

Islam: Threat or Opportunity

by George Verwer

Islam is both a threat and an opportunity for Christians, and we must rethink our theology and witness in the face of Islam.

Duration: 1:01:19

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, John 3:16

Topics: "Islam"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding and empathizing with people of different faiths, particularly Islam. He encourages Christians to see the world through the eyes of others and to walk in their footsteps. By doing so, the message of Jesus Christ can become relevant and attractive to those of different religions. The speaker also suggests practical ways to engage with Muslims, such as giving them copies of the Bible as gifts.

Transcript

Well, let me say first of all, it's lovely to be here among you and back in Bromley again. We've got a quite a challenging title before us. Islam, Threat or Opportunity.

I don't actually like the word or, because I think it's really not an or, it's an and. Threat and Opportunity. But then that's quite biblical.

Because, biblically, what is a threat is also an opportunity. And what is an opportunity is also a threat. You just think of Jesus, the great rock of our salvation.

But that rock is also a stumbling block for those without faith. So you can either trip over him or you can climb higher through him. He is both a rock and a stumbling block.

Jesus is an opportunity and also a threat. As indeed it is, as Christmas is coming, with Jesus as Emmanuel. Emmanuel was originally, in Isaiah's Gospel, a threat.

Was it not? With King Ahaz refusing God's command to ask for a sign. And when King Ahaz said, I won't, God said, alright, Emmanuel, God with us. And when God is with us in our disobedience, that's no promise.

That's a threat. And yet in Matthew's Gospel, we find Emmanuel is a promise for those who believe. So it is also with Islam, that Islam is both a threat and an opportunity.

First of all, in our own country, here in Britain, we are in a remarkable situation. And as I look around the congregation, I think most, not all, but most of you are my age or more. And therefore you have the advantage of our historical perspective.

The younger ones among you will forgive, we oldies. But a historical perspective, I remember, it's an old man's privilege to reminisce, I remember when I was a student, Muslims were not in Britain. It's difficult to remember that now, isn't it? And to think that that was true.

But it is true, 30, 35 years ago, Muslims were virtually non-existent in this country. It was before the Pakistani immigration, before the Bengali immigration, after that, there were very few Muslims. There was one mosque, the Woking Mosque, and that was a heretical one.

It was Ahmadi, not Orthodox. There were no Orthodox Muslim mosques in Britain. Isn't that amazing to think about? In one man's lifetime, and not that long, just to defend my youth, that we have seen such a change.

And what a change, religiously. Just to give some statistics, we reckon in Britain today there are something like one and a half million active Anglicans, of all sorts and shades. And as we're in Baptist church tonight, better get the Baptist statistic quickly.

About 150, 160,000 Baptists in Britain. About 80 to 100,000 in the newer churches, community churches, house churches, etc. And not as many as that in the Brethren.

Well, we could get the statistics for all the denominations, but that's not my job tonight. But you get a figure roughly there, one and a half million Anglicans, give or take. 150, 160,000 Baptists, a million Muslims, a little bit over.

So if you think the Baptists are significant religiously in Britain, they're nothing compared with the Muslims. Excuse me saying that in a Baptist church. But it's true statistically, and it's true in the dynamic.

It's true in terms of their impact on our society. That the Muslim community, not only statistically, but in impact, will have a much greater influence than most of our denominations. So that if you go on a university campus today, you're more likely to be given a piece of Muslim literature by somebody who is missionizing for Islam, than you are to be given any literature by a Christian.

You're more likely to be challenged by the message of Islam, than you are to be challenged by the message of Christianity. So, is something of a threat? A threat, firstly, because Muslims are confident. They've got the truth.

They've got the final prophet, the final revelation, in the final book, the Quran, and they have got the truth of God. They think. They also feel that they have got the way of life, because it's God's way of life, they say.

And as they look at the corruption of Western society, that adds to their confidence. When they see the churches half-empty, I know we call them half-full. When they see Christians ending up in divorce, in homosexuality, in drunkenness, in looseness of morals, they love to quote these things.

