A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF ISLAM
INTRODUCTION

1 Peter 3:15 — Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.
“Islam” means “submission.” Those who submit to Allah are called “Muslims.”

Muslims regard Muhammad as the last prophet, after prophets like Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.

The revelations that Muhammad claimed to receive are recorded in the Qur’an—the Muslim holy book.
Medieval depiction of Muhammad receiving revelation from the angel Gabriel
The Kaaba in Mecca
The Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem

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Depiction of Muhammad speaking to Abraham, Moses, and Jesus
HISTORY OF ISLAM

• In 619, Muhammad’s first wife and uncle Abu Talib both died. This is known as the “year of sorrow.”

• In 622, he and his followers were forced to flee Mecca. They found shelter in the city of Medina.
Muhammad’s forces conquer Mecca
Muhammad preaching his farewell sermon
The Spread of Islam from 632–750
The Crusades (1095–1290)
Muhammad was succeeded by Abu Bakr, then by Umar ibn al-Khattab, then by Uthman ibn al-Khattab, and then by his son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib.

Those Muslims who recognize the legitimacy of all four of these leaders (“the rightly-guided caliphs”) are known as Sunni Muslims. Those who only recognize the leadership of Ali are known as Shia Muslims.
CONCENTRATION OF MUSLIM GROUPS AROUND THE WORLD TODAY

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A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF ISLAM
How does the Bible distinguish between true and false prophets?
TESTING PROPHETS

Biblical Tests

- **Doctrinal Orthodoxy** – God’s true prophets proclaim doctrines that are right and true.

- **Moral Integrity** – God’s true prophets are characterized by personal holiness.

- **Revelatory Accuracy** – God’s true prophets declare divine revelation with 100% accuracy.
TESTING PROPHETS

Doctrinal Orthodoxy

The revelation declared by a true prophet will always align perfectly with sound doctrine (with what has been previously revealed).

Conversely, any self-proclaimed prophet who deceives people by leading them into theological error is a false prophet.
Deut. 13:1–5: If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, “Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,” you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.
But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the Lord your God. . . to seduce you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you.
2 Peter 2:1: But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.
MORAL INTEGRITY

Though not perfect, a true prophet is required to live according to God’s standard. In Scripture, the Lord spoke through holy men who were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, any self-proclaimed prophet who lives in unrestrained lust and greed shows himself to be a false prophet.
MORAL INTEGRITY

Jeremiah 23:14–16: Also among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: The committing of adultery and walking in falsehood; And they strengthen the hands of evildoers, So that no one has turned back from his wickedness. . . .
Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; They speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the Lord.”
MORAL INTEGRITY

False prophets are known by the fruits of their life (Matt. 7:20).

2 Peter 2:2–3: Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.
REVEALATORY ACCURACY

When a true prophet speaks about future events or other unknown things, he speaks with 100% accuracy.

Conversely, if someone claims to receive new revelation from God, but that revelation is shown to be factually untrue, the Bible categorizes that person as a false prophet.
Deut. 18:20–22: “The prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. You may say in your heart, ‘How will we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’ “When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.”
REVELATORY ACCURACY

Ezek. 13:3–9: Thus says the Lord God, “Woe to the foolish prophets who are following their own spirit and have seen nothing. . . . They see falsehood and lying divination who are saying, ‘The Lord declares,’ when the Lord has not sent them; yet they hope for the fulfillment of their word. Did you not see a false vision and speak a lying divination when you said, ‘The Lord declares,’ but it is not I who have spoken?’
(cont.) Therefore, thus says the Lord God, “Because you have spoken falsehood and seen a lie, therefore behold, I am against you,” declares the Lord God. “So My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will have no place in the council of My people, . . . that you may know that I am the Lord God.”
Key Question:

How does Muhammad measure up to the biblical tests for those who claim to be true prophets from God?
TESTING PROPHETS

- **Moral Integrity** – God’s true prophets are characterized by personal holiness.

- **Revelatory Accuracy** – God’s true prophets declare divine revelation with 100% accuracy.

- **Doctrinal Orthodoxy** – God’s true prophets proclaim doctrines that are right and true.
THE MORAL TEST

- Muhammad’s life does not meet the biblical qualifications for God’s spokesmen (cf. 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1).

- Even by the standard presented in the Qur’an, Muhammad’s life calls his claims into question.

- For example, he had more than four wives (the limit in the Qur’an), and even married his own daughter-in-law (though the Qur’an forbids adultery).
THE ACCURACY TEST

• But what about revelatory accuracy?

