THE HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF ISLAM

The Dramatic Growth of Islam
There is a people—as yet nearly unreached with the Gospel—who are very aware of God, and whom God loves. From various races, they represent one out of every five people on earth. They are Muslim, and their faith is Islam; their God is Allah; their holy book, the Qur’an (Koran); their prophet Mohammed.

Their religion is the fastest growing in the world. They stretch from the Middle East to Malaysia and from Africa to Central Asia. Muslims number approximately 1 billion. It is estimated that by the year 2020 the Muslim world population will have doubled to 1.9 billion, or one in every four.

Islam began in Arabia and spread quickly through North Africa, into Western Europe, and east to the borders of India. In the 1860’s the first Muslims to immigrate to the US were mostly from Syria and Lebanon.

North America
According to 1989 estimates, Muslims number about 400,000 in Canada and probably 5 million in the US. Thousands of Islamic centers and mosques are spreading throughout the world, with more than 500 in Canada, and 1,000 established in various places throughout the US.

Since 1985 Muslims have begun to launch open and carefully planned strategies for North American missionary outreach. Tremendous Mideast wealth supports their activity. In 1989 there were 8,000 visa applications to the US by Muslim missionaries. Islam is a missionary faith, a fact of which we can no longer be unaware.

Islam reaches every nation on earth. Of the total Muslim world population more than half (68%) live in Asia, 25% in Africa. There are 25 million Muslims in Europe. Indonesia is the nation with the largest Muslim population. And in most nations where Muslims are predominate, they make up as high as 90 to 100 % of the national population.

⇒ Taken from “The Muslim World: Mine Field or Mission Field?” by Open Doors with Brother Andrew, p.3-4.

Quick Facts
• The founder of Islam is Mohammed the prophet, born in Ubu’l-Kassim in Mecca, A.D. 570. He died in Medina, A.D. 632 in the arms of his favorite wife Aisha.

• The word Islam means “surrender” or “submission” to the will of Allah. Muslim (or Moslem) is related to this word, and it means “one who submits.”

• Muslim symbols are a crescent moon and star.

• 2 billion people suffer ongoing poverty and hardship, many of whom are Muslims. 75% of the world’s refugees come from Muslim nations.
ISLAMIC TEACHING

Part 1

The Five Pillars (The Muslim’s submission to Allah is demonstrated before his fellow men by five religious duties):

1. Confession of FAITH: Confession of faith in Allah and Mohammed as his messenger. This creed is declared every time the Muslim prays. If you are not already born into a Muslim family, reciting the confession is the way you become a Muslim.

2. Daily ritual PRAYER: Five times a day (at dawn, midday, mid-afternoon, sunset, and evening) Muslims face toward Mecca and go through very formal ritual movements and prayers. Ritual washing goes before the prayer. On Fridays they pray at least one of those times (usually at noon) at the mosque, and there the ritual washing is more complete. At these communal prayers, the Muslim slips off his shoes, unrolls his prayer mat and, sitting closely together with those on either side, goes through seven different procedures in a prescribed manner.

3. The FAST: During the entire month of Ramadan, Muslims refrain from food, water, tobacco, and sexual relations between sunrise and sunset every day.

4. ALMSGIVING: This involves detailed regulations about how much—usually 2.5%—to give to the poor, and it is based on what is owned, not just what is earned.

5. PILGRIMAGE: Traveling to the Muslim’s holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, is required at least once in a the lifetime of a Muslim unless poor health or poverty prevents it. In that case, someone may go in his place. The pilgrimage was a pagan custom of the Arab’s before Mohammed’s time, which he allowed to remain and incorporated into the Islamic rituals. Only Muslims are allowed to enter the sacred area five miles around the ka’bah—a square, stone structure in Mecca, which is said to be built by Abraham. They put on special clothing, observe certain regulations, and repeat, “Here I am at your service, O Lord.” After walking around the ka’bah seven times, they kiss the black meteorite stone at its center. Seven days in Mecca are followed by three days of celebration.

