

JESUS: FIRST, LAST and BEST

1. Introduction

There was a man named Muhammad. And there was a man named Jesus Christ. These two men call for your allegiance, one out of the history books, one by His ever-living Spirit.

Their sayings and their lives are in total contradiction to one another. If one is correct, the other cannot be. May the Holy Spirit point out to you, confirm to you, the One Who has been anointed of God to save you and the world.

I do not doubt the claims of Jesus Christ to be the Son of the Living God, and intimately related to the Father so much that He is Himself God. Nor do I personally accept the claim of Muhammad, of seventh-century Arabia, to be the last prophet, or in the Biblical sense, a prophet at all. I certainly do not want my work to be seen as a lowering of the Son of God or an elevation of Muhammad.

Yet, nearly one of four people on this planet, the Muslims, believe that Jesus and Muhammad are equals. For nearly 1,400 years this has been Muslim belief. Christians must continue to meet this challenge to the Truth, just as in the political arena a rival needs to be answered in the eyes of men, not because there is any truth to the rival's claims, but for the very opposite reason.

It is not because we take Muhammad's claims seriously, as possibly true, that we must continue to compare Him to Jesus Christ, and Christ to him. It is because we take Islam seriously. It is because many in Christendom continue to defect to Muhammad as a modern-day Saviour for the world's ills.

Such was the case of one Martin Lings in the last century. On the jacket of the book he wrote about the Arabian prophet, it is said,

"Martin Lings was a renowned British scholar [who] studied English under [the great Christian apologist] C.S. Lewis, who later became a close friend... his friendship and similar beliefs with philosophers Rene Guenon and Frithjof Schuon inspired Lings to convert to Islam."

Actually, he and his friends converted to Sufism, Islamic in origin but a minority group in that religion, focusing on the inner life and not the political turmoil created by pure Islam. Not being in the political arena of Islam he was able to pick and choose from his sources those things that make Muhammad look like a good and fair man. Almost no mention is made of the Koran's

startling differences from Christianity, and not all that much about religious differences with the Jews.

Nevertheless, he was a follower of Muhammad, and his book reads as a heroic tale of one he considered to be the last of prophets and the best of men. I chose his biography to study Muhammad because it was stated that he had used the oldest sources for the study of Muhammad's life, and because it was hailed as the "best biography of the Prophet in English." The reviews I read confirmed this opinion.

So why read a book so blessed by Muslims when trying to find a way to compare the man to the very Son of God? My thought was simply that by using Lings, no one could accuse me of prejudice when I showed point by point that Jesus is far better in every way, and deserving of a hearing that Muhammad does not deserve. If I take the best that Islam has to offer, lionized by the best English biographer he ever had, and Jesus still shines greater than Muhammad, then surely Jesus is to be followed, and Muhammad refused.

So it must be understood that Lings is my Muhammadan source throughout, and his sources are the oldest and most reliable. Names like Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Sa'd, Waqidi, Azraqi, Tabari, Suhayli, and eight traditionists of the ninth century, are quoted with reverence by the skilled author.

My source for the life and message of Jesus is far simpler. I will refer only to the writings of apostles and their associates, as recorded in the New King James version of the Holy Bible. Occasional references to the Old Covenant prophets will be in order also.

So, our word against theirs? Not really, though at the human level it will seem so to some. But in addition, it is our faith that the sheep of Jesus hear His Voice. That Voice is echoed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who guides His true disciples into all the truth. In the Divine sense, it is their word against God Himself.

"He who knows God hears us. He who is not of God does not hear us," says John. It's that simple. Yet the apostles took it seriously, this defending of the faith. Though they believed in the inner working of the Spirit of God to guide them, they continued to teach in real words, messages, sermons, letters, to people who took in those words and evaluated, discerned, believed them.

That is what I do here. I merely repeat what we have most surely believed about this Jesus for these thousands of years, and place next to His spotless life and wondrous love the person of a man, Muhammad.

It's not a fair comparison really. Jesus is God. Muhammad was a man. Jesus is alive forevermore. Muhammad was born a man, lived 63 years, and died a man, and he is dead to us still. For some,

this alone is enough of a comparison! But for those who wish to go deeper, walk with me through the various categories I have delineated, and see just how vast is the difference.

Through it all we aim at one conclusion in particular. On the Prophet comparison, to which Muhammad forces us, we say that Jesus is the final Word from the Father, therefore the last prophet. Prophecies still come, some failing, some not, but the prophet "like Moses" predicted by that ancient saint, has come in the first century. By His Spirit he is still with us, visible by faith to His own. There shall never be a prophet to take His place, follow Him in importance or chronology.

Yes, Jesus is the Last Prophet. He is still here and he will return in bodily form to finish what he started. His is the ongoing final word.

Popes have tried to speak for Him. They desired earthly power for themselves. Today's "apostles" trend that way also. Railing against denominations and religion in general, they often seek to form a new alignment of power with themselves at the top. How easily the political spirit enters the people of God.

Muhammad appeared at a time when the church's passion for souls was becoming a passion for power. His understanding of the Christian faith and its predecessor, the Jewish nation, was in terms of military and political might.

His revelations convinced him and his followers that a new prophet was here. But he spoke while Jesus was still speaking, though not so loudly in Arabia, as many had already tuned out His Voice. Be that as it may, Muhammad interrupted the Son of God. Jesus'

Word, Jesus the Word, still speaks. That Word is eternal. Better than Moses. Better even than angels. Better than Muhammad. He is the Last. And as you will see, by far the best. That is the Truth.

I hereby acknowledge the unwitting assistance of many men in the creating of this study. Usama Dakdok is the Egyptian Christian who translated the Koran into a readable and literal English, and who goes about the country warning believers about the Islamic threat. It was his teaching, "Muhammad or Christ?" that inspired my own work.

And as stated, Martin Lings' exhaustive research added to that of Islamic scholars down through the centuries is the source I have drawn from extensively. They have done all the hard work, and all I had to do was read one volume to glean it for myself and for you.

2. From eternity.

As I indicated earlier, it's not really a fair comparison, Jesus and Muhammad. Nowhere is this inequality greater than in the Jesus Who has lived for all time. How can I compare Jesus, this eternal one, to Muhammad, the mortal?

Since I have no resources by which to share Muhammad's eternal nature, I can only share with you from the multitude of Scriptural wealth on this subject. Where to begin?

Micah 5:2 talks of one who is to be born in Bethlehem Who will be a ruler in Israel. This one, it is said has been "going forth" not only from ancient times, but from "everlasting."

Isaiah speaks of a Child (9:6-7) Who will grow to rule Israel, when the government is placed on His shoulders. One of His many names will be "Everlasting Father."

Jesus Himself said that He and His Father are one (John 10:30).

John 1:1 declares that Jesus, the Word, is God. No one will argue the eternity of God, I think.

Pretty plain speech. Whether in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, and all the translations thereof into English, Jesus is the Eternal One.

I have posted a much fuller study of the Deity of Jesus Christ on Sermonaudio. It is in two parts and goes under the title *True witnesses agree Jesus is God*.

I think it is important to note here that Jesus claims to be, not only the "last", as we will discuss later, but also the "first." The Alpha and the Omega. The Beginning and the End. The One Who was. The One Who is. the One Who is to come (Revelation 1:8).

So we not only make the case that He spoke long after Muhammad, that He still speaks, that He will speak forever, but in the office of "Word", he has been forever speaking. Long before Moses. Long before Abraham. In fact, "Before Abraham was, Jesus IS" (John 8:58).

Also before Adam, before Lucifer, before the angels. Jesus is and is and is. Always speaking the Word of the Father, always representing the Father, along with the Spirit of God, to the creation and beyond. Eternal Word. Eternal Prophet, the one who was to come, the one who came, the one who will come again.

Words fail. But I think the message is clear. Muhammad, if he be prophet at all, was not the last prophet. Not by far. The Last Prophet was still speaking when Muhammad came along. He spoke all during Muhammad's life. And after Muhammad left us in the seventh century, he continued to speak in His living breathing body called the church, through whom His actions and His very words are communicated to the planet day after day.

3. The prophesied one.

Once more the Muhammad side of this comparison is sadly lacking. It is true that there were rumors floating around Arabia of a coming prophet. Israel in particular had been expecting a prophet to come for many years. Those who rejected Jesus to their eternal loss continued to look for "the Prophet" of Deuteronomy, and certain Jewish tribes in Muhammad's Arabia were open to the possibility that Muhammad might be the one they sought.