• In terms of predictive prophecy, there is no solid evidence that Muhammad claimed the ability to predict the future.

• However, there is at least one important incident that calls Muhammad’s accuracy into question.
Robert Spencer: The Satanic verses incident has naturally caused Muslims acute embarrassment for centuries. Indeed, it casts a shadow over the veracity of Muhammad’s entire claim to be a prophet. After all, if Satan could put words into Muhammad’s mouth once, and make him think they were revelations from Allah, who is to say that Satan did not use Muhammad as his mouthpiece on other occasions?

(The Truth about Muhammad, 82)
THE DOCTRINAL TEST

• The Christian’s primary objection to Islam is at the doctrinal level.

• Muhammad claimed that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures were from God.

• The question that arises, then, is whether or not his new revelation was consistent with what God had previously revealed through the prophets and through Jesus?
A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF ISLAMIC DOCTRINE
BIBLICAL EVALUATION

• Muhammad claimed to be in line with earlier prophets, such as Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.

• The Qur’an states that the writings of the OT prophets, and the gospel of Jesus should be regarded as true revelation from God.

• Yet, when compared to what Scripture teaches, the teachings of Islam fail to measure up.
At a basic level, at least three tests might be applied:

1. What does Islam teach about the worship of God (in spirit and truth)?
2. What does Islam teach about the Word of God (in Scripture)?
3. What does Islam teach about the work of God (in salvation)?
ISLAM &

THE WORSHIP OF GOD
ISLAM’S VIEW OF GOD

1. The name “Allah” (meaning “the god”) was used by Arabian tribes before the time of Muhammad.

Allah was viewed as the supreme deity who created the world and brought rain.
2. The key doctrine in Islam is that of unipersonal monotheism.

Allah alone is viewed as God, without any partners or competitors.
3. In its insistence on unipersonal monotheism, Islam rejects the doctrine of the Trinity.

Anyone who believes in the Trinity is regarded as a polytheist, headed for eternal hell.
4. Consequently, Christians need to understand that the God of the Bible is not the same as Allah of the Qur’an.

Though Muslims refer to the one God of Abraham and Moses, their definition of God differs greatly from His self-revelation in both the Scripture and in His Son (cf. Heb. 1:1–2).
James White: For this reason we maintain, together with the thoughtful Muslim, that if worship is an act of truth, then Muslims and Christians are not worshipping the same object. We do not worship the same God.

(What Every Christian Should Know about the Qur’an, 72)
5. Islam regards Jesus as a good prophet, but does not view Him as divine.

Yushua Sadiq: In Islam, no prophet can be thought of as a divine being, because only Allah is divine. Thus, in Islam, Jesus cannot be considered a divine figure. Jesus is a great prophet, but not “the God,” “the Lord,” or “the son of God.” Muslims follow Jesus as long as what he said does not contradict the injunctions of the Qur'an. (An Insider’s Guide to Islam, 6)
6. Islam further denies that Jesus Christ died on the cross.

The Qur’an: They said, “We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, the Messenger of God.” In fact, they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them as if they did. Indeed, those who differ about him are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it, except the following of assumptions. Certainly, they did not kill him. (Sura 4:157)
7. Consequently, in Islam, Jesus is not viewed as the Mediator between God and man.

Jesus is viewed merely as a prophet of Allah.
ISLAM’S VIEW OF GOD

8. Though they deny His deity, Muslims believe that Jesus will one day return in judgment.

Islam teaches that Jesus will come back to restore Islam and destroy all non-Muslims, including Christians.
The Muslim view of Jesus Christ rejects both His deity and His atoning work on the cross.

Moreover, the Muslim view of God denies His Triune nature. Thus it does not fit with the way God has revealed Himself in the Bible.

Consequently, the Muslim view of God falls woefully short of biblical teaching.
ISLAM &
THE WORD
OF GOD
ISLAM & THE SCRIPTURES

1. Islam derives its beliefs from two sources of authority: the Qur’an and the *hadiths*.

The Qur’an and the *hadiths* serve as the basis for Muslim *Sharia* law.
2. As already noted, Muhammad initially claimed that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures came from God.

• The Qur’an teaches that previous revelation also came from God, including the writings of Moses (Sura 2:87; 3:3), David (4:163), and the gospel of Jesus (5:46–48).