Articles of Faith (Islam’s five basic doctrines):

1. One God (the Arabic word for God is Allah): Allah is sovereign, the creator, and personally unknowable. The word probably came from al illah, which means “the God.” So extreme is the monotheism of Islam that the greatest and most unpardonable sin is shirk—associating Allah with anything created. The only true way to define Allah is by the via negativa (negative way), i.e., by eliminating all the things that Allah is not. Also, metaphor or analogy may be used sparingly in describing Allah, e.g. “the merciful” or “the compassionate.” This is the most important of doctrines.

2. Angels: Allah created angels to worship him and for use as messengers. Islam has an elaborate system of angles and demons that lends itself to a practical polytheism among the masses, who tend to treat these beings as deities.

3. Holy books: There are four inspired books: The Torah (the first five books of the OT, or God’s revelation to Moses); the Psalms of David; the Gospels of Jesus; and the final revelation, the Qur’an, to Mohammed. Because Islam recognizes these three, Jews and Christians are regarded as “people of a book.” Nevertheless, Muslims believe that the earlier revelations are in corrupted form and the Koran
supersedes them. The Koran is held to be as eternal as Allah. It was simply dictated to Mohammed by
Gabriel over a period of years. On an interesting note, Mohammed’s revelations were accompanied by
violent fits and foaming at the mouth. From a NT perspective, they appear to have been demonic in
origin.

4. Messengers and prophets: Muslims recognize many prophets (some place the number at over
100,000) who came to teach and guide, including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, Moses,
David, Solomon, John the Baptist and Jesus. The Koran mentions 28 of these, most of who are found in
the Old and New Testament. Many of their prophets are said to have been messengers, bringing a book
from God for a particular people. Mohammed is regarded as being God’s final prophet, bringing God’s
revelation first to the Arabs and eventually to the world.

5. The Last Day (Day of Judgment and Resurrection): This is when all will be raised to life and
judged for their deeds. A Muslim will go to paradise if his good deeds outweigh his evil deeds. If they
do not, he will go to hell, either permanently or temporarily. The Muslim has no real assurance of going
to heaven, unless he should die in a holy war (jihad).

(6) God’s decrees: This is not considered one of the original articles of faith. These decrees cover
everything good and evil. The Muslim considers his life to be written; often he declares, “If Allah wills . . .
.” This doctrine was added after Mohammed died.

⇒ The above information was compiled from multiple sources
ISLAM vs. CHRISTIANITY

Areas of Agreement Between Islam and Christianity

- **God:** There is one God who is creator and sustainer of the universe. He is infinite, all-knowing, all-powerful and the sovereign judge.

- **Jesus:** Jesus was without sin.

- **The Bible:** The writings of Moses and the OT prophets, and the NT Gospels are divinely inspired.

- **Judgment:** God will judge all men. Some will spend eternity in the presence of God, in heaven, all others will spend eternity separated from God, in hell.

Areas of Disagreement Between Islam and Christianity

- **God:** Muslims believe God is unknowable and one. Christians believe God can be known personally through Jesus Christ. Though He is One, He exists in three distinct Persons—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- **Jesus:** Muslims believe Jesus was a messenger but not the Son of God. For them it is unforgivable to associate anyone or anything with Allah. They say God could never become man, and Jesus did not die on a cross. It is believed that prior to the crucifixion, God changed the features of Jesus so that He was unrecognizable to His enemies. Then Allah raised Him to heaven so that He could not be seized. Approved Muslim commentaries say that Judas, the betrayer of Christ, was actually the one who was crucified after his own appearance was so disguised that even Mary and the disciples were deceived.

- **The Bible:** Muslims believe the Bible has been corrupted over the centuries and contains many inaccuracies. They believe the Qur’an is God’s final revelation and supersedes all other Scriptures.