The Church was weak in its knowledge of the Scriptures, had begun spiraling down into compromise and unbelief, and was also susceptible to deceivers.

In Arabia there were splinter groups of Christians that had evolved into factions far removed from the orthodoxy of Scripture. The Ebionites were such a group. They believed that people such as Paul were anti-semitic, so they scissored out all his writings from the New Testament. Imagine a New Testament without Paul!

They believed that the law was still in effect. Yet they called themselves Christian, and looked for a Prophet. Waraqaah, who figures largely in the early days of Muhammad's "revelations", was of this group. He early jumped on the bandwagon of Koranic inspiration and encouraged Muhammad to continue on in a series of utterances that even Muhammad at first believed to be demonic.

In Muhammad's life, per Lings, there were from time to time persons who pointed him out as the prophet. One, Nestor, a monk, tied him to the "Shiloh" prophecy of Genesis 49. But Shiloh means "rest", a word used specifically by Jesus to describe the effect He has on the human heart when He enters it. Muhammad certainly has not brought us rest. Jesus will.

As to other Biblical prophecies regarding Muhammad, there are none. But Islam through the years has played a double-sided game in terms of referencing Scripture. If a Biblical verse seems to serve the cause of Muhammad, it is accepted without wavering. If the text is decidedly different than the Koran, the Biblical text is considered corrupted, and the argument ends. Very difficult to reason with persons who are convinced of their position without even a search into the records.

But since there are no trustworthy Islamic records of a prophecy of Muhammad's coming, Muslims rely heavily on their less than worthy interpretations of our Biblical texts that seem to say their prophet was foreknown. Before I share with you the clear predictions of Jesus' coming, let me deal with the supposed Scriptures promising the coming of Muhammad.

Among the favorite is Deuteronomy 18:15-18. Ironically, this passage is also the most easily answered. It is amazing that a thinking Muslim would still cling to this set of verses. God here

declares that one day He is going to raise up in Israel a Prophet "like Moses" from among their brothers. Since Muhammad was not Jewish, nor did he find himself raised up among the Jews, the prophecy in no way connects to him.

It does connect to Jesus, though. After He had fed the 5,000, the Jewish recipients of that miracle meal declared that Jesus was indeed the Prophet that Moses was talking about. In this, they were correct. Forcing Him to take His Kingdom immediately was not the plan for the first century, but for the last.

For the record here, Jesus was indeed called a prophet. The men who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus described Him as a "Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." The Jewish multitudes who witnessed His triumphal entry into Jerusalem concurred. Those who saw the son of a widow in Nain raised from the dead likewise agreed that He was a prophet. The woman at the well used the title. As did the man born blind, made to see by Jesus.

Another passage used by Muslim scholars to show that the Bible predicts a coming Prophet in Arabia is of a much more serious nature. Since it is clear that John 14:16 refers to the Holy Spirit's coming, the wrenching away of it to fit a supposed prediction of a Gentile political leader is most distressing, and bordering on the blasphemous.

You see, there is a passage in the Koran that contains the word *periclytos*, which means "praised one." Since this word is so close to the Greek *paraclete*, Muslims rush in to claim this verse for their leader. How preposterous the claim is, is borne out in the rest of the verse. Let me demonstrate.

John 14:16: [Jesus said] "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another *paraclete*, that He may abide with you forever [Muhammad is to abide with the apostles forever?], even the Spirit of truth [absurd, yet there are devotional works that do indeed call Muhammad "Spirit of Truth"!]whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him [the world never saw Muhammad?] or knows him [the world never knew Muhammad?], but you know Him [the apostles knew Muhammad?], for He dwells with you [Muhammad lived with the apostles?] and will be in you [Muhammad will live inside the apostles?]."

Pretty difficult fit. Like a size twelve trying to work its way into a size five.

But a perfect fit, if the Holy Spirit of God is considered the fulfillment. Jesus went on to say, "I will not leave you without help. I will come to you." Blasted away in this statement is not only the notion of Muhammad as the Comforter or Paraclete, but also the anti-Trinitarian bias of Islam and so many others. Jesus is leaving the disciples. But the Father is sending a Helper. Clue: The Helper is someone they know right now. Someone who will return in a different form. Someone who is the speaker!

No, Muhammad is not predicted in Christian Scripture nor in any other, except in those places where Jesus Christ Himself or inside His surrogates warns us of the viciousness of the wolf who will come to destroy sheep that are not on guard. The false prophet. Certainly there have been a whole host of such men. None of them have been singled out by name, but by their fruits we shall know them. Blood, confusion, anti-Christ, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, political strength, immorality. We'll know.

But Jesus was foreknown, from the foundation of the world and before. He was prefigured in Genesis 3:15 as the seed of a woman. He was to be the one who would bless all nations through the seed of Abraham. He is Shiloh, the rest of the people of God in the last words of Genesis. He is the Lamb and the sin offerings of Exodus and Leviticus, the star of Balaam's vision, "that prophet" of Deuteronomy, of the seed of David, the Psalmist's King on Mt Zion, the awful sufferer forsaken by God Himself, betrayed by His best friend, yet breaking the nations with a rod of iron. The prophets saw Him as suffering servant, yet Everlasting Father, founder of a New Covenant, born in Bethlehem, dying on a tree, buried in a rich man's tomb, but not allowed to see corruption in His body, the King of the Kingdom that shall never be destroyed, during the time when the earth shall be filled with knowledge about Him.

Never has there been a man known in advance as much as this Man.

4. Genealogy.

Jesus entered the human family through the Promised Son of Abraham, Isaac. The Scriptures are painfully clear about this, showing how Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar tried to manipulate the plan of God, and help God keep His promise by creating an alternate plan. By Abraham's relationship to the servant of his wife, Ishmael came into the world. First indeed, but not the promised son. Not the one who would bring Messiah and bless all nations. All of those blessings would devolve upon Isaac.

But in Koranic teaching, it was Ishmael who was offered on the Mt. Moriah altar, and in reward for this heroic act, God gave Isaac to Abraham. Christians recall that the Scriptures indicate that the offered son was Isaac.

Muhammad claims, perhaps rightly so, a family connection to Ishmael. Genealogies offered by a number of Muslim scholars have differed from one another. Numbers and names don't match up. It is impossible to tell at this point which one is correct. I offer below the list given by Wikipedia. In another list below it, I have offered a comparison of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim renditions of the same list, the line from Adam to Abraham. The Muslim list is the work of Ibn Ishaq, believed by many to be reputable.

From **Muhammad** to the tribal leader of his people, **Quraish**, is as follows:

***Muhammad** ,**Abd Allah**, **Abdul Mutallib** (who was called **Shaiba**), **Hashim** (named 'Amr, after whom the **Banu Hashim** clan was named), **Abd-e-Manaf** (called **Al-Mugheera**), **Qusai** (**Qusayy**) (also called **Zaid**), **Kilab**, **Murra**, **Ka'b**, **Luwai** (**Lo'i**), **Ghalib**, **Fih**r (known as **Quraish** and whose tribe was called after him).*

Thus far does Lings dare to go in his work. From Wikipedia I glean the continuation of the line between **Fih**r (**Quraish**) and **Ishmael**. No one swears by this line, but there is possibly some validity to it:

***Malik**, **an-Nadr** (also called **Qais**), **Kinana** (founder of the largest Adnanite tribe of western Saudi Arabia in **Hijaz**), **Khuzaima** (**Khuzaiman**), **Mudrika** (who was called 'Amir), **Ilyas** (**Elias**), **Mudhar** (**Muzar**) (patriarch of one of the two main branches of the "North Arabian" Adnanite tribes), **Nazar** (**Nizar**), **Ma'ad**, **Adnan** (ancestor of the Adnani Arabs of northern, central and western Arabia), **Udad** (**Awwad**), **Al-Muqawwim**, **Al-Yas'a**, **Al-Hamis** (**Al-Humaisa**), **Nibt** (**Nobet**), **Salaman** (**Sulayman**), **Hamal** (**Haml**), **Qidar** (**Qaidar**) (father of the **North Arabian Qedarite** tribe that controlled the region between the **Persian Gulf** and the **Sinai Peninsula**), **Isma'il** (**Ishmael**).*

Both of these last names, **Qidar** (**Kedar** in **NKJV**) and **Ishmael**, are quite Biblical, as is the rest of the line, from **Abraham to Adam**, which matches clearly the genealogies in **Chronicles 1:1-27** and **Luke 3:34-38**, though spelling variants do not make this obviously clear at first.

