident leaders. Some mosques contain a school for training the *mullahs* (or *ulama*—Islamic scholars).³

Muslims have no ordained clergy. Generally, Muslim leaders emerge because of their personal knowledge of the Quran and their oratory skills.

Women are prohibited from entering a mosque during their menstrual period. One scholar notes, “Younger women are strongly discouraged from entering the mosque because they might carelessly enter in a state of impurity. Hindered from praying in the mosque, women have a harder time having their sins forgiven.”⁴

The Growth of Islam

About 20 percent of the earth’s population is Muslim. That’s about 1.3 billion people—one out of every five persons on earth!

The Muslim world was once “somewhere else.” No longer. Islam is now part and parcel of life in the United States. George Braswell comments, “Christians are discovering that they have Muslim neighbors, that mosques are being built next to churches, that their medical doctors are Muslims, and that their children attend school with Muslims.”⁵

The United States presently has more than 3000 Muslim mosques; in 1990 there were only 30.⁶ A new mosque opens each week in the United States. As of this writing, 165 Islamic schools, 426 Islamic associations, and 90 Islamic publications are located in the United States.⁷ An Islamic leader inaugurated a session of the United States Senate, praying in the name of Allah.⁸

Some well-known Muslims live in this country. Among these are pop musician Cat Stevens, who converted to Islam in 1977 and changed his name to Yusuf Islam. He and basketball stars Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Hakeem Olajuwon have generated substantial publicity for the religion.

Islam has enjoyed impressive growth around the world:

- Islam is presently the world’s second-largest religion. (Christianity is the largest.)
- More than 65 nations in the world are Islamic.
- Muslims constitute about 85 percent of the population in 32 countries.⁹
- Islam is now the second-largest religion in Europe.¹⁰

THE 10 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ISLAM

- Muslims outnumber Methodists and Baptists combined in the United Kingdom.¹¹
- England had only one mosque in 1945, but now it has thousands. Hundreds of the buildings currently used for mosques were originally churches—including the church that sent well-known Christian missionary William Carey to India.¹²
- India alone has more than 100 million Muslims.¹³
- Muslims comprise the second-largest religious group in France. The number of mosques in France mushroomed from only one in 1974 to thousands today.¹⁴
- Muslims constitute a majority in 45 African and Asian countries.¹⁵
- China has 100 million Muslims.¹⁶
- Indonesia has more than 180 million Muslims.¹⁷
- Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries are currently donating tens of millions of dollars to promote Islam in the United States.¹⁸

Many Muslims argue that the explosive growth of Islam around the world constitutes proof that Islam is *the* true religion. After all, how could the religion grow so exponentially without God's blessing?¹⁹

Reasons for Islamic Growth

Islam is growing around the world for several reasons. Here are some of the most pertinent factors that Muslim leaders acknowledge:

Financial support. A great deal of money is being poured into Arab missions around the world, especially in the United States. This money is being used to build mosques, create Islamic centers at major universities, and publish Islamic literature.²⁰

A universal religion. Islam claims to be a universal religion. Though it originated in Mecca, it claims to be for all people everywhere. Islam claims to know no barriers between races.²¹ (Interestingly, though, the

Shi'ites, Sunnis, and other Muslim sects disagree on key issues and divide from one another.)

A simple religion. Islam has few requirements. It is a much simpler religion, Muslims claim, than Christianity. It contains no difficult doctrines like the Trinity and the two natures (divine and human) in the one person of Christ. A person who recites the Islamic creed is a Muslim. A person who keeps the five pillars (ethical principles) of Islam is a *good* Muslim. A person who emulates the life of Muhammad (as recorded in Islamic tradition—the Hadith) will be a *successful* Muslim.

A comprehensive religion. Muslims say that Islam, unlike Christianity, encompasses all of life—political, economic, judicial, social, moral, and religious. (Christians believe a relationship with Christ affects one's interactions in all these realms.)

An easier-to-obey religion. Muslims say Islam is a much easier religion to obey than Christianity. Many of Christ's teachings seem almost impossible to fulfill (for example, His requirements in the Sermon on the Mount). In contrast, the Quran's commands are realistic, and the average person can obey them. (Christians believe that though Christ's commands are indeed loftier, the indwelling Holy Spirit empowers people to successfully live the Christian life.)

