



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

## Church History – Part One (100-1500 AD)

### Lesson 23 – The Rise of Islam

When Paul described in advance the rise of the papacy in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, he said that its coming would be **“according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception”** (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). But Satan was not satisfied with corrupting the Church of Christ from within. Satan also was allowed by God to establish an enemy of Christ to attack His Church from the outside. Satan accomplished this by means of a new fanatical religion that turned many away from Christ and that is still attempting to turn people away from Christ today.

This new religion was begun by a man from Arabia named Mohammed (or Muhammad). This man grew up among Christians and Jews. He accepted some of the history of the Old Testament and even accepted Jesus as a prophet of God. But he claimed that the angel Gabriel had given him a superior revelation and that he, Muhammad, was a true prophet of God even greater than Jesus. The main teachings of this religion were that there is only one God (Allah), that this God is not Triune, and that the prophet Jesus is not God. Muhammad claimed that Gabriel had given him a new revelation called the *Qur'an* (or *Koran*), written in Arabic. Muhammad claimed this to be a true message from God and that it should be accepted without question.

Muhammad and his forces fled from Mecca to Medina in Arabia in the year 622 AD. In the next ten years (before his death in 632 AD), Muhammad and his men succeeded in conquering all of Arabia and beginning the conquest of most of the East and eventually a good portion of the West as well. Muhammad spread his religion by force of arms, not by persuasion. He allowed Christians to live in the lands he ruled, but he made them second-class citizens and deprived them of the rights enjoyed by others. Apparently, Christianity was not strong in the territories he conquered, for Islam, as his religion was called, almost wiped out Christianity in Arabia, Egypt, northern Africa, Spain, and the countries of the Middle East. The Byzantine Empire lost much ground to Islam. The Persians fell to them, and all of Europe was threatened by Islam. The Muslims were not driven back until Charles the Hammer defeated them at the battle of Tours in France in 732 AD. Most of the ancient centers of Christianity were then in the hands of Muslims, such as Jerusalem, Antioch, Damascus, Alexandria, and Carthage.

Islam is the religion of many peoples of the world today. Here is a very brief summary of their beliefs. All Muslims recognize five pillars of faith:

- 1) The *shahada*, or profession of faith. All Muslims accept and recite daily: "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."
- 2) The five daily prayers made while facing Mecca, which include *rakah* (bowing). Several special actions and positions are prescribed for these prayers. Friday is the special day for prayer.
- 3) The giving of alms, including a 2½% tax for the poor.
- 4) Fasting during the daylight hours of the lunar month *Ramadan*. While fasting, Muslims do not eat or drink, smoke, or engage in sexual relations. The sick, injured, elderly, and pregnant or nursing women are excused from this fasting.
- 5) The *hajj*, or pilgrimage where all Muslims must try to make to Mecca at least once in their lifetime. This involves walking around the *Kaaba* (the holy place in Mecca) seven times and participating in other rituals.

Some Muslims have argued that there is a sixth pillar of faith: the *jihad*. We commonly know it as a "holy war". It actually refers to any form of striving for the faith – from the inner struggles for purification to the spreading *Islam* by any means, including "holy" war.

When Muslims control the political structure of a nation, they seek to establish the *Shariah*, the Islamic code of civil justice. In it are laws concerning abstaining from gambling, alcohol, and the eating pork. Islam errs in its basic concept of God and its teaching that eternal life is based on the good works of the faithful. The *Qur'an* teaches: "But those who believe and do good works Allah will lead into gardens under which rivers are flowing; they will be adorned with bracelets of gold and with pearls, and their garments will be of silk." (Surah Ash-Shura 42: Ayah 22).

The faith spoken of by Muhammad is a "general faith" in the existence of a god who is creator and judge. It is not a trust in Jesus as the Savior from sin. Muhammad explicitly denied the Trinity. The *Qur'an* is a legalistic code outlining the good works they assume they must do to earn heaven.

#### Questions:

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1. Why does God allow Satan to introduce false religions in the world?
2. What did Muhammad believe about Jesus?
3. What did Muhammad believe about himself?
4. What did Muhammad claim about the contents of the *Qur'an*?
5. How was the Muslim advance into Europe stopped?
6. What is the main difference between Islam and Christianity?
7. What is the way to salvation according to Islam?
8. What is meant by Shariah law?