As a demonstration of the fact that Islam is the true way of life, and Christianity is a failure. So there's a confidence in their witness. And they have no hesitation in witnessing.

So that when you meet a Muslim, you think you're going to witness to them, but you be prepared, they'll witness to you. In fact, I have various friends of a less evangelical flavour, who have tried dialogue with Muslims, but have found it very difficult, because while they dialogue, you know, let's find the truth in all the different religions, see what we can learn from them, and so on. The Muslim has no intention whatsoever of learning from you.

Because you haven't got the truth. So he comes to the dialogue, and it is he, it's not just sexist language, he comes to the dialogue in order to convert you to Islam. And that's embarrassing.

So that there is a threat to the church, and to our British community. Now it has to be said that so far in Britain, they're not winning very many ethnic English to Islam, a few, and those few are well publicised, but not actually very many statistically. Partly because their form of witness tends to be culturally rather unsuited to British society.

They haven't adjusted very well in their literature, and in their preaching methods, in their witness methods. And so on the whole, they don't appeal to our people. But that's only a matter of time, as they begin to adjust more adequately to our society, they will become more effective, and are already showing signs of that.

Now of course, when we say that of them, we have also to say it of ourselves. Because frankly the witness of the church among its Muslim neighbours is culturally unsuitable, ineffectual, unrelated. But I hope that that's just a matter of time, while we learn to do the job.

And there are signs that we are beginning to learn. Well Islam is also a threat to our society. We've seen it particularly with the Salman Rushdie affair.

But not only that, but Islam in our country is militant. Not all Muslims, but at least the central core. And it is a clash of civilisations.

I was talking with somebody just this weekend who works at 10 Downing Street, and is very much aware of what's going on socially, economically and politically in our country. And he was saying, yes it is, it's a clash of civilisations which have two utterly different values. Islam believes we have the law of God, the law of Allah.

And that law is the law for the whole of humanity. Western society, and we have exported this, is built on the assumption that every nation has the right to choose its own politicians, and through its politicians to develop also its own laws. And therefore in Britain we have British law, which is slightly different from French law, or German law, or Brazilian law, or wherever.

And every nation, we feel, has the right to develop its own social customs, and particularly its own laws. Not so in Islam. Islam believes in the law of God, not the law of Britain.

And the law of God, as they understand it, of course supersedes any national law. And so in Osama Rushdie affair, Khomeini cannot offer a death threat, and even though it is illegal in Britain to murder, or even to incite to murder, well British law is insignificant because British law is merely secular, and does not carry the weight of divine law. Well, our politicians and our lawyers may not agree with that.

And so you have a basic clash. And of course it's not just with the Osama Rushdie affair. It deals also with marriage law, and inheritance law, and every other form of law.

The Britain believes in secular law, national law, which may be influenced by a Christian background, but is not specifically Christian. Islam does not believe in that. Islam believes in God's law.

The law of the Quran, and the law of Muhammad. Well that's a fundamental clash. And already Muslims within this country are not only forming their own political party, which is fine, but they are also beginning to ask that within the Muslim community Islamic law should be the law of the people.

So that you have two different laws within the country. You have British law for non-Muslims, and you have Muslim law for Muslims. Well, we have never traditionally in our countries entertained the possibility of having different laws for different people.

We have always believed in one people, and one law. So that there is a fundamental clash there. It is a clash also of community.

Islam has always believed, and still believes, that you can divide the world into two sections. The world of Islam, what is called Darul Islam, and the world of warfare, Darul Haram. And those who are not Muslims, and who do not live under Muslim law, are in the war zone.

And it is the task of Islam to turn those countries into Islamic countries with Islamic law. Including, of course, the Islamic law as to how you handle people who are not Muslims. Where you make a covenant with them, what was called the Dhimma.