A rational religion. Certain doctrines in Christianity do not make sense to Muslims. For example, the idea that one man can die for another or for many people, or the idea that God cannot forgive people without sacrificing someone on a cross, is nonsensical to them. In contrast, Islam is a thinking man's religion. It contains no irrational concepts as does Christianity. (I will address these issues later in the book.)

A brotherhood religion. Muslims all over the world follow the Muslim Hadith (traditions), which contain details on how Muhammad acted in various circumstances, so they have a sense of camaraderie and brotherhood few other religious groups experience.

Proselytizing. Muslims proselytize. They actively share their faith. They are commanded in the Quran to "invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom" (Sura 16:125).²²

Colliding Faiths: Islam Versus Christianity

The denials Islam makes regarding Christianity relate not to peripheral issues over which people can feel free to disagree in an agreeable way. Rather, Islam's denials cut to the very heart of Christianity. Islam claims that the Christian Bible has been corrupted, that God is not a Trinity, that Jesus is not God or the Son of God or even the Savior, that Jesus did not die on the cross for the sins of humanity, and that Jesus did not rise from the dead. In other words, Islam denies what Christianity regards as nonnegotiable.²³

The debate between Christianity and Islam is a critically important one.

UNITY AND DIVERSITY AMONG MUSLIMS

MUSLIMS DO NOT ALL BELIEVE THE SAME THINGS. Though Muslims often criticize Christianity for having so many different denominations and divisions within it, many sects and divisions exist within Islam, some estimates placing the figure around 150.¹ World religions scholar Lewis Hopfe is correct in his assessment that Islam is not a monolithic body. “Although most Muslims would agree on the basic principles of Islam, there are many variations in beliefs and practices.”² In short, we see both unity and diversity in the Muslim world.

Unity: The Five Essential Beliefs

Muslims subscribe to five essential doctrines. Belief in these five essentials is common to Muslims everywhere:

God. The one true God’s name is Allah. The term *Allah* is probably derived from *al illah*, which means “the god.” Allah has seven primary characteristics. He has absolute unity—that is, he is one and not a Trinity (God cannot have a son or a partner). He is also all-seeing, all-hearing, all-speaking, all-knowing, all-willing, and all-powerful.

Angels. A hierarchy of angels stretches between Allah and humankind. The chief is Gabriel, the archangel who gave revelations to Muhammad (Sura 2:97). Each human being has two recording

angels who list all of his or her deeds, good or bad (Sura 50:17). These recorded deeds will be reviewed at the coming judgment.

Holy books. The four inspired books are the Torah of Moses, the Psalms of David, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the Quran (containing the teachings of Muhammad). The Quran contains Allah's final message to humankind and supersedes all previous revelations. The Quran abrogates any conflicting truth claims. Only the Quran has been preserved to the present time in an uncorrupted state.

Prophets. Throughout history, 124,000 prophets have been sent to humanity. The most important ones number less than 30—the greatest of whom is Muhammad. Other prominent prophets include Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Jonah, John the Baptist, and Jesus. Each prophet brought truth for his particular age, but Muhammad is a prophet for all time.

A future judgment. A future resurrection and day of judgment will both occur. Allah will be the judge. Allah weighs people's good and bad deeds and sends people to paradise (a place of pleasure) or to hell (a place of torment).

Fate. Some Muslims teach a sixth doctrine—that Allah foreordains all things. He is totally sovereign. Nothing can take place without Allah ordaining it to happen. No event is random.

I will address these doctrines in greater detail throughout the rest of this book.

Diversity Among Muslims

Muslim clerics may well teach different things in different parts of the world. For example, in the United States, Muslim clerics often say that Islam is a religion of peace and does not sanction terrorism. In Saudi Arabia, Iran, and other such countries, however, Muslim clerics predominantly teach that unbelievers (including Jews and Christians) must be fought until they are subdued.³ This latter group of clerics divides people into two categories: those who submit to the will of Allah and those who do not.

This diversity of views among Muslim clerics is not surprising. Different parts of the Quran communicate seemingly contradictory

messages regarding how to treat unbelievers. As researcher David Goldman puts it, “Some revelations in the Quran are kind to non-Muslims. Other revelations are adversarial. Either position can be argued by quoting specific Quranic verses.”⁴

To make matters worse for United States citizens, many Muslims are angry at the United States because of its relationship with Israel. Many Arab Muslims believe Israel is essentially an outpost for American expansionism. Militant Muslims have made no secret about their desire to return Israeli territory to Muslim control. They promise there will not be peace until they obtain that control.

