

INTERCEDE

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by Paul Parks

When Muslims Ask, “Who Is Jesus?”

As we see increasing evidence that the Spirit of God is moving across the Muslim world, more Muslims are asking the question, “Who is Jesus?” They may not be asking it of Christians or out loud, but it is certainly on their minds. Other Muslims ask it with an antagonistic attitude seeking to argue with us over this central Christian belief. Some will come to us sincerely wanting to know the answer from a true follower of Jesus. What shall we say to them and how shall we convey this truth?

They already know part of the answer. They are taught in Islam that Jesus is virgin born, that he lived a sinless life, that he healed the sick and raised the dead and that he left this world in a very unusual way, without

dying. Foremost, Muslims see Jesus as a prophet. Their real question is, “How can Jesus, being a man, be the Son of God, as you Christians proclaim?” When Christians speak of the incarnation, Muslims have a pre-programmed answer saying, “This is blasphemy,” and turn away in unbelief.

Perhaps we need to realize what causes us and all true Christians to accept this truth about Jesus. Like the early disciples, we have examined the *evidence* about Jesus and have come to the belief that only the incarnation can explain what scripture says and what we have experienced in our own lives. Our problem may be that we don’t give Muslims the chance to do the same, but have

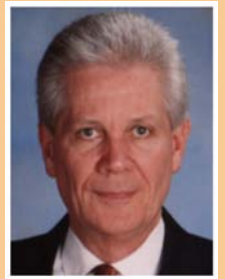
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Until All Have Heard

How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? - Romans 10: 14

Jim Bennett
Global Initiative:
Reaching Muslim Peoples



In a recent issue our lead article defined the differences in “the Muslim Jesus” and the scriptural Jesus. In the current issue Dr. Paul Parks has done a fine job of highlighting the practical use of biblical narrative (storytelling from key passages in Luke’s gospel) to convey the scriptural Jesus to Muslim seekers.

Our readers frequently request “practical ways from the Word of God to share Jesus with Muslim seekers.” There is no substitute for the power of the Word of God; especially when discussing the uniqueness of the person of Jesus with a Muslim seeker. Using the narrative/storytelling approach, consider letting Jesus speak for himself! In Matthew 16:15 Jesus posed the question “Who Do You Say I Am?” Everyone had an opinion about him; even today--everyone has an opinion about him. Upon hearing from the scripture how Jesus describes himself – the Muslim seeker realizes that Jesus is far more than a prophet!

Here are a few simple but powerful “I am” scripture passages which allow Jesus to describe himself – in this case to Muslim seekers:

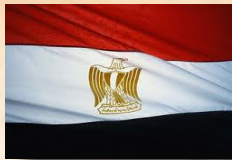
- I am the bread of life (John 6:35). Bread was an essential of life in Jesus’ culture. No meal was complete without bread. Are you spiritually hungry? Has life left you feeling empty? Consider the words of Jesus: “I am the bread of life.”
- I am the light of the world (John 8:12). Sin brings spiritual darkness into our lives. Jesus is the

antidote. Let him light up your life. Let him dispel the darkness of sin.

- I am the gate (John 10:9). A gate is an entryway. Jesus is the entryway, the gate or door, to spiritual life. No man can come to full spiritual understanding--except through him. Will you step through the door today?
 - I am the good shepherd (John 10:11). Jesus is not just any shepherd, he is the Good Shepherd. He loves his sheep and they know his voice. Are you spiritually exhausted? Come to the Good Shepherd.
 - I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). If you are spiritually dead, you need nothing less than spiritual resurrection and new life. Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).
 - I am the way and the truth and the life (John 14:6). Have you lost your direction? Are you groping for truth? Has all spiritual life been drained from you? Jesus is your answer. He will point you in the right direction and give you a new life.
 - I am the Alpha and Omega [the beginning and the end] (Revelation 1:8). Jesus will bring completeness to your life. Nothing is lacking in him.
- The statements above are the answers Jesus gave about himself. Only you can answer the critical question posed by Jesus: “Who Do You Say I Am?” ☺



Muslim World News



Egypt



India



Indonesia

The Egyptian army's killing of 27 people – including at least 23 Christians – who were protesting the burning of a church building has removed any respect most Egyptians had for the transitional military government, according to Christian human rights activists in the country.