It is still called the Dhimma. And that puts them very definitely in a position of inferiority. So it is openly and specifically the aim of Islam to turn Europe, including Britain, for we are part of Europe in case you weren't sure, but to turn Europe to the law of Islam.

And that's what they would like. But that is a threat to those of us who are not Muslims, and do not wish to become Muslims. But perhaps for us as Christians, Islam is particularly a threat, and a challenge, and an opportunity altogether, theologically.

Because Islam is posing questions, not just questions, criticisms, that our theology doesn't really deal with. Because our traditional Christian theology has been dealing with secularism, with liberalism, with Greek philosophical backgrounds, with traditional Roman Catholic, for pre-reformation Roman Catholic arguments. That sort of issue.

And has not really dealt with the sort of questions that Islam is posing. And so the whole of our theology gets attacked, and on the whole Christians don't have answers. Or not adequate answers, because they haven't done their homework.

And that is a challenge, and a threat to us. And generally speaking, most Christians, when they actually come up against Muslims, find themselves defeated in debate, and find themselves feeling theologically and spiritually highly inferior. Or perhaps I should say lowly inferior.

So that is a challenge to us. It means we have got to rethink all of our biblical exegesis and understanding, and all of our theology. We've got to begin to produce Christian literature that is answering the problems, not just of secularists, atheists, or liberal attacks, but particularly the attacks of Islam.

Because they are not a tiny proportion of our population. They are a million strong. And that is before we start on tourists and business people and politicians and others who happen temporarily to be residents in this country.

This is resident British Muslims that I am talking of. People with British citizenship and British passports, like the rest of us. So it is a challenge that we've got to have our literature and our teaching and preaching related to the challenge of Islam in this modern day.

Now that is a challenge for the whole Christian Church. Because, quite frankly, most of our Bible training in Bible colleges is irrelevant to Islam. Most of the training given in theological colleges is irrelevant to Islam.

Most of our theological and biblical literature is irrelevant to Islam. And therefore we face an enormous challenge, biblically, theologically, and in our wholesome media presentation. That's quite a challenge.

But I would say it's not only a challenge, it's a wonderful opportunity. Because, well, it's an opportunity to rethink our Christian faith. And when you do so, you find all sorts of new excitements and new riches and new depths and new beauties.

When you see Christ and the Scriptures through different eyes, and you come at them from different sides and different approaches, and so you see new riches and new depths. And that's important for us in the Church, isn't it? Because many of us have got stuck, if we're honest. I remember some years ago being challenged by my old father-in-law.

When he was in his nineties, he wasn't able to get out of the house anymore. He wasn't bedridden, but he couldn't get down to his church. And one day I said to him, old daddy, you must miss not getting to your church.

And he said, no, not really. And then he looked at me rather uncertainly, and he said, well, you see, the brethren, brothers and sisters, they come and visit me, so I have plenty of fellowship. And he said, you see, I've heard it all before.

Well, he'd been a Christian for eighty-odd years by then. So he'd had time to hang out a fair bit. Well, when he said that, he then gave me a definitely quizzical look with a little smile.

And after a long pause, he said, many times. I've heard it all before. Many times.

And I was challenged. Is my ministry just the same old stuff? Re-gurgitated? Rehashed? Why am I going deeper into the Lord? Am I seeing the Lord from new perspectives? Am I going deeper into the Scriptures? Am I seeing the Scriptures through different eyes and different perspectives? Or is it just the same old stuff? Well, Islam gives us the opportunity, the challenge and the opportunities to see the Scriptures and to see our Lord Jesus through different eyes, answering different questions, with a different philosophy and different perspective. It is an opportunity.

Well, of course, it's also an opportunity for witness. Not just for us to rethink our Christian faith and enjoy it in a new light, but also, here we are, in the old days, when I was young, we had to go overseas to meet all these people. Oh, God in His grace saves us the airfare.