• Elsewhere the Qur’an affirms these previous Scriptures (2:91; 3:14, 84; 4:47), asserting that God has protected his revelation in them (5:48; 18:28).
3. Yet the Qur’an clearly contradicts those Scriptures that it claims previously came from God.

- This is most clear in the Qur’anic rejection of the historical facts and theological tenets of the New Testament gospel of Jesus Christ.

- In response to these clear contradictions, Muslims claim that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures have been corrupted.
ISLAM & THE SCRIPTURES

4. In addition to contradicting the Bible, the Qur’an also contradicts itself in places.

• The Qur’an urges religious tolerance in one place (Sura 2:256) and then commands Muslims to fight and kill those who do not believe (9:29; 9:5).

• In another place (7:54 and 32:4), the Qur’an claims that the heavens and earth were made in six days. But in 41:9–12, it teaches that eight days were needed to create the universe.
5. The Qur’an contains historical errors.

- It claims that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was the daughter of Amram, making her the sister of Moses and Aaron (Sura 66:12)

- Haman is mentioned as the second-in-command under the Pharaoh of the exodus (Sura 28:38)

- It is purported that a Samaritan molded the golden calf (Sura 20:85–87, 95–97)
The Qur’an claims to build on previous revelation from God in the Bible.

In reality, it directly contradicts biblical revelation. Thus, it is unable to match the very standard it sets for itself.

Moreover, the errors and self-contradictions within the Qur’an expose the fact that it is not the perfect Word of God.
ISLAM & THE WORK OF GOD
ISLAM & SALVATION

1. The concept of substitutionary atonement (that we can be forgiven on the basis of Christ’s death on the cross) is completely absent from Islam.

In Islam there is no substitute to pay the penalty on behalf of sinners.
2. Consequently, salvation in Islam is based on being a good Muslim (e.g. on good works).

The Qur’an speaks of the scales of justice by which Allah will weigh the good from the bad (Sura 7:8, 9; 21:47; 23:101–103). He will save those whose good outweighs their bad.
3. The pillars of faith are supposed to help Muslims attain salvation.

1. **Profession of the Creed** – “There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet.”
2. **Worship** — ritual prayer that takes place 5 times per day, facing Mecca
3. **Almsgiving** — generosity extended to one’s own people
4. **Fasting** — during the month of Ramadan (fast during the day and eat at night)
5. **Pilgrimage** — travel to Mecca at least once in a lifetime

**NOTE:** A sixth duty is Jihad, or “struggle.”
4. Because it is a works-based system, there is no assurance of salvation.

R. C. Sproul and Abdul Saleeb: Islam is very emphatic that nobody will know his destiny until the day of judgment. . . . Because of this, many Muslims die in fear because they don't know. Many suspect that the balance of their scale is probably not going to be tipped in the right direction. *(The Dark Side of Islam, 63)*
ISLAM & SALVATION

• Such stands in direct contrast to the gospel of grace that is articulated in Scripture.

  The Bible teaches that we are saved by grace through faith apart from our good works. Our salvation is founded on the finished work of Christ on the cross.

• Moreover, those who have truly embraced Christ in saving faith can rest in God’s unfailing promise of eternal life.
HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS RESPOND?
1. Recognize that Islam represents a false religious system.

Muslims do not worship the same God as Christians do.

The Qur’an does not measure up to the perfect standard of Scripture.

Sinners cannot be saved by working hard to be a good Muslim.
A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

2. Remember that the Great Commission is a call to take the gospel to all people, including Muslims.

Rather than viewing Muslim people as our enemies, we ought to view them as the mission field.
A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

3. If you do not know anyone who embraces Islam, you can still be faithful to pray that the gospel would penetrate Muslim nations.

Specifically, pray for our missionaries who are serving in those parts of the world.
A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

4. If you do know someone who is Muslim, look for opportunities to tell them about the gospel.

Encourage them to read the Bible for themselves, especially the Gospel accounts.

In addition to talking to them about the truth, be sure to show them the love of Christ through your actions and friendship.
5. In explaining the gospel to Muslims, be sure to emphasize truths like:

- the love and unmerited favor of God
- the fact that sinners can be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ because of His sacrifice on the cross
- the assurance of salvation found in Him

These are concepts that are absent from Islam.
A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

6. Finally, remember that your objective is not simply to win arguments.

Rather, your hope is to see souls won for the glory of Christ.

Speak the truth in love and trust the Spirit of God to work in those whom He is drawing to Himself.
A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

1 Peter 3:15

Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.