

Resurgence of a Revived Islamic Empire



by Harry Morin

In November of 2003, the militant Islamic group, Al-Qaida, declared, “There is no doubt that the demise of America and its collapse will lead to the collapse of these fragile regimes [of the Middle East] that depend on it. We will not stop until we establish the Islamic Caliphate and until Allah’s law is implemented in his land,” (MEMRI Special Dispatch Series, No. 609). What do these fundamentalist Muslims mean when they refer to the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate?

For Muslims, the term caliphate refers to a governing system based on what they perceive to be God’s laws as revealed in their scripture, the Qur’an, and in the teachings and example of their prophet. This governing system is to be administered by a supreme ruler known as the caliph, a term that derives from the Arabic, *khalifa*. A *khalifa* is one who inherits from God author-

ity to rule on His behalf, or as God’s representative. This title is used in the Qur’an to refer to humankind in general (6:165); and more specifically to Adam (2:28), who is given dominion over the earth; and to King David (38:25), who is known by the title *Khalifatullah* (God’s ruling representative).

This term became prominent following the death of Muhammad in A.D. 632. His successors became known by the majority of Muslims as *khalifas*. Under the first four *khalifas*, and within a span of 25 years, Islam spread from Mecca and Medina into surrounding regions and beyond — including the remainder of the Arabian peninsula, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, parts of North Africa, and Iran. What began as a local religious reformation developed into an expanding political domain with the goal of instituting Islamic law within that domain.



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, Director
Center for
Ministry to Muslims



Many have asked me to share some of the ministry highlights of CMM in this space. In response, here are some “good news” items.

Institutes of Islamic Studies. In 2009, CMM is partnering to present Institutes of Islamic Studies in: Amsterdam, Romania, El Salvador, Bangalore, Argentina, the Philippines, and two locations in Indonesia. These IIS programs will train hundreds of national missionaries and others to work and church-plant among Muslims.

Module courses and seminars. In 2009 CMM personnel will do other Islam-specific teaching and training in: Argentina, Indonesia, Kenya, Morocco, France, Spain, India, Moldova, Ukraine, Tanzania, Romania, Hong Kong, Hungary, Holland, and the U.S.

World Islam Consultation. How gratifying to have 225 Assemblies of God nationals and missionaries from various parts of the world attend this Consultation in Nairobi, Kenya this past February. Great speakers, powerful testimonies from Muslim background believers, inspiring workshops and strategy caucuses by region characterized the consultation. The highlight of the last day was a time of fasting and prayer for renewed vision to take the gospel to unreached Muslim peoples.

Encouraging Stories. During the Nairobi Consultation, I spoke with two national brothers who work among Muslims in the same difficult and restricted country. The first related to me that he has seen ten Muslim background believer house churches birthed in the last few years. The second said he now pastors a Muslim background believer congregation of twenty – and their church meets across the street from the largest mosque in the area.

Powerful Testimony. I just received a note from a colleague who works in a country with a huge Muslim population. The details are edited, but the content is so encouraging, it needs to be shared! “Last month, fifteen leaders (*sheikhs*) from an all-Muslim tribe turned their hearts over to Jesus. They were called in by security and berated. ‘Don’t you know as leaders you have a responsibility for your communities?’ They listened calmly and then simply



replied; ‘Thanks for reminding us that for the last seven years you have been killing us and it was the Christians that came to our aid. Yes, we have a responsibility to lead our households to the Christ.’”

The Importance of Prayer. I recently met a lady who stated that she has fasted and prayed for Muslims every Friday for nine straight years. Muslims are having dreams and visions because people like this lady are interceding on their behalf. Please join the great throng of faithful people who are praying for Muslims to receive the truth about Jesus Christ.





Muslim World News

Egypt

ISLAMIC LAWYERS URGE DEATH SENTENCE FOR CONVERT

In the latest hearing of a Muslim-born Egyptian's effort to officially convert to Christianity, opposing lawyers advocated he be convicted of "apostasy," or leaving Islam, and sentenced to death. More than 20 Islamic lawyers attended the hearing in Maher Ahmad El-Mo'otahsem Bellah El-Gohary's case to obtain identification papers with Christianity designated as his religious affiliation. El-Gohary was not present at the hearing, as attendance would put him at extreme personal risk. He had planned to obtain papers authorizing attorney Nabil Ghobreyal to act as his proxy representation in court, but staff members at the registry office swore at and beat him, lawyers said. The presiding judge was forced to temporarily adjourn the case because El-Gohary did not obtain the necessary proxy representation documents. – *Compass*