Brings them all to us. And there they are, doubled, on our doorsteps. And it's amazing how many of the people who were so keen on missionary support and so on, are not quite so keen when the mission field in inverted commas comes onto their doorstep.

Particularly if it affects the price of their house, or their job, or the smell that comes down the street. I don't like curry. I'll pray for missionaries that they might get used to curry.

But not in my street. Because missionaries are those who are out there. Not here.

In London. In Bromley. So it gives us an opportunity.

And what an opportunity we have. It's wonderful, actually. Because some of these, not all, by any means, but some of the Muslims that come to us are yanked out of their traditional families and societies and cultures.

And some of them become much more open to Christian things when they're away from home. Particularly the Iranians. It's wonderful to see Iranian churches popping up in London.

With Muslims turning to the Lord in relatively large numbers. It's lovely to see some Arabs turning to the Lord in this country. People who would never get the opportunity of the Gospel if they were back in their own country.

And yet here, they can hear, and they can receive. With relative ease. Tremendous opportunities.

I hope my sisters and my brothers and you're taking these opportunities. Taking the opportunities and befriending Muslims. Getting to know them.

Visiting them. Being visited. Visiting.

Sharing. Sharing your faith. Listening to their faith.

Discussing together. Just talking and sharing and becoming friends. Lending Christian literature and New Testaments or whatever.

Wonderful opportunities. If you have your eyes open, the opportunity is here. Some, particularly second and third generation Muslims in Britain, who have been educated in English schools.

Who know English well, unlike their parents or their grandparents. Who've begun to think with a little bit of a sort of English thought pattern. Some of those become open to the Christian faith.

If they've not encountered racialism. And so you can divide the second generation, third generation in this country. Between those who have encountered the bitterness of racialism and become bitterly anti-white and with anti-white, anti-Christian.

Who become angry and become very much a ghetto community. Don't want to know these racist whites. And may I say there's far too much of that racialism in the church.

Let alone outside. Prejudice. Paternalism.

These little people. Obviously not educated. Obviously inferior.

Not quite up to standard. Racism. Prejudice and paternalism.

And that angers and causes people to be anti-Christian. But there are others who have not encountered racism. In fact some have even encountered just the reverse.

They've encountered warm-hearted love, friendship, generosity. Open homes that invite them in. And those who become very open to the Christian faith.

Tremendous opportunity as well as challenge. Well of course it isn't only Muslims coming to us. It's also us going to them.

It's very interesting actually to ask this evening. How many of you have ever visited a Muslim country on business or for a holiday or something? Give me a thumbs up if you've been to North Africa. Just have a good look around my friends.

Now I can't work out the percentage. OK thank you very much. I'm sorry to embarrass you.

It's a terrible sort of primary school stuff isn't it I know. But notice that. How significant that in this ordinary group of ordinary Christians such a large number have actually been in Muslim countries either on business or for holidays.

That's significant isn't it. Now I won't embarrass you by asking what you did there. Whether you forgot that you were a Christian or whether you remembered.

Did you do anything? I was very much struck by something that one of the leading Christians in Tunisia said to me three years ago now. When I was in Tunisia. Tunisia is a country of seven and a half million people.

A lot of Tunisian people as opposed to others who happen to be in the country, Italians, French etc. But of Tunisians how many Christians would you expect there to be in Tunisia? Well I won't ask you to guess. Actually around 30.

When I was there there were 27. I think there's probably around 30 now. Praise the Lord for growth.

And now if you just look around you. 30? Well 30 is our school isn't it, our church. 30 is peanuts, it's honey.

And yet that's all there is in that total nation of seven and a half million people. Surrounded by a sea of Islam. With tremendous Islamic pressure upon them.

Tremendous pressure. Now the leader, he said to me, he wished for tourists who happen to be Christian would do things that they can't do. Namely, speak to people about Christ.

Bring Christian literature and give it away. You stay in a hotel. Give a New Testament in French or Arabic to the girl who cleans your room.