- **Salvation:** Muslims believe that on the day of judgment, God will weigh each man’s good deeds against his bad deeds. He can never be sure whether he will reach paradise. Most expect to spend some time in hell being punished for their sins. Islam is a religion of works, not grace. It is interesting to note that unlike the God of the Bible, Allah has done nothing for man that cost him anything. Islam makes no real provision for sin. One’s salvation is never certain since it is based on a works system and on complete surrender to the will of Allah. This religion rejects the biblical teaching of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, though it concedes that He was a sinless prophet. Mohammed did not rise from the dead, and there is no basis for a resurrection in Islam.

Quotes

“Run, run the law commands, but gives me neither feet nor hands; ‘tis better news the gospel brings: It bids me to fly; it gives me wings.”

---John Bunyan

“One might better try to sail the Atlantic in a paper boat than to get to heaven by good works.”

---Charles Haddon Spurgeon
THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- Muslims think that the Bible has been corrupted and no longer reliable, or is superseded by the Qur’an.

- According to Islam, it is an unpardonable sin to say Jesus is the Son of God. While referring to Jesus 97 times, the Koran forbids worshipping Jesus as God.

- Jesus was not crucified on the cross, but He was taken up to Allah and someone else died in His place.

- Muslims think that Christians believe in three gods (God, Mary and Jesus). God and Mary supposedly cohabited and had a son. Mohammed learned this from a heretical Christian teaching he encountered during his life.

- Muslims believe that they are born sinless. Sin is not evil in itself, but isolated acts of wrongs. Atonement for sin is not possible.

- Christians must focus on the problem of sin, contrasting what the God of the Bible has done about it with what Allah has not done.

- Islam is marked by sectarian differences with differing concepts of God. Questions must be asked to determine what particular views a Muslim holds.

- Islam is a rapidly spreading religion for several reasons. It is the state religion of Moslem countries and this gives it a strong cultural and political base. It has the appeal of a universal message because of its simple creed and tenets. Anyone can enter the Ummah, the community of faithful Muslims. There are no racial barriers. Thus it spreads quickly among black communities of Africa and more recently, of America. Its five doctrines and five pillars can be easily communicated. In the West it is making appeals to the universal brotherhood of man, world peace, temperance, and the uplifting of women.

- Islam is externalistic. A Muslim has no vital personal relationship with God. Prayers and worship lack spontaneity or individuality because everything is codified.

- Mohammed’s life contrasts greatly with the life of Christ. Mohammed spent his last ten years in almost constant warfare. He treated the Jews in Medina cruelly. He violated the law of the desert by plundering the caravan to Mecca even during the months of pilgrimages. Because of his many wives (which exceeded the accepted limit of four), his household was filled with conflict and strife.

- In Moslem countries women have few rights. A man can easily secure a divorce, but a woman cannot. Though Islam condemns such things as stealing, lying, gambling, and drinking, these things have reached epidemic proportions in Moslem countries.

⇒ Taken from “The Muslim World: Mine Field or Mission Field?” by Open Doors with Brother Andrew, pp.10-11 and “Cults, World Religions, and the Occult” by Dr. Ken Boa.
SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH MUSLIMS

1. Use the Word of God.

2. Be constantly in prayer.

3. Be a genuine friend, showing genuine love for them.

4. Ask thought provoking questions:
   A. Do you ever think about God? What is he like?  
   B. Do you know God personally?  
   C. If you were to die today, would you be sure of going to heaven?  
   D. What can you do about your sins?  
   E. What has Mohammed done for you?  
   F. What does your religion teach?  
   G. How are you saved from hell?  
   H. Where do you worship?  
   I. How do you worship?  
   J. What do you believe about Jesus?  
   K. What do you think about Christians?

5. Listen attentively.

6. Present your beliefs openly.

7. Never denigrate Mohammed or the Qur’an.

8. Respect their customs and sensitivities.

⇒ Taken from “The Muslim World: Mine Field or Mission Field?” by Open Doors with Brother Andrew, p.12