The activists, along with members of Egyptian churches, said that the attack and the subsequent denial of any wrongdoing by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has taken away any credibility the army had among Christians, moderate Muslims and “secularists.” Instead of assuming any responsibility for the killings, the military instead blamed unidentified “enemies of the nation.”

Wagih Jacoub, a Coptic human rights activist who was injured during the attack, was enraged at the assault and subsequent denial of responsibility.

“They are absolutely lying,” he said.

- *Compass*

Police in India's Kashmir Valley detained and beat converts from Islam and were expected to arrest Christian workers after Muslim leaders alleged that Muslim youth were being “lured” to Christianity.

Police in the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley picked up seven converts who were recently baptized in All Saints Church in Srinagar, a local Christian who spoke to the converts after their release on Nov. 2 told *Compass*. Srinagar is the summer capital of the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir, and is the main city of the Kashmir Valley.

The source, who requested anonymity, said police beat the converts and asked if Christians had given them money for their conversion.

Most of the converts were from Budgam district, about 18 miles from Srinagar, and pastors there, fearful of being arrested, were in hiding, he added.

- *Compass*

Members of a church in Bogor, West Java, are determined to continue meeting outside their sealed building each Sunday until they are granted freedom to worship inside it, despite a ban on street meetings issued by the local mayor.

Amid the stand-off, religious freedom for groups such as the Yasmin church would be dramatically reduced under a “Religious Tolerance Bill” under consideration by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, critics of the proposal say.

In defiance of a Supreme Court order early this year affirming Yasmin's constitutional right to freedom of worship, Bogor Mayor Diani Budianto canceled the church's worship permit, locked and sealed their church building and banned church members from meeting on the site. The permit had been hard-earned; under terms of a 2006 Joint Ministerial Decree, all churches must meet strict criteria to qualify for a church worship permit.

- *Compass*

given them just the conclusion, without the *evidence*.

Remember that Jesus had a similar situation with his disciples. They were religious Jews who also believed in one and only one God (Deut. 6:4). (Muslims keep reminding us that God has no equals, or associates, or Son). Jesus waited for nearly three years and then near Caesarea Philippi in Matthew 16: 13-16 asked the important question, “Who do you say I am?” They had been watching and listening. They had heard the Word of God and seen the miracles, healings, feeding of the multitudes, control of the weather; the list went on and on. Peter draws the only conclusion possible from the evidence and says, “You are the Christ (Messiah) the Son of the living God.” Peter became spokesman for the group with no objections - not even from the betrayer. We know they had already discussed this question. They were convinced. Jesus tells Peter, and all future followers, that this truth was not taught to them by man, but was a revelation from the Father. Further, this truth would be the cornerstone upon which Jesus would build his church. This same event is recorded in Mark 8:27 and Luke 9:18. In John’s gospel we don’t encounter the record of this event. Rather, in John 20:30-31 we read that the purpose of the whole book is to record the “signs” of Jesus so that the reader may believe Jesus is the Son of God.

Only after the disciples of Jesus were convinced of who he was, were they ready for part two, what the Messiah would do. In each of the first three gospels, following the revelation of who He is, Jesus explains in the next paragraph that the Messiah will “suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised (Luke 9:22). The Messiah would be crucified and then raised from the dead. With Muslims it is best to follow the pattern of Jesus - to first give the evidence for who He is (incarnation), and then to explain why He had to die (atonement). (Later this year Intercede will feature an article on explaining the atonement to Muslims.)

We have said we want Muslims to see the evidence for who Jesus is. They must also experience that evidence. Our witness to a Muslim should involve a relationship with that person. Jesus was a master at forming relationships quickly. Sometimes Jesus took control of the conversation and went straight to the person’s life issue, as in John 3 with Nicodemus. With other people he asked penetrating questions, as the woman at the well in John 4. For Muslims especially, we need to show by our behavior and words that we are not what they consider typical Christians; meaning we forgive (even Muslim terrorists), show mercy to others, pray publicly

Intercede 4



When Muslims As

and talk about God and what He has done in our lives. We demonstrate cultural sensitivity by accepting them as equals (people for whom Christ died) and eating and sometimes dressing so as to not offend them (sometimes called modesty).