***Ibrahim Khalil-Ullah** (**Abraham**), **Ta'rikh** (**Azar**), **Tahur**, **Shahru**, **Abraghu** (**Ra'u**), **Taliqh** (**Falikh**), **Abir**, **Shale'** (**Shalikh**), **Arfakhad**, **Arfakhshad**, **Sam** - the **Semitic** family/race, which encompass a large group of families, **Nuh** (**Noah**), **Lumuk** (**Lamik**), **Mutu Shalkh** (**Mutwashlack**), **Akhnukh** (who is said to be **Prophet Idris**), **Yarad** (**Yarid**), **Mahla'il**, **Qinan** (**Qainan**), **Anush** (**Anusha**), **Sheeth**, **Adam Abu'l-Bashar** (**Adam**).*

Here is a line-up of this part of the genealogy, from the three faiths, also borrowed from Wikipedia.

<u>Jewish (Chronicles)</u>	<u>Christian (Luke)</u>	<u>Islamic (Ibn Ishaq)</u>
1. Adam	1. Adam	1. Adam
2. Shet	2. Seth	2. Sheeth
3. Enosh	3. Enos	3. Yaanish
4. Kenan	4. Cainan	4. Qaynan
5. Mahalalel	5. Mahalalel	5. Mahlil
6. Yered	6. Jared	6. Yard
7. Chanokh	7. Enoch	7. Akhnookh
8. Metushelach	8. Methuselah	8. Mattooshalakh
9. Lamekh	9. Lamech	9. Lamk
10. Noach	10. Noah	10. Nooh
11. Shem	11. Shem	11. Saam
12. Arpakhshad	12. Arphaxad	12. Arfakhshadh
13. Shelach	13. Cainan	13. Shaalikh
14. Ever	14. Shelah	14. Aybar
15. Peleg	15. Eber	15. Faalikh
16. Re'u	16. Peleg	16. Raa'oo
17. Serug	17. Reu	17. Saaroogh
18. Nachor	18. Serug	18. Naahoor
19. Terach	19. Nahor	19. Tarih
20. Avraham	20. Terah	20. Ibraheem
	21. Abraham	

The line of Jesus is simpler, although many have struggled with these genealogies in the Bible.

You will see above the direction Muhammad takes from Abraham, namely through Ishmael.

The Biblical text traces the Christ through Isaac, as follows: (Luke 3, Matthew 1)

Luke 3:

Jesus ... the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, the son of Jesus, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Symeon, the son of Judas, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, the son

of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham...

Luke knew the truth of the matter. It was only "supposed" that Jesus' Father was Joseph. That's what people thought. Luke knew that Jesus is the Son of God. He gave this genealogy of Mary's line to show that in His flesh He was indeed also the "Son of David" long prophesied to come into the world.

Why do the scholar's say that Luke's list is "Mary's" line? Well, Matthew has already established that Joseph's father was one named Jacob. See below. Here he is called "Heli." Not only is Heli different, but all the names from here back to David are likewise changed. The answer seems relatively simple. Matthew traces through Solomon a legal lineage. Jesus is the Son of David in both lines, but Solomon was told that the Kingdom would be taken from him, and eventually the Jewish Kings were told that no one in that line would rule again. So how to have a Messiah from David without coming against the revealed word of God? You have Him come from another son of David. You'll see his name in Luke: Nathan (not to be confused with the prophet by that name).

So both genealogies are valid and true. One shows his legal rights, the other His blood rights. And He shall rule the Throne of David on the basis of the promise, not the human line of the Throne of Israel. It's all in these two genealogies, along with a lot more, had we the time.

Here's Matthew's version:

Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren; and Judah begat Perez and Zerah of Tamar; and Perez begat Hezron; and Hezron begat Ram; and Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon; and Nahshon begat Salmon; and Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab; and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; and Jesse begat David the king. And David begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Uriah; and Solon of her that had been the wife of Uriah; and Solomon begat Rehoboam; and Rehoboam begat Abijah; and Abijah begat Asa; and Asa begat Jehoshaphat; and Jehoshaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Uzziah; and Uzziah begat Jotham; and Jotham begat Ahaz; and Ahaz begat Hezekiah; and Hezekiah begat Manasseh; and Manasseh begat Amon; and Amon begat Josiah; and Josiah begat Jechoniah and his brethren, at the time of the carrying away to Babylon. And after the carrying away to Babylon, Jechoniah begat Shealtiel; and Shealtiel begat Zerubbabel; and Zerubbabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; and Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; and Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

So how do Muhammad and Jesus the Christ compare in genealogy? First, the genealogies of Islam are not certain. We believe that it was through the Spirit of God that we were given Luke and Matthew.

Second, giving Islam the benefit of the doubt, and allowing that Muhammad was the descendant of Ishmael, and given that Jesus is the descendant of the Promised Son, Isaac, we are left with the very real distinction suggested.

While Muhammad is never hinted at in Scripture, still we see in the people that were to come from Ishmael a glimpse into their future state:

Ishmael himself was to be a "wild man; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."

Also, God says, "I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly..." We can't forget that part.

"But my covenant," He says in the next breath, "I will establish with Isaac..."

The promise of the land. The promise of incredible blessing. And a great people. In fact, in Abraham, and then in Isaac (Genesis 26:4) all the families of the earth are to be blessed. The promise was not fulfilled in Abraham or Isaac, or any sons of that era. The world has yet to see what this shall fully mean. But it is clear that Jesus Christ, Isaac's descendant, is poised and ready to fulfill this promise upon His return. Already this one Man has brought incredible blessing to untold millions through the years. But the best is yet to come, and it's in Jesus.

Isaac is a man of peace, who is looked after by the Father in the Father's desire that he be given a proper bride, namely Rebekkah. In all of this he is a picture of the coming Christ.

Muhammad has been given material blessing. But the price for that blessing to the rest of the world has been horrendous. God may be using "Ishmael's" greatness to purge the earth somewhat before Jesus comes with the final purge, but when Jesus comes, after that initial judgment, there shall be no more sin, no more sickness, eventually no more death. Then shall it truly be said that all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

Genealogies are important! Jesus is the true Son of the Promise. As great as Isaac is over Ishmael so Jesus is over Muhammad, and infinitely more, since He is God Almighty in addition!

5. Setting.

Muhammad was born and raised in the land of Arabia. Seventh-century Arabia was a land of many gods, punctuated here and there with Jewish and Christian communities. The Christianity that came to represent Jesus in that area however was a far cry from the Jerusalem variety of the first century. In the first place, all of Christendom had entered a spiritual recession by this time. Discipline was relaxed. Morality was decayed. The power of Roman politics had begun to snuff out the life of the once-vibrant fellowship of believers whose faith and example had toppled an Empire.

In its place was a power grab. All that the Roman Empire had been the supposed church wanted to be. And powerful men determined church doctrine by their own standards, not those of God's Word. Monasticism had begun to rise as a response to this worldliness, but that in itself could not stem the tide of evil that appeared as unregenerate pagans had flooded the membership rolls in response to the church's own persecution of its neighbors.

In Arabia there were many variations of the theme Christian. None of them vibrant echoes of the life of Jesus Christ, the resurrected One. Miracles had ceased. Life transformation was all but forgotten. It would be very hard for a citizen of that land to get a good grasp of what being a Christian was all about.

One such group was the Ebionites, that I described earlier. Christian in name but very Jewish in practice. It was this Torah-following Prophet-seeking Paul-hating group that produced one Waraquah, relative and friend of the family of Muhammad. He is the one who was called alongside the family to encourage young Muhammad when he was suddenly the victim of a series of frightening revelations, that had him thinking he was demon-possessed. Not to worry, said his Ebionite uncle, this is surely God. You are surely the Lord's prophet. Spoken by one who with his people had rejected the Lord's finest apostle, the endorsement was not worth a lot.

Jesus too was born and raised in a backslidden land. The Judaism of Jesus' day had fallen on hard times due to its stubborn rebellion against God and His ways. Jews had fallen so often into idolatry that it seemed they were abandoned. Babylonians, Assyrians, Medo-Persians, Greeks, and now Romans had moved into the Holy Land, a place made holy by the promises of God, not at present by His people.

But though it did appear bleak and forsaken, the Holy Land was once more to be visited. One Visit in particular, prophesied for this very time by the prophet Isaiah. See the unfolding of circumstances through the prophet's eyes:

Isaiah 8:22-9:7. "Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and they will be driven into darkness. Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her

who is distressed, as when at first he lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali... in Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined...For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called...Mighty God..."

