

Sermon Questions: Islam

Genesis 21:9-20

1. Pastor Mark tells the story of a fundamentalist Christian Pastor named Terry Jones, who declared September 11, 2010 to be “International Burn a Koran Day.” Why do you think some people have such a strong dislike for Islam and the Islamic Holy Book?
2. Why do you think Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, and is likely to overtake Christianity as the largest religion in the world within the next 30-40 years?
3. In 1970, the number of Muslims in America was just under 100,000. Today that number is 3.3 Million. In what ways do you think America should accommodate the religious practices of Islam? In what ways should we not accommodate?
4. Many people say that Islam and Christianity worship the same God. Pastor Mark points out that the Allah of Muhammad is a strict and distant God, while the “Abba” of Jesus is a gracious and loving God (“Abba” is the Hebrew word for “Father.” Muslims refuse to think of God as a loving Heavenly Father). How do we Christians balance the holiness and righteousness of God with the compassion and grace of God?
5. Muslims believe that their Holy Book, the Koran, contains the directly dictated words of God. Christians believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God. What do you think is the difference between how Muslims view the Koran and Christians view the Bible?
6. What are your impressions of Sharia Law? Pastor Mark mentioned some of the oppressive and harsh restrictions and punishments imposed by Sharia Law. Women are especially oppressed through Sharia Law. How do we manage the tension between religious beliefs that treat women as less than men, and our modern western understanding of equality between genders?

7. Muslims criticize Western Democracies (especially the USA) as being sinful and decadent. In what ways might they be correct? Do you believe that American culture has become more sinful and decadent over the last 100 years? If not, why not. If so, what are the causes?
8. The Muslim idea of Jihad can be taken to mean “inner struggle,” dealing with the need to overcome personal sin and unhealthy desires of the heart. It can also mean “Jihad of the sword” and refer to the need to kill and destroy “infidels” who do not submit to the Islamic faith and Sharia Law. In what ways is the “inner struggle” consistent with our Christian Faith? In what ways is the “Jihad of the sword” inconsistent with our Christian Faith?
9. How do Muslims view Jesus? How do Christians view Muhammad?
10. Why do you think the Islamic view of Heaven is one where Men enjoy lots of physical pleasure, especially with attractive young women? How is this different from the Christian view of Heaven?
11. Pastor Mark points out that Islam is an attempt to earn God’s favor and receive Heaven as a reward, while Christianity is a desire to respond to God’s grace and be an instrument of His love in the world. Heaven is a free gift we receive, not a reward we earn. Why is this an important distinction?