Having done all of these things, which can be difficult if your Muslim friend is from a conservative land,



Sometimes the best we can do is give a copy of a single gospel to tell the story of the Messiah. In this case probably the best is Luke, John or Matthew - in that order. Mark is a little more difficult because in 1:1 he declares the truth of Jesus being the “Son of God,” before the evidence has been given. An ideal way is to tell the stories to the person individually. You don’t need to memorize them word for word, just make plain the main truth about Jesus in each one. As we share the stories suggested below and their main truth, we want the listener to draw the conclusion about the meaning themselves, not imposed by the storyteller. Remember this truth: Jesus said that the revelation of who He is comes only from his Father.

Remind your Muslim friend that the gospels contain the story of Jesus’ life recorded by his first disciples and are therefore reliable. It would have been impossible to change them, for many knew the story from hearing it, and some were still alive who had experienced it. Here, then, are some suggestions from the Gospel of Luke for stories that reveal who Jesus really is!

1. Luke 1:26-38. The Angel Announces Jesus’ Birth

In this passage the angel tells Mary about Jesus’ approaching birth. Twice he says that Jesus will be the Son of God, verses 32 and 35. You may also want to tell about the birth of John the Baptist, with whom Muslims are familiar. Use Luke 1:5-25, 39-45, and 57-66.

2. Luke 2:41-52. Jesus in the Temple at age 12

Here we see Jesus himself refers to God as his father in verse 49.

3. Luke 3:1-22. Jesus’ Baptism by John the Baptist

The key verse here is 22 where the voice speaking from heaven says Jesus is his beloved Son, a very dramatic ending to the story.

4. Luke 4:1-13. The Temptation of Jesus

Note here that Satan understands the claim that Jesus is making and tempts him to do certain things to prove the claim, thus disobeying God. The claim is in verses three and nine, “If you are the Son of God...”

5. Luke 4:16-30. Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

Jesus reads a verse that applied only to the Messiah (Isaiah 61:1- 2a). The people then tried to kill Jesus because of this claim (verse 29).

6. Luke 4:31-37. Jesus Casts out a Demon

Before being cast of the man, the demon speaks

what is the evidence they need to see? A friend of mine said it this way: “I want to take my Muslim friend by the hand to the hills of Galilee, to sit at Jesus’ feet. There he can listen to his teaching and experience firsthand the deliverances and healings.” In brief, my friend desires to tell his Muslim friend the story of Jesus’ life; his words, his power and his love for all mankind.

through the man and declares Jesus the holy one of God (verse 34).

7. *Luke 4:38-41. Jesus Heals Many*

Again, as demons left people they would cry out, “You are the Son of God.”

8. *Luke 5:17-26. Jesus Forgives a Paralytic*

This is one of the most powerful stories from Jesus’ ministry to reveal who he is. This event is not primarily about faith or healing or perseverance. It is about a situation Jesus creates by telling the paralytic his sins are forgiven. This gets the attention of the teachers from Jerusalem that are present. They rightly see that only God can forgive sin. Jesus asks, “Which is easier to SAY...

your sins are forgiven or rise and walk.?” The answer is – your sins are forgiven, because there would be no visible change to the man. But to prove he has authority to forgive, which only God can do, Jesus heals the man. He thus shows again that he is the Son of God. In this passage he identifies with mankind, however, for he calls himself by his favorite title, Son of Man.

Although we are a long way from finishing Luke it should be obvious by now that the main question, perhaps the only question that Luke seeks to answer for Theophilus (1:3) is the question, “Who is Jesus?” It is the question that Muslims must answer in order to find the true peace of God. Let us share the evidence with them and pray they have the same revelation Peter had long ago - “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ☪

Afghan Tajiks: Unreached People Group

Afghanistan boasts the largest Tajik population (8.5 million) outside their homeland to the north in Tajikistan. Comprising over one-quarter of the Afghan population, they are the second largest group in the country. Forcefully converted to Islam by Arabs in the 7th century, Afghan Tajiks remain almost entirely Muslim. Religious traditions dictate rituals to celebrate important life passages, including birth, marriage and death. Memorized prayers are recited daily and in some communities old practices incorporating magic, charms and animistic beliefs still have a place.