Not in place of the tip, but on top of the tip. Just so that the gospel is popular. Particularly in your last day in the country, go and buy some postcards.

And when you pay for the postcards leave a New Testament or a gospel with the person. When you go by taxi, which you probably will do because they always put the tourist hotels right out of town so you have to go by taxi if you're going anywhere. They don't want tourists mixing with ordinary people.

They certainly don't want ordinary people mixing with tourists. So you will take a taxi probably in and out of the main town. When you do, pay your taxi and give them a gospel or a New Testament or something like that.

Particularly, as I say, on your last day. Police can't do much about it. And quite seriously, this is a marvellous opportunity.

Take it. You are Christians, not just tourists. When you go on business, you'll almost certainly be invited by top business people for meals out.

It is Arab culture to give an honorary gift when you're invited to a meal. So get a nice Arabic or French New Testament or if you're English speaking, you can even do an English one. Wrap it up nicely in gift wrap and give it as an honorary present.

And say, I hope you would be willing to receive a copy of my holy book. And they can hardly say no. And really, this is a marvellous opportunity.

And I'm not just preaching, I've done it. And it goes over well, let me assure you. So use your opportunities.

There are wonderful opportunities today, not only for casual visitors like tourists and business people, but also for longer term. What nowadays we call tent makers. Complete misuse of the word, but never mind, you'll know what it means.

Tent makers. People who go in their professions to other countries, but with a gospel purpose. To bring the good news of Jesus Christ into those countries.

And there are tremendous opportunities today. In North America, in the Middle East, in Soviet Central Asia, all over the place. Wonderful.

I have been challenged by seeing some of the tent makers that I've met in some of these countries. Just seeing a sense of initiative. Multitudes, of course, using their God-given gift that everybody here this evening has got.

Or almost everybody here this evening. I believe that all of us have different gifts in some sense, but there is one gift that virtually everybody in the church here tonight has got. And that is, virtually all of you speak English.

What a gift. What a gift. Use it.

All over the world, I can't imagine why. But all over the world, people want to learn English. And there are tremendous opportunities to go and teach English.

All over the place. So why not? God's given you a gift. Use it.

Why don't you take early retirement? Well, you'd better take early retirement than get sacked. So why don't you leave while the game's good? And go overseas and use your skills, whatever they may be, whether they're teaching English or whether in your particular profession, in order to bring something of Jesus Christ into the needy Muslim areas of North Africa, Middle East, etc. Tremendous opportunities.

Well, I was instigated just this last summer to meet one person who'd set up a little factory where a whole lot of women were making carpets, local industry. And he was helping them to make better carpets. And then he was selling those carpets across into Europe.

And so it was an export business. You can see these are their natural opportunities to relate to the people in his business, making the carpets and their families and so on. Great.

Somebody who was in commerce and had set up an English bookshop next to a local university. And he'd got all sorts of English classics and grammar books and all that sort of boring stuff. And with it he'd got a little bit of Christian literature and Bibles and so on.

And that was going out among local students and others. Great opportunity. And may I say he was making a mint of money out of it.

Just to encourage you. Mission can be paid. I found somebody who was an amateur photographer and had managed to sell his photography skills to a local firm that was writing a tour guide for that area of North Africa.

And his photos were going to be used in the tour guide. So he had the opportunity of travelling all around the area taking photos. And he had also got a contract for providing photos for making local tourist postcards.

Great. He wasn't a professional photographer. He was an amateur.

But he was good enough to get the contract anyway. Probably not much competition. Actually I saw his photos.

I didn't think they were awfully marvellous. But anyway they seemed to do the job so that's okay. The opportunity for those who've got their eyes open and are willing to adventure for Christ.

Yes, the world of Islam is in some ways a threat. But there are tremendous opportunities today. Let's take them.

I'm looking forward on Tuesday to leaving this country. Just for a short while. And going to the Soviet Union.

I'm a Muslim part of the Soviet Union. It's amazing. Ten years ago that was almost a closed area.