Someone, whose name is God, will be born and given to this northern extremity of Israel, the place closest to the conquering hordes, thus the place mixed with the most evil, the place most vulnerable. He will eventually rule and reign all. Jesus Christ was born to a resident of Galilee, and lived most of His life and ministry there.

Though His setting was a place of darkness, within 30 years of His birth, a great light had shined there. Multitudes healed, some raised from the dead, many others delivered from demons, sins forgiven, life eternal shared, a church formed.

Muhammad managed to change his setting from a relative calm polytheism to a divided and chaotic series of battles over a new religion. Though we applaud the move to one god, we regret that that god is not the one described in our Bible, so that the strivings of those awful years come to naught but continued strife for the world.

Jesus too caused serious changes in His setting, and eventually in the entire Roman Empire. But on the way, countless people have found eternal life with Him, and countless others have felt the positive effects of the Spirit of God in man's individual and societal life.

6. The City and the House.

Muhammad grew up in a pagan setting, believing that the Kabah of holy Mecca was the house of God. Later people would come to believe that this Meccan shrine had originated with Adam, had been destroyed, and then been rebuilt by Abraham and Ishmael, founders of the true faith of God. Protected by a snake it was, says Lings. The holy house of God was a place of prostration, where Abraham himself prostrated before God. A place of prostration is a *masjid*, or *mosque*. Muhammad is said to have been the first to enter the rebuilt Kabah, at which time he put a mysterious "stone" in place.

But growing up, it was simply the place where everyone went to honor whomever his god happened to be. One called "Allah" was the god of Muhammad's family. They faithfully honored him, and longed for the day when he would be exalted over the other gods. This faith in a single god was inculcated into young Muhammad's thinking. It was eventually the driving force of his life, and is the driving force of Muslims around the world to this day.

As stated above, "Allah" is not the god of the Bible, though Muhammad attempted to bring this idea to his people. The Koran is filled with Bible-like stories, using Bible names, but most of them fall short of the Biblical account. Some of the stories are outright blasphemies, especially those dealing with the Son of God. Over and over Muhammad denies that Allah is able to have a Son. Thus over and over he lets us know that Allah, with whatever "good" qualities he may possess, is not our god, but a creation of the new religion.

Jesus was raised in the already-established Judaism of Moses. Its people were oppressed by Rome in this day. Most of the fervor of the days of yore was vanished. Smart but often ungodly men ruled the religion from Jerusalem, the city conquered by David 1000 years earlier, and heaped upon with promises by God, promises that seemed far from fulfillment in Jesus' day.

Nevertheless, the House of God in the city of peace, Jerusalem, was standing. Muhammad surely must have known there was only one house that God called His own, if he knew the Scriptures at all. God had dwelt with His people in the Mosaic tabernacle, even in the tabernacle of David, but it was that David who wanted a beautiful building to house the glory of God. His son was instead appointed to carry out God's -and David's - plan. The Solomonic Temple was a wonder of the age. But a few hundred years from its creation, it was destroyed by the Babylonians. The Persians allowed Israel to rebuild, but the resultant house of Zerubbabel lost much of the former glory. And when that building too was destroyed by Greeks, it was left to Rome, via the Edomite Herod, to raise it yet again.

It was Herod's Temple, well over 40 years in the building, that Jesus saw in His day. And though it was Roman, and though Herod was not Jewish, Jesus called it the House of God. Less than 40 years after His death and resurrection, that Temple too was destroyed. No other has risen since, though Jesus has prophesied, through Daniel and John, that another will come. Ezekiel seems to have seen the very structure that will exist after Jesus returns.

Jesus, like Muhammad, entered the Temple, made it a holy place, but then became the *rejected stone*. But Jesus knew that the true House of God is He Himself. Or in another picture, His Church. Where God lives, there is His House.

A clear distinction therefore exists between what Jesus knew and knows as the House of God, and Muhammad's idea. The Kabah was a place of polytheism, reduced through Muhammad's energetic campaigns in Arabia to a place for Allah, the god of Islam, but not Jehovah God, Father of the Lord Jesus. The Temple, and the Person of Jesus, and the Church of Jesus, these are the House of the true God of Israel, the place where His very presence lives and prospers forever.

7. Annunciation and Birth.

Recall that Martin Lings is using the best sources available to chronicle the life of Muhammad. But we have no extant copies of these sources until over 200 years after Muhammad's death. The biographies of Jesus began circulating within a couple of decades. Nevertheless we follow Lings, who writes his story as though it were all seriously true.

He claims that Muhammad's mother Aminah, widowed just before her son's birth, was "conscious of a light within her, and one day it shone forth from her so intensely that she could see the castles of Bostra in Syria." She also heard a voice declaring that her son was to be the "lord" of this people. She was also then given his name.

I need not comment much on the birth of Jesus, except to say how drastically different it was from Muhammad's, even yielding to the story of Lings as though it were true. With Jesus the entire night sky was lightened by angelic presence, a star appeared that guided inquiring astrologers from distant lands, and before it all, messengers from Heaven appeared to Joseph and Mary.

And as to the name given, He was to be called Jesus, Saviour, because He would save His people from their sins. We know now that it was not only Jews the angel had in mind here, but all who would call on the name that is above every name.

When the Baby was later presented in the Temple, the elders Anna and Simeon knew Who He was and spoke words of the Holy Spirit over Him.

No man ever entered this world with more pageantry, more preparation, more prophetic release.

Both Muhammad and Jesus were raised without their real fathers, in one sense. Muhammad's father was taken ill and died just before his birth. Grandpa took him under his wing from that time. Jesus' true Father was in Heaven, where He had always been. And in His place as an earthly surrogate, Joseph the husband of Mary raised the Son of God.

Again the stories are not parallel, not to be compared. Jesus Christ was sent from and cared for by, Heaven itself. He was not allowed to be spoiled or privileged, as the unfolding story will prove, but neither was He ever a Fatherless wanderer, made to grope His way to an identity. All other men of all other times, however favored or not favored among men or even by God, are men at best, with the ups and downs that men must face. Muhammad included.

8. The Formative Years.

Muhammad was raised in the desert. It was the custom of his people to send children to barren places such as this to learn the "beauty of speech" of the desert people and a host of other lessons. For up to eight years a child would be trained by a Bedouin tribe. In Muhammad's case, the tribe was Bani Sad Bakr.

As Rome later added fables to the truth of Jesus, so it seems have the legends arisen regarding the Arabian. It is said that a desert woman who offered her near empty breasts to feed Muhammad, suddenly experienced the filling of same, along with the rejuvenating of all her impoverished and hungry animals!

After two years of weaning, it is said, per Lings, that two angels opened his chest and cleansed his heart with snow. We will find later that that heart still had Adam's touch on it as well.

Three years were then spent in Mecca, and at age 6 he visited Medina, that would have such an important part in his life in years to come. There his mother died.

His grandfather truly believed in little Muhammad's future greatness, and asked him tough questions, which Muhammad was always able to answer. Then grandfather died and his uncle Abu Talib took charge. A truly tragic childhood. His family was now very poor and he was forced to work as a shepherd.

Customs in Judea differed radically from those in Arabia. The Jewish child was trained in Hebrew and the Torah, God's language and God's law. Soon he was entered into a trade. Jesus became a carpenter. This also was a poor family. To work at a low-class job was not a thing of which to be ashamed. Never did Mary and Joseph counsel Jesus that he must seek his fortune in the world. This boy was set on more serious matters.

Working with His hands and dealing with people, that was His upbringing. All we know for certain is that Jesus "increased in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man." All else is fantasy and we will in no way countenance such on the Jesus side of this story.

We do know that at age 12 Jesus also was confronted with a series of hard questions, as we mentioned earlier. These questions were from the religious leaders of His day, and they were asked from inside the Temple, the House of God. We assume that all answers given were correct.

Mary nursed her own child. So it was said of her by envious mothers many years later. Certainly it would have been the blessing of blessings to give one's milk to the Son of God! Yes, but greater blessings are pronounced on those who receive the pure milk of the Word of God, and honor it, said Jesus.

Jesus also had dealings in the desert. He too was not "protected" from the evil. Though only there for 40 days, during that time Jesus did not eat or drink. Following this awful hunger the enemy came and tempted Him, to no avail. This would be only one of many victories over the Enemy that would serve to secure our salvation. The Lamb of God had to be a perfect one. Though tempted in every point as are we, never did Jesus sin.

This in contrast to Muhammad, though Lings' book does not offer much in the area of weakness in the Prophet. We'll deal with Muhammad's sinfulness at other times.

