

IRAQ & AFGHANISTAN

Mine fields or Mission fields?

Matthew 28 - ¹⁸And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Amen

Should Christians Convert Muslims?

"Mennonite representatives delivering aid in Muslim countries do not preach the gospel. They are not alone in this. Many Christian groups in these countries, including some in Iraq, avoid trying to convert the people around them...Others simply feel that any good sermonizing is outweighed by the violence it could provoke or the possibility that needy Muslims might be discouraged from accepting aid." - *Keeping the Faith without preaching it* - *Time Magazine* 6/22/03

John 12 ⁷But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. ⁸For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always."

James 1 - ²⁷Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

Matthew 10 ⁴²And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."

Missionaries to Muslim countries: ~15,000 (1982) ⇒ ~27,000 (2001) 50% American; 33% Evangelical

Don't we all worship the same God, just with a different name?

"'Allah' is the Arabic name for God, which is used by Arab Muslims and Christians alike." - *Terrorism, Jihad & Islam* (Islamic Society of Tampa Bay).

"But the Quran rejects the Christian claim that he [Jesus Christ] is the son of God as blasphemous and dismisses the doctrine of the Trinity as polytheistic. The Crucifixion is mentioned in passing, but according to the Quran, Jesus mysteriously does not die. Instead, Allah rescues him to heaven..." - *The Bible and the Qur'an*, Newsweek 2/11/02, p. 55

"To hear those same words recited, to take them into yourself through prayer, says Father Patrick Gaffney, an anthropologist specializing in Islam at the University of Notre Dame, 'is to experience the presence of God with the same kind of intimacy as Catholics feel when they receive Christ as consecrated bread and wine at mass.'" - *The Bible and the Qur'an*, Newsweek 2/11/02, p. 55

"Whenever it is postulated that Christians and Muslims worship the same God, there are some -- both Christians and Muslims -- who say this is simply untrue. Those who raise objections generally agree that Christians and Muslims worship one God, but will not accept the statement that they worship the same God. Admittedly, this problem is probably more of a Christian problem than it is a Muslim problem. Once a Muslim is ready to acknowledge that God can be known by a name other than Allah (i.e., God, Onyame, etc.), he will generally agree that Christians and Muslims worship "the same God." At the same time, he will insist, however, that Christians err in "associating" (shirk) others with God. This conclusion grows out of the common misunderstanding among Muslims, based partially on the Quran (5:119), that Christians worship a Trinity of Father, Mother, and Son. The problem as it confronts Christians is another kind of a problem altogether. It is a question of whether you can say you are worshipping the same God when you have such different understandings of the nature of God. Those who are troubled by this concern say that although Christians and Muslims use the same name for God and many of the same words to describe Him, they are not talking about the same God because Christians are talking about the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit..." -- excerpted from "REACHING MUSLIMS FOR CHRIST: A Handbook for Christian Outreach Among Muslims" by William J. Saal (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991) (© 1991 Arab World Ministries).

Is Christianity illegal in Iraq, Afghanistan and other Muslim countries?

Most countries in the Islamic world today do not enforce the Shari'ah in full and therefore do not have any law preventing Muslims from converting to another faith. Nevertheless, in some of these countries converts have still faced imprisonment and various other forms of legal discrimination in family and inheritance matters as a result of traditional Islamic teaching. In several Muslim countries such as Egypt or Jordan, whilst there is no law preventing conversion from Islam to another faith, the state does not legally recognize converts. Thus in Egypt there is no way for a convert to change the religious identity on their official documents from Islam to Christianity. More significant is the registering of a birth, as officials would want to know why parents with Muslim names wish to give their child a Christian name, thus drawing attention to a convert family and inviting persecution. If a child is registered as a Muslim they will be forced to learn Islam and not Christianity at school.¹ Sharia: "the path to a watering hole"

Sharia Law: Derived from the teachings of the Koran and from Sunna (The practice of the prophet Mohammed).

Within sharia law, there is a specific set of offences known as the Hadd offences. These are crimes punished by specific penalties, such as stoning, lashes or the severing of a hand. The penalties for Hadd offences are not universally adopted as law in Islamic countries.

Some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, claim to live under pure sharia law and enforce the penalties for Hadd offences. In others, such as Pakistan, the penalties have not been enforced. The majority of Middle Eastern countries, including Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria, have not adopted Hadd offences as part of their state laws.²

"They (Dayna Curry and Heather Mercer) broke every rule in the book. They were women in a patriarchal society, didn't know the language (well), didn't know the culture and were counseled against doing this by other Christians."³ - Robert Seiple, State Department's Ambassador-at-large for International religious freedom

"They have bombed the Jordanian embassy -- the symbol of a peaceful Arab country. And last week they murdered a respected cleric and over a hundred Muslims at prayer -- bombing a holy shrine and a symbol of Islam's peaceful teachings." - President George W. Bush, Televised address, 09/07/2003.

Saudi Clerics Hit More Rights for Women

AP Thu Sep 11, 12:05 AM ET

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia - Prominent Saudi clerics and academics warned Wednesday against calls for equality and increased rights for women, saying such efforts aim to make Muslim women more like "infidel" Western types. Efforts to give women greater rights are part of an anti-Islamic campaign spearheaded by the United States, said 130 Saudi sheiks and academics in a statement obtained by The Associated Press Wednesday. Women in Saudi Arabia are segregated in public places, they cannot drive cars, and they must be covered from head to toe in public in this strict conservative society. Islamic laws protect women and their rights, the statement said. It said efforts to change such traditions are "a vicious campaign from (the Muslim community's) enemy, led by the American government, to divert it from its faith." U.S. criticism of Saudi Arabia's lack of democracy and support for militant Islam in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States have forced the government to open up somewhat. Newspaper and magazine articles and television programs began to discuss reform, and even host women, something that used to be taboo here. The statement said equality between men and women is not possible under Islam. "Any calls for absolute equality is an illegal and illogical call," the statement said. It said allowing women to drive, a repeated request in the kingdom, would lead to "many evils." The religious establishment is one of the most powerful voices in conservative Saudi Arabia, which ascribes to a puritan form of Islam known as Wahhabism.

Would separation of church and state be a good thing in Islamic countries?

In the late 1970's Communists seized control of the country (Afghanistan) and systematically dismantled many of the controls that the mullahs (Islamic clerics) had imposed on the people. They introduced many reforms, including education opportunities for women.⁴

Will there ever be peace between Jews, Muslims, and Christians?

"This call of history has come to the right country. Americans ... know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world; it is God's gift to humanity." President George W. Bush, 1/28/03

¹ <http://www.barnabasfund.org/Apostasy/Persecuted.htm>

² Susie Steiner, Tuesday August 20, 2002, *The Guardian*

³ Should Christians Convert Muslims? - *Time Magazine* 6/22/03

⁴ www.religioustolerance.org