And the thought of Europeans going into Soviet Central Asia with the Gospel of Christ was a pipe dream. Today, oh it's a threat. It's a threat that area.

Because of the whole population of the Soviet Union, which is about 250 million, 60 million are Muslim. And there's every possibility that they will blow the Soviet Union apart. And cause the whole of the Soviet Union to disintegrate.

It's very possible. It's very possible that that 60 million will join with Iraq and Iran and other areas in the Middle East against Europe. And of course against the Christian faith.

Very possible. The threat is there. But meanwhile the opportunity is also there.

I find it exciting that now from all nations we have all the students residents working in places like Tashkent and Almaty and Kashgar and these sort of places. I never thought that students I trained would be working there. And I praise the Lord it's great.

Opportunities today that were not there just five years ago. Wonderful. Let's pray for them and let's use these opportunities.

As God gives us grace. Well, Asia and Africa too. Islam is on the march.

Islam is advancing. No doubt about that. It's growing.

But so is Christianity. And more and more the churches and the mosques are confronting each other and meeting each other. For many decades.

For a hundred years and more. The Christians in Africa have been evangelizing the tribal religions. And winning animists or tribal traditional religious people to the Christian church.

Muslims have also been witnessing and sharing their faith with these animistic tribal religious people. So that the tribal religions, the animistic people have been so to speak a buffer state between mosque and church. But today that buffer state is almost worn out.

And most, not all, but a high proportion have become nominally at least either Christian or Muslim. And more and more today the two great religions confront each other. An opportunity of peace.

An opportunity of learning from each other and living in mutual harmony etc. But frankly it doesn't seem to work that way generally. It's more of a threat than an opportunity in terms of harmony.

But it is an opportunity from a Christian perspective to share the Christian faith with our Muslim friends. In a way that is relevant. In a way that is true.

But it does mean we have really to know our Islam. And we've got to begin to know our Islam. Not just from a Western perspective.

But to see Islam through Muslim eyes. Well, I remember a Muslim leader in one of the Middle Eastern countries, it had better remain nameless. He had read a little book that I've written called Islam, Christian Witness.

And to my embarrassment, he phoned me when I was visiting his country. And I thought, whoops, I'm in trouble. He was the leading Qadi, the leading Muslim judge in the whole country.

Representing Islam on television etc. etc. A very top man.

The top Muslim in the country in fact. And he phoned saying he read this book. Oh dear, I'm in trouble.

I'll get thrown out. And then to my surprise, he said, would it be alright if you came round and visited me? And I thought, uh-huh, that's alright then. If he'd been angry, he'd have asked me to visit him.

But the fact that he was visiting me was a good sign, so I felt a little bit better. And I said, yes of course. Right.

And he came round and he said, well he said, of course I don't agree with Christian stuff. But he said, I wanted to meet you because this book walks in our sandals. I've never forgotten that expression.

Never mind the book now. I've never forgotten that expression. It's so important.

For our witness. For our witness with British people. Ethnic English.

Let alone our Muslim British or others. Let alone overseas. That we learn to see things through their eyes.

What a challenge. And what an enriching opportunity. To see the world through other people's eyes.

To see God and religion through other people's eyes. So that we begin to walk in their sandals. And when we do that, then the message of Jesus Christ has an opportunity to come home relevantly and attractively, indeed delightfully.

Well, we have ten minutes or so for questions if you'd like to. On any subject related to Islam. I'm glad we haven't got cameras.

It's a lot of language. Who'd like to start? Yes, the lady at the back. How can we understand? Yes, now there's a whole lot of courses run by all sorts of different people that can help you.

Actually, let me do some advertising. We actually at All Nations run a short residential course in Islamic studies and Islamic mission every December. And I've got some leaflets on the table, you know, in place where we'll get our coffee afterwards.

So help yourself to those if they are useful to you. But you need also to have done some reading. And the more you read on Islam, the better.