9. Identified.

Here the Christian church is brought sadly into the story of Muhammad. The monastic movement was begun as a reaction to the worldliness that had crept into the church and wrested from it its former glory. Monks centered on the inner life. For some of these men we are grateful and in fact, in debt, as they discovered their own sinfulness and the cure for it. Martin Luther was a monk. But others went to extremes in lifestyle and teaching that are as unacceptable as Luther's was acceptable. Being a monk in and of itself is not the issue, but what monastic living drives one to believe and do.

There was one Bahira who lived in the early days of Muhammad's life. He had been reading documents about a prophet to come. One day, per Lings, he saw a cloud over a caravan in which Muhammad was traveling. The caravan stopped, and in a story that reads much like Samuel's picking out the future king of Israel from Jesse's sons, we learn that Muhammad is indeed the chosen prophet foreseen by the document Bahira had been reading.

True? Supernatural? You will be asking yourself this question throughout as Lings, a dignified scholar of no mean reputation, treats these miraculous occurrences so casually. Keep in mind that supernatural is not the key. From Heaven, is the key. When we see what Muhammad believed and taught about the Son of God, we will no longer worry whether his life was marked with occurrences "above nature." We will simply identify the source as above or below.

How was Jesus identified? The Spirit of God took a bodily form, that of a dove, and descended publicly on Jesus. John the Baptist was an eyewitness of this event, and the testimony was recorded for all time. Here, said John, is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This was in keeping with what the angels had said about Jesus. He is Saviour. He came to deal with sin. One would think from reading current Christian literature that He came to make us rich and happy in the world's sense. But no, it was always about sin, and still is.

Jesus' identification was clear, His mission was spelled out. He is to eradicate sin.

Muhammad is to be a prophet. What Jesus has already done for sin in the hearts of millions, and what He plans to do on His return, will make the statements made about Him satisfactory. But in what sense Muhammad was a prophet is yet to be seen. Prophets prophesy, but Muhammad never did that. Prophets work miracles, but by his own admission in the Koran, he never did that either. Then we can just say that prophets speak the words of God to their generation. Those who believe that Muhammad spoke truth in his recitations (Koran) therefore can accept him as prophet on that basis. But those of us who do not believe that he was speaking God's words must say that he is not a prophet on that basis either. Unfortunately there is only one other type of prophet we can name, and that we have already done.

10. Marriage and family

At first it seems we have come to a topic which again does not have content for both men. Muhammad was married. Again and again he was married. Some say there were about 15 wives. His own teachings limited him to four, but one day a "revelation" came that freed him from the hindrances of the common Muslim.

By age 20 or so, Muhammad was becoming more and more involved in the business world. He was astute in this field, and was gaining a reputation as one who could be trusted, and one who was quite efficient. At age 25, this combination got the attention of a 40-year-old wealthy merchant named Khadijah. She had been twice married already. Initially she hired Muhammad to deliver goods. Enamored by his character and style, she proposed to him in the normal method of the day, and he accepted.

The story goes that an angel promised him a 6-year-old girl as his bride when he was 52. There was no intimacy until the little girl, Aisha, was 9. Lings tries to paint Muhammad here in youthful colors, a man who looked maybe half his age. Given that he had the appearance of a 26-year-old, then, we still think it odd that he would be sharing wedded bliss with a girl who was out playing with her friends on their wedding day.

Later, he married a slave girl from Egypt. Mariyah eventually gave him a son, but not before he had banned her from his presence because of the jealousies arising at home. Then came another convenient reading from Allah, basically telling him to cancel the ban, and if necessary divorce the complaining wives, all of whom could easily be replaced by other women. This reading is now chapter 66 in the Koran. It certainly solved a lot of problems.

He married several other women from this tribe or that, at the end of every battle, or so it seems, as, king-like, he began to consolidate power throughout the region.

Stories are told of the confusion in his house, and the disrespect with which he was treated by his wives, to the consternation of Arab men who were used to being honored in their home.

But he was Muhammad. He was the Prophet. And now he had a revelation to support his family choices. And oh yes, the revelation included the hitherto unknown fact that not only Lot's wife, but also Noah's, was corrupt and turned from God, whereas the wife of Pharaoh repented and was saved. Look out, wives, says the Koran to these offending females, you can be replaced, and rejected by God!

The Bible, in both Old and New Testament, frowns upon multiple marriages. Adam and Eve are looked to as the pattern given by God. Jesus suggested that persons who marry more than one person, without infidelity or death occurring, are hard of heart, weak in character. The many wives of David and Solomon are not given us as patterns for godly character but examples of the grace of God, His using of imperfect people to accomplish His perfect will.

Jesus never married. But it is unfair to leave it there. I speculate here, but I believe that because the Bible says He was tempted in all points as are we, that sexual temptation was a reality also. Not for a moment did He yield, but only because of the constant contact with the Father. Jesus had no illicit relationships with women, but neither did He have to ignore them in fear.

Mary Magdalene and the woman at the well are two examples of females who related to Him and he with them, in purity. As He would later share with Paul, the taking of a wife can slow the progress of the work of God. It is literally true that Jesus Christ was married to His work, but His work was us.

It is not stretching things to call God's people the bride of Christ, for such language is in the New Testament record. Though the marriage has not yet been consummated, we are all His intended. Like Muhammad, Jesus is to be married to a broad range of women, and men too, but unlike Muhammad, Jesus' character is in no way questioned.

Muhammad's world viewed marriage as the essence of satisfaction here. In fact, Islamic Heaven is physical union with many virgins who remain virgins forever. Jesus' description of Heaven claims that there will not be marriage as we know it in that place, but we shall be as the angels of God. The union that is coming is of the Spirit, and far transcends anything that can be worked up by the human body. The Body of Christ, comprised of a huge number of person-parts will come together with Jesus in everlasting joy never before experienced by mere mortals.

11. The revelations

There is a clear distinction between Jesus and Muhammad in the area of revelation.

The Word claims that Jesus was identified publicly, and that a Voice from Heaven announced to witnesses that Jesus Christ is the very Son of God, and that God is pleased with Him. There was constant interaction between Father and Son for thirty years, for the truth is that Jesus is God, but when it was time for Jesus to be revealed to the world and His own, He left nothing to chance.

Jesus' own "recitations", as the sermon on the mount, were not the result of an epileptic-like seizure or mystical moment. Jesus and the Father flowed together in perfect union, so that He could simply listen to what the Father was saying in his mind and heart, and speak it out with his mouth.

No one took notes at his meetings. But He promised His disciples that when they were about to write these teachings down, the Holy Spirit of God would bring everything to their remembrance that was needful for the church to hear.

Muhammad's first revelations are of a totally different variety, and clouded with such mystery that we shall always be forced to ask, Did he really receive anything? or, Was his message from the enemy? or, Was this revelation a result of a physical illness?

At age 40, while meditating in a cave in Mt. Hira, a personage he came to identify with Gabriel began to "embrace" him to the point of overwhelming his person, and telling him to recite he knew not what. Gabriel visited him all his life, say some of the records. Later he would say that the revelations were preceded by a bell. The angel was like a man. Witnesses to later events would describe them as are occult manifestations described today. Sweat. Pangs. Seizure. Temperature change.

He would listen to what was being said, then pass the words on to followers, who would immediately afterward write down bits and pieces of revelation on a huge assortment of materials that can be used for recording. Leather, pieces of bone...

Given the memories of men and comparing that to the promise of Divine Assistance from the Spirit, we must conclude that in this category also, Jesus is better. Better words, and better means of recording them for all time.

Better words? Nothing in the Bible has ever been proved to be false, though much is not according to the workings of the mind, much is so difficult. But in the Koran are contradictions and errors of fact.

Better means? There was much wrangling at the beginning as to what was truly Koranic. It took strong men to have all other "recitations" destroyed, leaving as holy only what had not been consigned to the flames.

12. Worship

Lings points out that the angel Gabriel taught Muhammad how to worship. The rituals that one sees in Muslim mosques of our day are meant to be replicas of the religious forms taught the Arabian. Prostrate. Five times a day. And so on.

Some might call this vain repetition. Lings tells a story of a burdened family that approached Muhammad asking for one of the captive slaves to be given them after a hard-fought battle. Instead of giving them what they asked for, Muhammad taught them to say many repetitions of phrases like "Glory be to God," "Praise be to God," "God is most great," etc. One can only imagine that it was the current Romanist religious system that gave Muhammad his ideas. It seems he had never met a genuine Christ-follower.