The Sunnis

Islam has two major sects—the Sunnis and the Shi’ites. These sects originally divided over a dispute about the first *caliph* (successor) to Muhammad, whom Muhammad neglected to appoint prior to his death. The Sunnis said Muhammad’s successor should be elected. The Shi’ites believed the successor should come through Muhammad’s bloodline. The Sunnis got their way. They accept the first four caliphs—Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman, and Ali—as the legitimate successors to Muhammad.

The Sunnis make up about 90 percent of all Muslims and predominate in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. Their name is derived from *Sunnah*, which refers to “the trodden path” or “tradition.” The Sunnis are the traditionalists of Islam.

Toward this end, Sunnis everywhere seek to live their lives according to the exemplary pattern set by Muhammad (as recorded in Muslim tradition) and to obey the Quran. Sunnis believe their Muslim faith can be lived out in the context of various existing earthly governments.⁵ Sunnis are generally more tolerant of diversity than are Shi’ites, so Sunnis adapt more easily to divergent cultures around the world.

The Shi’ites

Shi’ites constitute only about 10 percent of the Muslim world, but they are nevertheless the most visible and vocal of all the Muslim

sects. The term *Shi'ite* is a corruption of the term *Shi'at Ali*, which means “partisans of Ali,” and refers to the fact that they have rejected all subsequent caliphs who were not descendants of Ali (Muhammad’s son-in-law).⁶ The Shi’ites predominate in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and parts of Africa. They are much more literal than Sunnis in their interpretation and application of the Quran, and they are much more militant. The Shi’ites view government as a divine institution of Allah, and they attempt to establish a theocracy (God-ruled nation) on earth.⁷

Shi’ites tend to view the present world order with great distrust. They admire true believers in Allah, those who tenaciously cling to their faith and refuse to sell out to the established order.⁸ Shi’ites do not compromise with unbelievers.

Shi’ite leaders are known by the title *Imam*, and they wield extreme authority over their subjects. They are fiercely authoritarian in their interpretation of the Quran and believe that Allah speaks through them. World religions specialist Dean Halverson says the Imam is the Muslim counterpart to the Catholic pope.⁹ Shi’ites believe a divine spark and the “light of Muhammad” are passed from one Imam to the next.¹⁰ Ayatollah Khomeini, who died in 1989, was an Imam.¹¹

Differing Views on the Jihad

Muhammad never mentioned jihad early in his career. This was certainly the case when he was living initially in Mecca. Scholars have suggested that the reason for this is that during those early years he lacked a strong following and military might. Once in Medina, however, he was able to build a strong following and a strong military. Jihad suddenly became a topic of major Quranic revelation.¹² Note the following contrasts in Muhammad’s behavior in Mecca and Medina:

	MECCA	MEDINA
evangelism	by preaching	by the sword
personal behavior	priestlike	warriorlike

marriage	one wife, Khadija	eleven more wives in ten years
focus of battle	against idol worship	against Jews and Christians
nature of Islam	religious movement	political movement ¹³

Jihad comes from the Arabic word *jahada*, which principally means “to struggle” or “to strive in the path of Allah.” The term has made headlines many times in recent years, especially in connection with terrorist activities around the world. Muslims generally understand it to refer to armed fighting and warfare in defending Islam and standing against evil.

Some Muslims, however, have held to less dangerous forms of jihad. One example of this is a jihad *of the pen*—a written defense of Islam.¹⁴

In keeping with this, scholar Frederick Mathewson Denny notes that “holy war” doesn’t fully capture the meaning of jihad, although that is certainly part of it. Denny says that Muslims refer to a greater jihad and a lesser jihad. A person’s struggle with his own vices, the evil tendencies in his soul, and his lack of faith is considered the greater jihad. This jihad is a spiritual struggle or striving. Many Muslims in the United States hold to this interpretation of jihad.