Including the Quran itself. But then particularly, I would say, get to know a Muslim or two. And begin to share with them and talk with them.

But ask them questions. Don't you do all the talking. You know, Ian Forster, the novelist, talked about poor little talkative Christianity.

There's a danger that sometimes we as Christians do all the talking instead of listening. So when you're with your Muslim friends, or friend, ask them, you know, how do you view God? What do you think a Muslim God is like? You know, I'm ignorant, please excuse me. What do you actually feel about the Quran? What do you feel about prayer? How do you practice prayer? What does it mean to you? When your auntie dies, what do you think about eternal life? The judgment.

You know, how does all that work in Islam? That sort of question. Ask, you know, about their relationships with their parents and the wider family and so on. So you begin to get into the social views of Islam.

Ask them if they're British Muslims, you know, British citizens who are Muslims, British Muslims. Ask them, how do you feel about being British and living in this country? What difficulties do Muslims face in this country? What do you feel when you see on the television some of the sort of movements of fundamentalism and some of the fanaticism as it seems to us? What do you feel about Salman Rushdie and all that? Just get them talking. And the more they talk, the more you learn.

Not only the things they say, but the way they say it. Okay, next question. This is the fact that Muslims never believe in God in Islam.

This is the fact that people never find that they believe that they will never find God on this side, only in the next. There are different sorts of Muslims. The mystical Muslims, known as the Sufis, they believe very much in knowing God personally, in a very intimate personal relationship with God, in a mystical way.

The orthodox Muslims, in theory, believe that you cannot know God even in eternity. And yet there are actually one or two Quranic verses that seem to suggest that you will know God in eternity. But the aim in orthodox Islam is more to be submitting to Allah, to obey Allah, to worship Allah, to follow Allah, but not particularly to love Allah or to be loved by Him.

It's not that intimacy of relationship. So it's interesting, for example, whereas for us revelation is revelation of God Himself. For the Muslim, revelation is often said to be like a signpost, which tells you how to walk, where to go.

And so it's showing you the will of God, not so much God Himself. Nevertheless, many Muslims, particularly those in Britain that have been influenced by the sort of atmosphere of Britain, with its somewhat Christian atmosphere, at least religiously, they will often talk about knowing God and relating to Him. Next.

Do they believe in the resurrection? They believe in the resurrection, yes. The resurrection of the body and the spirit. So the full resurrection.

We shall be resurrected in Islam. And they believe that Jesus rose to the seventh heaven. Not from the dead, because He didn't die.

They say. They deny the crucifixion. But they believe that Jesus was raised by God into the heavenlies, and that Jesus will return at the end of history, to judge and to prepare the world for the kingdom of Muhammad.

And just incidentally, He will destroy all thieves and all judges. Yeah, go ahead. It's not true.

In some commentators that there is, in the Arabic, an allowance for the interpretation that Christ was actually resurrected and dead God. Resurrected, yes. Dying, no.

There is a lot of foreknowledge that some of the Arabic versions... Not for the dead. Yeah. It was actually spoken, but in the chat, a couple of people have disagreed with it.

We're thinking of the third caliph who gathered the whole Quran together and formed it as it now is. No, you'll find no notes in the Quran, and none of the official Quranic commentators who would allow the death of Jesus. Now, the one possible exception to that is the heretical sect of the Ahmadiis, the Ahmadiyas and the Woking Mosque.

They believe that Jesus was crucified but didn't die on the cross, but swooned and then walked to Kashmir and lived in Srinagar until he was 120, and he died, not crucified, but died in Srinagar. And many of their books have photos of his grave there, which proves it's true. Yes.

Our concept of God and the Muslim concept of Allah, is there a difference? Yes. If you're going for comparative religion, you could sort of draw two parallel lists of the attributes of God, the characteristics of

God, and you could say, in Christianity, God is holy, powerful, all-knowing, all-seeing, you know, etc. etc.