Worship, said Jesus, is an affair of the Spirit of God as wedded to the spirit of man. It is not in a particular place or in a particular way. The Father yearns for people who will worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Though we can easily believe that Jesus was taught the Jewish forms of worship as a child, and though we see Him in serious prayer, lifting His eyes to Heaven, the emphasis of Jesus and worship in the account, is of the worship that was directed to Himself, by others. Disciples, the healed, the delivered, bowed before Him and gave Him glory. Never once did He reject it. In fact He could innocently pray, "Father... glorify Your Son...glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

A person who has gotten hold of a truth like that does not need to be taught how to worship. Whether Jesus or His followers, worship is spontaneous, from the heart. To know Him is to worship Him.

Just for the record, Muhammad never claimed to be Divine, though some erstwhile moderns have tried to thrust this role on him. But in this area of the worship of God, it is clear that Jesus Christ had the deeper insights. We continue to wonder why Muhammad claims to have a final revelation if his revelation does not even include such very important facts from Jesus' life.

13. Miracles.

Muhammad worked no miracle. That is his own testimony in the Koran. Lings shows him involved often in the miraculous, based on hadith literature. In a case as important as this, I part company with Lings and offer the official Koranic teaching.

Muhammad is criticized by such impotence often in the Koran. People who flock to him want to know why, if he is a prophet of God, he works no miracle. They demand an angelic visit! His response in at least a couple of places is that the words they are hearing, the Koran, are the miracle. Look at the style, look at the substance, the content, and know that God is doing a miracle by the very fact that I am speaking so eloquently, words that are not even mine. And as for the angel they requested, he kept insisting that Gabriel was the source of his revelations.

To me, that is a weak defense:

"Show me a miracle."

"Listen to my words."

"Prove your words with a miracle."

"No, the words themselves, just the words!"

I am not quoting the Koran, just trying to get inside what is being said. It seems that in Islam it is the "Word" made to a book, whereas in Christ it is the [Living] Word made flesh.

Jesus began with a similar statement in John 14. I paraphrase. "Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? These words I speak are not from Me, but from the Father in Me!"

But Jesus took it a step farther: "Believe Me, that I am in the Father [just because I say it], or else *believe me for the very works' sake.*"

"Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe," said Jesus. Knowing that, He showed them signs and wonders constantly. I need not catalogue this list, for it is well known throughout the world. Jesus was a miracle worker. God gave Him this unprecedented power, says John, so that "you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

He gave such powers to all His prophets. He gave no such power to Muhammad. That's what Muhammad said. And that is the truth.

14. Disciples

Lings tells accounts of individuals who received visions and miracles individually and were told to follow Muhammad. I am told that many Muslims in our day are likewise having visions of Jesus, and being told to come out and follow Him.

That's the problem with individual visions. Undoubtedly God has appeared to people in the past via visions, angelic visitors, dreams. But do I know who they are? Do you?

By far the greater number of disciples began to flock to Muhammad later because of the growing political threat he posed. His slaughter at Badr, for example, caused more tribes to unite to his cause. Makes sense to me.

A story is told, and I believe it is self-deprecating but typical of the man, of a time when Muhammad was actively seeking powerful allies to meet the growing threat of those who would destroy the new religion. While he was earnestly beseeching one such candidate, a blind man came by, asking for assistance. Muhammad ignored him.

Jesus, of course, heard the cries of the blind. He not only cared about them, He allowed the power of God to match His compassion. Blind eyes could see again.

Today Islam's numbers are maintained by the birth process and the continued inherent threats. Those who are born in a Muslim country are taught the basics of the faith from childhood, and most stay with it. They are taught that to leave it means eternal hell, over and over in the Koran. I do not say that Muhammad did not or does not obtain disciples by teaching, but at least in our day, these adherents are often not told the entire truth about Islam. Even non-Arabic Koran translations have been "doctored" for Western consumption.

And frankly, the entrance requirements for Islam are quite simple. Believe in Allah. Believe in Muhammad. Make a statement. Say the words, "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of god." Similar requirements exist for much of the religious world. Only in Christ is full heart repentance demanded, and a new life from Heaven given in exchange for that old one. "You must be born again," is the actual wording of the Master. Prayers and confessions may come later, but the changed heart is the way to get in.

Again, isn't it strange that a religion that claimed at first merely to be a revision, an update, of the religion of "the Book", Jewish and Christian, makes no mention of Jesus at all in its entrance requirements?

Jesus' call to discipleship was direct. He saw people that the Lord showed Him in prayer, and simply called them to Himself. Everyone He called responded. Then as the power - not political but miraculous - of God began to be manifested in miracle after miracle of healing and

provision, others came to Him attracted by the wonders. They loved His message of forgiveness, though often they did not listen to the message of taking up the cross, and they eventually deserted Him when things got tough. Unlike Muhammad, Jesus offered no military protection for His followers.

Jesus continues to call people directly to Himself. They hear His Voice in their spirit man, they love Him, they follow Him to the death and then walk with Him in Heaven. But as then, there are those who follow for the wrong reasons. Both faiths have had their share of deserters.

It is a good time for all who hear this message to ask, Why do I follow Muhammad or Jesus? Because my parents did? Because it is legally protected and safe? Because I am financially prosperous and in good health? Because I've grown up in this faith and gotten connected to a lot of nice people?

Or because I am in perfect agreement with what he taught? Because He is the only hope of the world? Because with him I can live in inner peace now and eternal peace in heaven? Because I love Him with all my heart?

Time and truth and persecution will weed out true disciples on both sides.

15. Ultimate goals

Muhammad was not interested in just starting a religion. He called all men everywhere to come out of idolatry to the one true god. Unfortunately the one true god of Islam is not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore not the God of the Bible.

Through the writings of the Koran we understand that Muhammad envisioned a world under Allah's control. That's religious and military control. The goal has not changed. "Allah is greater," is the shout and the passion of true Muslims. Every nation they have conquered has come under Islamic law. Democracy is, as it was for the Romanists who moved to the Western world a few hundred years ago, a means to an end. The end is a Theocracy. An even brief look at the Muslim nations of the world will bear this out.

So do I contrast Jesus here, and say that all He really wants is a spiritual kingdom, a place where freedom of religion prevails, a place of liberty somewhat like the founding fathers of America envisioned? Does Jesus wish for democracy to prevail eternally?

Or does He too envision world control? What saith the Word?

God has set Jesus on the holy hill called Zion, in prophecy, not because the view is good up there. Jesus will rule and reign from that place. One day the kingdoms of this world, Islamic and

democratic alike, will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. And Jesus shall reign forever and ever.

Muhammad and Jesus have nearly identical goals.

We see in Matthew 4 the first intimations of a challenge to the Lordship of Jesus. Satan promises Jesus the kingdoms of the world in exchange for worship. Jesus refuses Him because He knows He shall have that world by conquest one day. Satan, and anyone trying for world power, is a usurper.

Call the roll of the power hungry of the earth. Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus, Caesar, Hitler, Napoleon. Where are they now? And where is Jesus now? Quietly but powerfully gathering a people. And that people will reign with Him when he comes. Muhammad's people seem to be on the rise, but we fear no change to the original plan. Jesus is the coming King. His goals will be met.

16. Opposition

Both Muhammad and Jesus were at first tolerated then opposed severely by those who desired the status quo. Such will it ever be when new ideas come to a community. In both cases, it was a religious community that was being invaded with these ideas. With Muhammad, a military invasion followed the original introduction of his religion. Jesus continued to go about doing good for those in need, but the more good He did, the more that evil men hated Him.

Both were accused of being demon-possessed. In Muhammad's case, that accusation came from himself at first. Jesus never had such doubts about His identity. Before He was thrust into the wilderness to be savagely tempted of the Devil, He had heard the Voice of the Father claiming that He, Jesus, was the Son in whom He, the Father, delighted.

Families were divided over both men. Their pull was real but not all-inclusive enough to make everyone feel comfortable in leaving all for them. There were those who loved them passionately and others who hated them with the same zeal. The lovers and haters of Muhammad eventually took up arms.

So with the haters of Jesus. But His lovers laid them down. True followers of Jesus through the centuries have been in their Christian experience promoters of the peace the Gospel gives through its own power, not the power of clubs and swords and guns.

Muhammad's idea of "Prophet" was not the Biblical model. He seemed to think that military might made his revelations right. Lings quotes him as giving this pre-war encouragement at one of his many battles:

"It is not for a Prophet, when he hath put on his armor, to take it off until God hath judged between him and his enemies. So look to what I bade you do, and do it, and go forward in the Name of Allah. The victory is yours, if ye be steadfast."