Indonesia

SHARIA-BASED LAWS CREEP INTO HALF OF PROVINCES

As candidates hit the campaign trail in preparation for Indonesia's presidential election in July, rights groups have voiced strong opposition to an increasing number of sharia-inspired laws introduced by local governments. Although Aceh is the only province completely governed by sharia (Islamic law), more than 50 regencies in 16 of 32 provinces throughout Indonesia have passed laws influenced by sharia. The laws became possible after passage of the Regional Autonomy Law in 2000. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by Article 29 of the country's constitution, said Syafi'I Anwar, executive director of the International Center for Islam and Pluralism. "The government must assist all religious communities to practice their beliefs as freely as possible and take actions against those who violate that right." – *Compass*

Bangladesh

REACTION TO CHRISTIAN BOOK DISTRIBUTION

Pilgrims to a massive Islamic conference beat and threatened to kill a Bible school student as he distributed Christian literature. Rajen Murmo, 20, a student at Believers' Church Bible College, was distributing the 32-page books near the school along with 25 other students in Uttara town in Dhaka, where the government claimed 4 million Muslim pilgrims had gathered. "Suddenly some of the entourage grasped me and asked where I got the books. They wanted to know the address of my religious leaders and mission," said Murmo. "If I had given them the address of the Bible college, they would have destroyed it. My blank denial to give information to them made them enraged, and they started beating me. They told me if I do not give the address of the religious leaders and mission, they would kill me." – *Compass*

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The succession of these *khalifas* and the power struggles that ensued led to the emergence of a powerful ruling family, the Umayyads. The Umayyad Dynasty shifted the seat of power from Mecca and Medina to the commercial center of Damascus.

By this time, much of the Middle East had become devastated by a long, drawn-out war between two major empires, the Sassanian Empire of the Persians, and the Byzantine Empire of the Christians whose capital was Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul). Both empires fought for control over two major attractions: the city of Jerusalem and lucrative trade routes. By the middle of the seventh century, each side had exhausted its military and financial resources. This meant heavier taxes for all concerned. In addition, many of the local Christians were treated as second-class citizens and even heretics by their Byzantine counterparts, which led to animosity and strife. As a result, many local Middle Easterners saw the rising

influence of Islam as a liberating force for change. This factor, coupled with the warrior mindset of the tribal Arabs who carried the banner of Islam, led to a rapid expanse of territory for the Umayyad Dynasty, which became the domain of the first great Islamic empire.

Incredibly, by A.D. 750, the Umayyad Empire extended into three continents — Asia, Africa, and Europe. It reached from the border of India, across parts of Central Asia, across the Middle East and North Africa, and into Spain. In light of this amazing spread of Islam, Islamic scholars and jurists began to theorize that it was God's intention for the whole world to come under divine law, which was believed enshrined in the teachings of Islam. This rule of law was to be protected and administered by the ruler of the empire, the *khalifa*, ruling as God's agent over God's people — and eventually the world. In time, Muslims viewed the expanding Islamic empire as a necessity for the survival of humankind. Muslims believed and

Survived Islamic Empire

from page 1

still do, that they are the only ones who qualify to administer God's law over the earth.

According to Muslims, Jews forfeited that privilege by falling into idolatry and into the wrath of God at the hands of the Assyrian and Babylonian armies centuries before. In addition, Christians forfeited their position by corrupting the doctrine of the oneness of God with the doctrine of the trinity. Thus, Muslims insist that Islam is the only surviving monotheistic religion that can save the human race.

The Qur'an (9:33) claims that Islam is the religion of truth that shall prevail over all other religions. But for this to happen, Muslims see the need for a strong political and military system that can protect and expand the influence of their religion. They see the need for a worldwide empire that will establish a theocracy based upon Islamic law for all humankind. For the fundamentalist Muslim, that means the establishment of a caliphate ruled by a caliph — a worldwide single community, united not by any tribal or national identity, but by a universal faith, and ruled by one supreme leader.

The Umayyad Empire was an impressive show of force that attempted to spread its influence worldwide. But, as history has proven, empires rise and empires fall. As family feuds and power struggles erupted, descendants of a related Arab clan took control in A.D. 750.