Good. And you could draw up a very similar list for Allah in Islam. And so you could say, oh look, there's an action in correspondence, same thing.

But in practice, no. More a question of emphasis, and I often call it the hierarchy of attributes. Which attribute is more important than another? In Christianity, just to start where we understand, in Christianity, the holiness of God is more important than the power of God.

So we are happy to say as Christians, that God limits his power to fit his holiness. And therefore he cannot do what is evil, must keep his word, must do what is good, cannot do anything else than that. Yes? And the whole purpose of faith actually is dependent on that reality.

Yes? That God is honest, good, trustworthy, and limits his power upon him. In Islam, the power of God is actually greater, more important, than the holiness of God, which is in Islam, but it's secondary. So that God can do what he likes.

And, you know, if he wants to send a good person to hell, and a bad person to heaven, he can do as he wills. And, you know, if he wants to deceive people, or he wants to do what is bad, no problem. Now Christians struggle in our Bibles, with the interpretation of words like, you know, God hardened Pharaoh's heart, or God sent a lying spirit upon certain people.

And we immediately begin to flannel about that, and say, well of course second course it is, you know. Because God cannot do what is evil. Now that sort of verse, also in the Quran, there is no problem to a Muslim whatsoever.

Yes? So there is no flanneling on that sort of verse, because he doesn't see why he shouldn't. It's perfectly natural, if God wants to do evil, he does evil, if he wants to do good, he does good. And it is actually, there is a list of 17 major sins in Islam, and one of them is to presume the mercy of God.

Christian assurance. Now another one is to doubt the mercy of God. So both of them are major sins.

So in fact every Muslim has got to be a good Englishman, you know. Problem would be okay, don't you think? After all, God is good isn't he? And I'm not so bad, am I? But God won't doubt it. Not presuming, but not doubting.

Both Islam and Christianity are very much based in historical events. How important for a modern Muslim are the events of Mecca and Medina, or are they still? It's not just a philosophy, not just... No, they are exceedingly important, because those were the, I'm going to use words that Muslims use, those were the ideal days, and therefore the whole of the practice of Islam is not just in obedience to the word, it is that too, but it's also in emulation and copying that which was done by Muhammad and by the family of Muhammad and by the companions of Muhammad and the friends of Muhammad. And those are in the traditions of Islam and they carry tremendous authority.

So what was laid down by, not only by the words, but also by the example of Muhammad but also what was laid down by the words and example of what are called the four rightly guided ones, the first four Caliphs, who came, who ruled Islam after Muhammad. Those are quite authoritative. Those are the basis of what we now call the Hadith and also the Shari'ah, the law of Islam.

All right, just in closing, if I may just mention the books. You will find that there is a large STL bookstall there, so do use that. And, you know, they've given us a wonderful service in that and we're grateful for it.

And I've put just a few books on Islam, plus some of the books that my wife and I have written. And may I say that the ones that my wife and I have written, we get in large quantities from the publishers and would love to therefore to give you a bit of a discount, because we get a discount. My wife has written her life story, *God Can Be Trusted*, starting in a Japanese prison camp in China, her youth experience.

And then the second half deals particularly with our experiences in Indonesia, the one country in the world where Muslims turn to Christ in very large numbers. In fact, there are more Muslims converted every year in Indonesia than there are in all the rest of the world put together. So you might enjoy that.

It's just a nice bedtime reading. If I could mention Islam and Christian Witness again, do get hold of that. There are plenty of copies and it's also on special offer, so make use of it.

I suppose the burning issue, theologically but also in our everyday witness today, is the whole question of the relationship of the Christian faith to other faiths. What's so special about Christianity? Why should I believe in Christ rather than Krishna? Is Jesus unique? If so, how? Is there salvation through Islam? That sort of question, or Hinduism or whatever. And there's a little book of mine called *What About Other Faiths?* Also on special offer.

And plenty of copies of that too, so do make use of that. Thank you very much. Copyright © 2020 Mooji Media Ltd.

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