This is the language of the military rulers of men, not the armies of Heaven and God's people, who have a totally different sort of prophet, different armor, different God, and different victory.

Muhammad's greatest men were military heroes. Jesus taught His men that the greatest were to be servants of all, a life which He modeled.

Interestingly enough, poets were among Muhammad's verbal attackers. Muhammad made it clear that such men must die. The contrast of this thinking with that of Jesus is clear. Consider all those who lifted their hands against God the Son in the final days of His life here. And consider His response.

17. Heaven and Hell

Muhammad's heaven is based on man's fleshly desires. Lots of good food. Shade for sleep. Here men will have non-ending sexual encounters with virgins who will ever remain virgins. It's not at first clear how the women, the non-virgins, will be occupying their time.

Besides men and women, "jinns" have a possibility of reaching the Promised Land, too. Jinns in Islam are troublesome spirits, something like demons.

The hell of Muhammad is a constant theme of the Koran. All but Muslims will be there. However, the Koran adds that if God can find the goodness of "weight of a grain of mustard seed" in any man in hell, that man will be lifted out and placed at the entrance to Paradise.

Another serious difference between the afterlife of Jesus and Muhammad: the presence of the Divine. Muhammad's future land seems to be a place where Allah places people, as he himself goes on with whatever he was doing.

In the Christian "by and by", Jesus promises that he Himself will be present, and will in fact be the center of things. Astoundingly enough we see the entire headquarters of the Heavenly realm, Father and Son and all the angels, moving to this planet and actually fellowshiping eternally with men.

With that sort of fellowship, we will not be in need of the virgins, thank you. And our food will be, to be in His Presence.

As to people being taken out of hell, Jesus taught no such thing. Hell is as eternal as Heaven. And evil spirits in Heaven? No, not in God's Heaven. Nothing that defiles will ever enter there.

Muhammad promised heaven, or paradise, to all who would go to battle with him, and especially to his "10 companions", the group created and named in his effort perhaps to duplicate the "12 disciples" of Jesus, to whom Heaven was also promised.

But Heaven is promised to any faithful follower of Jesus today. Those who suffer with Him are in fact told they will reign with him. Now, humans reigning in the future is not something I ran across as I traveled through the Koran. Pleasure unimaginable, of a fleshly sort, but no responsibility. The concept of Allah's aloofness from His creation would allow none of this sort of thing.

Jesus has come to be sure that our God is not aloof. Jesus is our God.

18. Transfiguration

Lings tells the standard tale of Muhammad's catching up into glory. Gabriel shows up one night and takes him to mount an animal which proceeds to transport him to Jerusalem. Here he is met by Abraham, Moses, Jesus and others, prophets all in Islam's sight. He leads them all in a prayer meeting before being taken up into the seventh heaven. When he arrives there, the persons with whom he had just prayed are reassembled! Of course, now they are "transfigured" into their heavenly forms. Quite a few interesting things transpired, not the least of which was his Abraham-like conversation with Allah during which he talked God into relenting on his 50-prayer-a-day life sentence. By the time the two had finished talking, it was down to 5, the very prayer system used by Muslims today.

I do not believe this story, but only for one reason: anything that purports to be from God, and places Jesus in a subordinate position, is false on the surface, and false all the way through. The true transfiguration story is told in the Gospels. In this story, there were eyewitnesses. Peter was still talking about it when he wrote his first letter (I Peter 1:16-21). He certainly remembers how embarrassed he was when it all unfolded.

He and his two friends James and John were asked to accompany Jesus to the top of a hill. There Jesus was changed from His human form into someone gloriously different. We have never heard all the details. But of the four people on the mount at that time, there was no question as to Who was superior. And it didn't stop there. Two more people showed up. Moses

and Elijah, the two greatest prophets mentioned in the Old Testament. Now there are six. Still Jesus shines as brightest. Peter attempts to start a conversation but is hushed by the announcement of the Father, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Does any thinking person believe that if Muhammad had been at such a meeting, he would be in charge of it?

Jesus is subordinate to no one, yet freely gives His life for us on a Roman cross. Muhammad cannot match the glory of the Son, nor even His servitude. The Koran tries in some places to lump together all the Books and all the Messengers and claim they are all equal in Allah's sight. No. One is distinct. The Word. Written or human, the Word of God become flesh stands out from the pack so radically as not to be worthy of mention.

19. The nature of the domain

We have actually touched on it much above, but a separate category is probably in order. Islam was forced often to make alliances with the tribes that dotted the desert of Arabia. Many come to him for political alliance. All of them want protection from enemies. It is a natural thing, and reminds us of Israel's situation.

But in the seventh century A.D. we are long past those Israel days. Islam should know this. When Jesus' disciples wanted to send down fire on cities He let them know that they were unaware of their own motivation. That things had changed. That that sort of force and power was to be suspended for now. Jesus had no military agenda. When trouble came, Jesus often just walked away. Or the power of God ruled the situation.

True prophets of God do not ask for or need the protection of men.

But Muhammad's life story is a bloody one. Attacks on the caravans from Mecca. Attacks on neighboring tribes that seemed not to be in sympathy. Murder and pillage. And the promise of eternal life to all his brave warriors who conducted "holy war" in the name of Allah.

That has not changed today, by the way. And it may have measures of success, depending on how the Lord wants to use His enemies to bless His Kingdom. But this sort of warfare, whether by Muslims or Crusaders or Holy warriors of any generation, will not earn one eternal bliss and eternal favor with God.

Vengeance belongs to Jesus, and He will finish the military campaign all alone one day, maybe soon.

20. The flight (Hijrah) and the Triumph

Political pressures mounted so high in Muhammad's home city of Mecca that he was forced, along with his followers, to flee north to the city known then as Yathrib, now as Medina. The Jews in particular of that area seemed to accept Muhammad. Historically the Jewish people have yielded to the appeals of false Messiahs. The One Messiah who met all the requirements of the prophecies, they seem to have overlooked.

At any rate, the climate was right for a leader to come in and help settle the disputes between this and that Arabian tribe. Muhammad thus cut all ties, at least for awhile, to his home land, all that was near and dear. He had been soundly rejected by the Meccans and the Meccan religion. He would have to start over.

What can I compare this to in the life of Jesus Christ? My Lord also left His Home Land to sojourn in a place that was foreign to Him. From the heavenlies it had become obvious to the Father that things on Earth must be corrected once and for all. He would send His Son into this hostile environment on a mission of love. No armies followed Him here, except for the invisible hosts of heaven that had been all but silenced by Heaven's orders. There was to be natural protection but no show of force. He would speak the Father's words, do what He came to do, and return.

So Muhammad fled from a city's rejection to a place of refuge. Jesus came from a place of acceptance to a city's rejection.

Both returned to their place of origin by the end of the written record. Muhammad triumphantly entered Mecca and took authority over the Holy Place and all the citizenry. Arabia would eventually fall to Muhammad's sword, as well as most of the Middle East and Northern Africa. The word and the sword of Islam continues conquering men's lands and persons to this day.

Jesus returned to Heaven having conquered sin and death, and waits there for a little while before He conquers the world too. We speak of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem that occurred one week before His death, and we are thrilled with our Lord's work. But the ultimate triumph occurred weeks later when He ascended to the Father, victory in hand, mission accomplished.

During our day, without the sword, He conquers the hearts of men one by one all over the planet.

21. Monument builder

Wherever Muhammad went he erected a mosque, a place of prostration before Allah. Though he talked much of the connection between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, his program was totally separate from theirs. The mosques were not Jewish. They were not Christian. They were monuments to Allah and his prophet.

Jesus built nothing. Except a church, the future of which is rock-solid and eternal. It has existed for all these centuries and will exist forever. Death, the very gates of hell, cannot stop the church. Yet you will not find even one physical monument that Jesus built so that we could look back and remember it. Our call to remembrance is only through a crust of bread and a sip of wine.

Jesus came to save the House of Israel, not to start a new house. The church was meant to house Jew and Gentile, but the message of salvation was to continue. Not a new religion but new life. He totally identified with His people, though He called them to repent.

22. Modus operandi

"If you are attacked and wronged, it is okay to defend yourself in any way necessary," said Muhammad, in essence. "Those who persecute you for your religion, fight them, so that there will always be freedom of religion." "Inflict only the punishment you have suffered."

Muhammad used this justification to attack Meccan camel caravans when he had migrated to Medina, looting and killing as necessary. After all, Mecca had wronged him. He was just getting even. He actually declared war on the city of Mecca and eventually won that war, and many more.