Prayer Needs:

- **Ask** God to call Christian workers who are trained in the Dari language to take the gospel to the Tajiks.
- **Pray** that the Christian relief workers who are working in Pakistan will be effective witnesses among the Tajiks who have been displaced from their homes.
- **Ask** God to restore political peace and stability to Afghanistan.
- **Pray** that relief funds will be made available for those living in famine stricken areas.





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Facebook. Please join today!

Friday, January 6, 2012. Please pray

...for Muslims in Libya. Pray that as a new government is formed, a window might be open to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Pray that some form of religious freedom might develop, despite pending sharia law.

...for Muslim women living in Western countries. Agence France-Presse recently reported that in Germany each year, approximately 3,000 Muslim women face forced marriages.

...for Asia Bibi, imprisoned in Pakistan on sham blasphemy charges. She has been in prison for over a year, and is currently appealing a death sentence.

Friday, January 13, 2012. Please pray

...for Muslim women in Afghanistan. A decade after the Taliban's overthrow, Afghan women are still subject to the harsh dictums of sharia law. Half of all women imprisoned in Afghanistan are held for "breaches of moral law."

...that Egypt's persecution of the Christian community, particularly Coptics, would end. Pray for religious liberty in the post-Mubarak era.

...for religious freedom in Tunisia. Despite glowing reports in the media regarding free elections in Tunisia, it almost went unnoticed that the Islamist party, al-Nahda, won in a landslide and now controls 40 percent of the assembly.

Friday, January 20, 2012. Please pray

...for Iranian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani, who is facing the death penalty in Iran as an apostate. Nadarkhani has refused to renounce Christianity four times while in prison.

...for Muslims in Mindanao, Philippines. Despite great hostility toward Christians, pray that Mindanao's Muslims would come to know the love of Jesus Christ.

...for the country of Syria. With rumbles of regime change, Christians have backed the present leader Bashar al-Assad, out of fear of future sharia law. If the sunni majority were to overthrow Assad, Syria's Christians would be in a very tenuous position.

Friday, January 27, 2012. Please pray

...for Muslims in Nigeria. The Boko Haram jihadists continue to run rampant and the region seems to always sit on the precipice of conflict and mayhem.

...for the country of Tanzania. Three churches have been burned in the last year and the threat of violence continues.

...for God to work a miracle in the lives of Oman's 2.6 million Muslims.

*I URGE THEN FIRST OF ALL THAT REQUESTS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND
THANKSGIVING BE MADE FOR EVERYONE. - 1 TIMOTHY 2:1, NIV*



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Friday, February 3, 2012. Please pray

...for the political climate of Egypt. The number of Muslim Brotherhood supporters continues to rise. Thousands of Christians have recently emigrated to escape persecution.

...for the Soninke people of Mali. There are a few Christian believers among the Soninke. Pray that more witnesses for Jesus Christ would be raised up to effectively reach the Soninke with the gospel.

...for Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) in Iran. The Iranian parliament is considering a bill that would codify the death penalty for apostates.

Friday, February 10, 2012. Please pray

...for Eritrea's forgotten MBBs, who regularly face death and persecution.

...for Muslim children attending Christian schools across the world. Pray that these little children and their families might come to know Jesus Christ through their association with these schools.

...for religious freedom in Uzbekistan. Police raids on Christian homes and suspected churches continue. Pray that Muslims would have access to Christian literature, despite government bans.

Friday, February 17, 2012. Please pray

...for God to work a miracle in the lives of Jordan's 6 million Muslims.

...for millions of children in Quranic madrassas (schools). They spend hours each day memorizing the Quran.

...for millions of Muslims attending mosques today. Pray that through dreams, visions, and Christian witness, they would miraculously come to know Jesus Christ.

Friday, February 24, 2012. Please pray

... that God will protect MBB house churches, especially in Iran. These underground believers face a gauntlet of risks: financial loss, prison, family separation, and death.

...for Christians engaged in prison ministry to Muslims in Western prisons.

...that Muslims seeking Jesus Christ in closed lands would find adequate witness via the Internet, television and radio.

Intercede is a bimonthly publication of Global Initiative: Reaching Muslim Peoples
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