Engaging in armed struggle against the enemies of Islam is considered the lesser jihad.¹⁵ Islam scholar Jamal Elias claims that for most Muslims today, “any war that is viewed as a defense of one’s own country, home, or community is called a jihad. This understanding is very similar to what is called ‘just war’ in Western society.”¹⁶

Radical Islamic fundamentalists are well-known for their use of arms and explosives in defending their version of Islam. Jihad, in their thinking, can terrorize perceived enemies of Islam into submission and retreat.¹⁷

Such Muslims emulate the behavior of Muhammad (Sura 33:21), for he often led Islamic forces into battle to make Islam dominant during his time. He shed other people’s blood to bolster Islam

throughout the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁸ In fact, “Muhammad’s mission was to conquer the world for Allah. The goal of jihad, or holy war, is to establish Islamic authority over the whole world. Islam teaches that Allah is the only authority, and all political systems must be based on Allah’s teaching.”¹⁹ Islamic history clearly reveals that jihad has been a primary tool of Islamic expansion.

This radical form of jihad is taken much more seriously today than it used to be because of the sheer number of radical Muslims threatening various countries and because of the growing availability of weapons of mass destruction. Though radical Islamic fundamentalists constitute a relative minority of Muslims, even a minority can be a substantial threat. John Ankerberg and John Weldon explain that “since we are talking about 1.3 billion adherents to Islam, even a ‘very small minority’ can involve tens of millions of people who have the potential to cause a great deal of trouble in the world, not only for America, but for moderate Muslim governments as well.”¹⁰

Islamic fundamentalists often cite verses from the Quran to support their view that arms are permissible and even compulsory in the defense of Islam. In Sura 2:216 we read, “Fighting is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you.” In Sura 47:4 we read, “Therefore, when ye meet the unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks; At length, when ye have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly (on them).” Sura 9:5 says, “But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war).”

In 1998 five Muslim *caliphates* (governments)—representing five radical Muslim factions—signed a *fatwa* (written decision) declaring a holy war against the United States. The document they signed contains the following words:

For over seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam and the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring

Muslim peoples...[There has been] aggression against the Iraqi people...[Their aim has been to] serve the Jews' petty state... [They express] eagerness to destroy Iraq...All these crimes and sins committed by the Americans are a clear declaration of war on Allah, his messenger, and Muslims...The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it...This is in accordance with the words of Almighty Allah, “and fight the pagans altogether as they fight you altogether,” and “fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah.”²¹

Who can doubt that the September 11, 2001, attack against the World Trade Center and Pentagon was prompted by this fatwa, written just three years earlier? Americans have taken jihad very seriously since that day.

Many Muslims are religiously motivated to participate in jihad, for any Muslim who loses his or her life in service to Allah is guaranteed entrance into paradise (Hadith 9:459). According to Muslim tradition, Muhammad said, “The person who participates in [holy battles] in Allah’s cause and nothing compels him to do so except belief in Allah and His Apostles, will be recompensed by Allah either with a reward, or booty [if he survives] or will be admitted to Paradise [if he is killed in the battle as a martyr]” (Hadith 1:35). That is why an Islamic suicide bomber is willing to give up his or her life.

The Call to Evangelism

Despite all this talk about jihad, many Muslims who call the United States their home are peace-loving people who do not endorse terrorist acts. They are excellent prospects for evangelism.

Sadly, more than one Christian missionary has noted that very few people seem to convert from Islam to Christianity. The truth is, Muslim conversions seem few not because Muslims are so hard to convert but because the Christian church has largely ignored them. A

mere 2 percent of the Protestant missionary force is actively involved in evangelizing among 1.3 billion Muslims.²² William Miller says that “with some glorious exceptions, the Christians of the world have signally failed to obey Christ by sending laborers to sow and reap a harvest in Muslim lands.”²³ Not only are too few Christian missionaries evangelizing Muslims in other countries, far too few Christians are seeking to reach Muslims in our own country. This is not as it should be.

Jesus, though not speaking specifically about Muslims, nevertheless made a statement very much needed for this hour: “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:37–38). The apostle Paul also spoke eloquent words needed for our times: “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Romans 10:14).

Let’s not forget that Christ calls us to be His witnesses to all peoples and all nations (Matthew 24:14; 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47)—including Muslims. And let us not be shy about it. We must boldly tell the truth about Jesus to our Muslim acquaintances and pray earnestly that God would work in the hearts of those we speak to. We can praise the Lord that Muslims are coming to know Jesus Christ each and every day.