The Abbasids, who established Islam's next great empire, shifted the capital city from Damascus to Baghdad. Part of the former empire split from this new emerging force, retained its Umayyad identity, and relocated its capital to Cordova, Spain, surviving until the 11th century. In Baghdad, the birth of the Abbasid Empire began to blossom into what has become known to Muslims as the Golden Age of Islam. Baghdad became a wealthy and beautiful city — comparable to ancient Rome and Athens. It was adorned with fountains, gardens, parks, public baths, and beautiful mosques.

While the former Umayyad Empire was famous for its advancement in the realm of power and territory, the Abbasid Empire became famous for its advancement in the fields of knowledge and arts. Great strides were made in the areas of science, medicine, architecture, astronomy, mathematics, and literature. Muslims learned the making

of paper from the Chinese and improved upon it in order to preserve their wealth of knowledge in books and libraries. The empire eventually splintered into smaller ruling sultanates and Baghdad was ultimately burned to the ground in A.D. 1258 by the invading Mongolian hordes of the East.

The next great Islamic force to emerge was the Ottoman Empire. As early as the 10th century, the nomadic Turks of the steppes of Central Asia began to migrate westward. Many of these Turks settled in the region of modern Turkey and eventually converted to Islam. They were warriors, and as they consolidated power in the 14th century, established a strong military presence that developed into what became known as the Ottoman Empire. This empire became renowned for its sheer strength. It ruled over most of the territories of the previous Abbasid Empire, but also extended its influence into Eastern Europe — including Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia, Hungary, Poland, and Austria.

The greatest prize of conquest for the Ottoman Empire, and for Islam as a whole, was the city of Constantinople in 1453. This marked the historic end of the Christian Byzantine Empire, which was an extension of the Roman Empire that for so long played a major role in the history of Eastern Europe and the Middle East. This monumental feat was seen by Muslims as the greatest victory for Islam over Christianity, and proof of the supremacy of Islam in the world. The city was renamed Istanbul and became Islam's new center of power and prestige. The Ottoman Empire reached its zenith in the 16th century, but then began to slowly erode as the flow of history continued to bring about change — new powers, new rivalries, and receding boundaries.

The Ottoman Empire became completely dismantled at the close of World War I and was carved into pieces that became territories mandated by the League of Nations and divided between the Allied powers — namely France, Great Britain, and Italy. For Islamic territory to have fallen into the hands of Christian rulers is a grave embarrassment for Muslims worldwide who believe they should always be the victors because they espouse a sovereignty governed by what they believe to be divine law.

For years following World War I, Muslims all over the

continued on page 6

Resurgence of a Revived Islamic Empire

continued from page 5

world lived as subjects to foreign Christian powers, a humiliating chapter of history for Islam. But two things happened that brought about drastic change: the freedom from foreign occupation, and the discovery of oil. Both of these developments provided Muslims with renewed hope and unlimited resources. Muslims are eagerly looking to the day when they will once again become a dominating force. All over the world, they are yearning for a revived Islamic empire, just like those of the past. As we look at Islam today and its global impact, we cannot help but believe that the unyielding influence of Islam will play a major role in the unfolding of end time events. Of the three former empires we have discussed, the one that is perhaps the most fascinating for Bible students and prophecy enthusiasts is the Ottoman Empire.

Revelation 17 speaks of a beast having seven heads which represent seven rulers or kingdoms. Five of those kingdoms had already fallen by the time of the writing of Revelation and the one kingdom existing at the time, according to many Bible scholars, was the Roman Empire. The identity of the seventh and eighth kingdoms remains a mystery. However, from Revelation 17:11 (NIV), we discover that the eighth kingdom seems to be a revived seventh kingdom. The question then remains as to which seventh empire overtook the sixth empire which we identified as the Roman Empire? It is true that Germanic tribes destroyed the city of Rome in the fifth century. However, that did not bring an end to the Roman Empire — it simply shifted its influence to its eastern

domain in Constantinople. There the empire remained intact until A.D. 1453, when Ottoman armies ransacked the city and put an end to the Roman Empire.

In light of this history and the dramatic unfolding of present day world events, some students of Bible prophecy are beginning to wonder if the Ottoman Empire of Islam could be “the beast who once was, and now is not.” If it is, then that would mean that the eighth kingdom of Revelation 17:11 would be a revived Islamic empire, the Ottoman Empire, which ruled from the country of Turkey. How interesting that Turkey, which tried to shed its cloak of Islam following World War I, is now in the throes of a fundamentalist Islamic resurgence by Muslims who are aspiring for a revived Islamic Empire — an Islamic theocracy to rule the world.

Of course, this is all speculation. However, the Bible does allude to the rule of a theocracy that will usher in a millennium of peace. But a theocracy is a divine order that can be properly administered only by a perfect being. Without divine intervention, humans are incapable of running a theocracy. But when he who is perfect returns to the world, such a theocracy will materialize. Indeed, the Prince of Peace will bring true and complete restoration to the world. Until then, let us pray that Jesus will reveal himself to countless Muslims as King of kings and Lord of lords — as the grand *khalifa* who alone has received all authority in heaven and earth to rule the world on behalf of Almighty God.





JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

*PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!*



Friday, May 1, 2009. Please pray

...for *missionaries* and Christian workers ministering to Muslims in Jordan and Syria.
...for *Hui Muslims in China*. With an estimated population of 15 million, the Hui are the largest Muslim people group in China. China is home to a total Muslim population of 30-40 million.
...for the *Muslims of Afghanistan*. The Taliban remain a genuine threat to any future stability in the country.

Friday, May 8, 2009. Please pray

...for *Christians in Iraq*. Pray for the many Iraqis following Jesus, even as they often face a threat of violence or death.
...against the *rapid spread of Islam in Mali*. Muslim organizations have pumped in finances with major incentives to foster the growth of Islam.
...that *God will continue to raise up* expatriate Christian workers to reach Muslims across the Islamic world.

Friday, May 15, 2009. Please pray

...for *MBBs (Muslim Background Believers) across the Islamic world*. Pray they would find fellowship and opportunity for discipleship, despite what are often the most extreme and dangerous circumstances.
...for *increasing numbers of Muslims* to hunger for spiritual truth and the possibility of knowing God personally, being assured of salvation, and having sins forgiven.
...for *MBBs in Libya*. Several news reports recently described four MBBs tortured by Libyan police as apostates.

Friday, May 22, 2009. Please pray

...for a *sheikh in Tanzania*, recently converted to Christianity and now in hiding. Pray he will grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus.
...for the *Comoros islands*, where the Muslim government continues to crack down on Christianity.
...for *protection of the Church in Kazakhstan*. The president is currently considering passage of a more restrictive law on freedom of worship.

Friday, May 29, 2009. Please pray

...for *further change in the Maldives*. After 30 thirty years under an Islamic dictator, the Maldives now has a freely elected government with a reform-minded president. However, the new coalition does include a hard-line Islamic faction.
...for *Turkey's nine Southeast provinces*. Out of a total population of almost 8 million, there are only a little over 100 Christians. Pray that God will call more laborers to this region.
...for *protection of the Church in Nigeria*. Violence between Muslims and Christians continues.

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



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

*PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!*



Friday, June 5, 2009. Please pray

...*against a U.N. draft proposal* to prohibit defamation of religion — which would be used to stifle criticism of Islam and as a legal impediment against Christianity in Muslim countries.

...*for the gospel of Jesus Christ* to be heard by Muslims in Lebanon.

...*for MBBs across the Muslim world.* Pray they would receive encouragement and protection from the Lord. Also, pray they would have access to Christian literature and fellowship.

Friday, June 12, 2009. Please pray

...*for the 12,000 Meskhetian Turks* who have emigrated to the U.S. from Krasnodar, Russia, where they had endured persecution. The majority are not strict Muslims and are adapting well. Pray God would send Christian workers to witness to them.

...*for the Muslims of Gaza to hear witness of Jesus Christ.* Pray that despite political turmoil, the gospel would be heard in this troubled spot.

...*for radio and satellite broadcasts reaching the Arabian Gulf states.* Pray for a genuine move of the Lord in this closed region.

Friday, June 19, 2009. Please pray

...*for Indonesia,* where sharia laws have crept into 16 of the country's 32 provinces.

...*for MBBs in Egypt.* They face court battles, threats of violence, and death as they testify about Jesus.

...*for Christian workers in the U.S. and Canada.* Pray they would seize opportunities to witness to Muslims that might not otherwise hear about the love of Jesus.

Friday, June 26, 2009. Please pray

...*for an untold number of MBBs* being persecuted in Iran. Arrest reports of Christians are increasingly frequent.

...*for the millions of Muslims attending mosques today.* Pray the Lord would reveal his love to them in miraculous ways.

...*for the Alevi Muslims of Turkey.* Numbering approximately 20 million, they are the second largest religious community in Turkey.