Sounds Mosaic.

And what could be wrong with freedom of religion? Should we not fight for this priceless privilege? With the sword if necessary?

Sounds American.

Muhammad further enjoined, If you hear of an evil man stirring up trouble, "who will remind you of Satan," kill him!

That sounds logical enough.

But my commitment in this study is to compare the words and lives of Muhammad and Jesus. Not Muhammad and logic, or Muhammad and Moses, or Muhammad and America. Jesus sounds decidedly different here.

"...I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also..."

"...I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."

As for those Satan look-alikes and wannabes: Jesus cast out demons. He delivered people from evil. His very name means deliverance. And He taught His people to pray "deliver us from evil." Deliverance is a spiritual thing, not a first-cousin to murder.

Lings relates how Muhammad stood by praying as his men tortured enemy soldiers. When the Meccans counter-attacked Muhammad at the famous battle of Badr, he simply prayed, O Lord, destroy them! Like the Pope promising indulgences to Crusaders, he promised his men then and always that if they would fight for him, they would enter Paradise, a promise given by Jesus only to a dying thief who believed in Him. Many Meccans were then slaughtered. Others were taken captive, females passed around to worthy soldiers.

"If you overcome them in war, make an example of them, to strike fear..." he says.

Things were so bad at Badr that many of the Jews woke up to the reality of this new religion. They are fully awake today, of course, as Islam and Judaism, Ishmael and Isaac, continue their feud.

By contrast, Jesus weeps over evil Jerusalem, though He knows a similar fate is coming to them as to Mecca. Worse, in fact. He shows us the heart of the Father who delights not in the death of the wicked, even when He must initiate that sentence.

"You know not what spirit you are of," could easily be said to Muhammad, who along with Allah seems to delight in all the blood being shed. No "love your enemies" here. Definitely not the god of the Bible.

Once more Muhammad descends to pre-Jesus days when our enemies were men and nations that needed to be put in order by God's people. Forgotten by this new and supposedly improved religion is the whole concept of the Jesus event and what it means for us now and eternally.

23. Battle record.

At the Battle of Uhud, Muhammad was defeated, and received a personal wound. His forces have often been defeated through the centuries, and will continue to be. This is the nature of warfare in the world. Even the greatest of generals lose at times.

All but one, the very greatest. Jesus Christ has never been defeated. And when His plans have been followed, whether with Old Testament saints, or in our personal lives, His people are never defeated either. "Of those you have given Me, I have lost none," Jesus could and still can report. He cannot lose. It is not in His nature.

The cross, you say? The greatest victory of all, in light of the fact that multitudes of angels were at His disposal. His giving of life on the cross was voluntary, an unheard of military strategy, used by One Who knew that the battle's outcome would so soon be reversed.

Jesus is wounded by our lack of attention to Him, for sure. He grieves over our sin. But that sort of wounding is in an altogether different league from those whose business it is to steal, kill, and destroy.

24. Sin

We have touched on this above, but let us be crystal clear in the distinction between Muhammad and Jesus in the area of sin and character. Jesus was tempted in all points as are we, but was without sin. Muhammad was tempted, and like the rest of us, yielded to temptation.

Lings tells the story of the night Muhammad inadvertently caught a glimpse of the scantily-clad wife of his adopted son. He immediately desired her. Later he gets a revelation that it is perfectly acceptable for his son to divorce this woman and yield her to Muhammad, a man of almost 60 by this time. This will be his 5th wife. He is given permission not only to take another man's wife but to exceed the normal Muslim limit of four wives.

So much of what we would call character flaw, namely, his sexual life and his anger and his much bloodshed, is covered over by revelations that make it all sound holy and appropriate for an advanced man of God.

Nevertheless they don't come any more advanced than Jesus of Nazareth, and never once did He yield to such things. And that record is in the same Book that tells of adulterer David and polygamist Solomon and deceiver Jacob and all the rest. Never has there been a holy book with such un-holy revelations about its main characters. But of Jesus it is said that the Devil had

nothing in Him. The only sin He ever experienced was yours and mine, when He became sin for us.

We must add that the only righteousness the born again have ever experienced is what Jesus put to our account on the day of His death.

25. Response to sin.

One day a group of Jewish elders came to Jesus with a woman who had just been caught in the act of adultery. We are left to speculate as to how they happened to catch her. Jesus did not see a sinner before Him but a broken soul. The woman had sinned. She knew it. The town now knew it. Of course Jesus knew it. But she was sorry, and ashamed. No need to try to express that to the Jewish leadership. The law was the law. She deserved to die. As we all do.

Jesus is not easy on sin. He and His Father are one in condemning sinful acts and commanding it to stop. They are also one in mercy and forgiveness. The price for sin would be paid soon enough. For now it was the time to forgive. And He did.

One day Muhammad's favorite wife, that he had married when she was but a child, was accused, in her teen years, of sexual sin. We have no way of knowing the truth of the matter, so we will not enter into that discussion. The fallout from the event was that tongues began to wag. Slander was everywhere. Immediately Muhammad's closest friends, those who knew Islam the best, suggested that the slanderers, not the wife, be killed. This was the fruit of the teachings of many years. Sin is to be dealt with violently and immediately.

In this case, another timely revelation intervened, and no one had to be killed after all. The slanderers were scourged instead.

26. The world.

Muhammad wanted a specific religious experience to come out of all his efforts. But he was willing to be intertwined with worldly connections if need be. After years of struggle with Mecca from his Medina sanctuary, a revelation confirmed that a treaty with Mecca was the thing to do. Thus he became wedded to the very system he had decried all this time. Later he overcame Mecca.

Jesus taught His followers to live at peace with all men, to be sure, but also to come out from the world and be separate. No ties, compared to the yoking of two oxen, were considered

healthy to the child of God. The church must operate in the world, but be separated from it as far as ultimate dependence.

We grieve when we see Christian churches sending to the streets men with buckets to collect money for their assembly. God has ordained that the people of God care for their own needs and only reach out to the world to give, not to receive. God cares for His own.

Let it not be said that the church needs the government for its protection, its wealth, its power, its program. That is not who we are. The very windows of Heaven open when God's people are faithful to give to God.

27. Love.

Also mentioned above. Let me clarify.

Muhammad does not seem to have operated out of love, but rather out of a desire for greatness, then the spirit of revenge. There may have been a religious thread running through it all, but the god he promoted, also never acted like our loving Heavenly Father. Of course, he could not, for the whole idea of fatherhood made him angry.

I should not say there is absolutely no love in Islam or in the Koran. Every system, every religion, every organization, somehow manages to run across love at one time or another. The Koran even says, "It may be that God will establish love between you and those with whom ye are at enmity."

This was a revelation to Muhammad and his people. It is THE revelation of Scripture. Our God is love, and "he who lives in love lives in God." Love is held up among us as the number one goal of all our virtues. Even greater than faith and hope and all the good works put together is a heart filled, like God's, with love.

Greater love has no one than this, said Jesus, that a man lay down his life for his friends. This is what Jesus did. He is perfect love in human form.

28. Sickness.

We speak it not in pride, but with joy we can announce that Jesus was never sick. He healed sicknesses, even raised the dead. But He never so much as caught a cold, according to the Scriptural record. Though sickness is on many pages of the Biblical text, since Adam's sin, no sickness ever touched the Son of Man.

Muhammad is seen as sick at least once in the narratives, and this time by sorcery. He became very weak and probably scared those around him with his appearance of one about to die. The story is that he was given more "surahs", revelations to add to the Koranic collection, for his healing.

29. The judge.

Often people would come to Muhammad asking that their problems be solved by him. Often he was glad to do so. Every dispute that was settled could only raise his star a little higher in the estimation of his growing following.

Although Moses entered into this behavior in the wilderness with Israel, Jesus never did. "Who made me a judge over you?" Jesus said to a man who wanted the Lord of Heaven to solve His family's inheritance dispute. But He went on to give the man the best help he could receive in this situation, a warning against greed.

Jesus was the Master teacher, and gave His people principles by which with careful thought and meditation on the truth, they could solve their own problems.

Muhammad created a dependence on himself that would spell loyalty down the road.

30. Anger

Muhammad seems to have lived a life of anger, generated in part by a fragmented family life, but fed by a growing rejection of his religion and his very person. Perhaps one of his finest moments of anger - and anger can bring good moments - was his appearance in the Holy Place in Mecca, when he returned to take over the city. Except for certain icons of the life of Jesus, every statue and picture in that place was destroyed, as Muhammad declared there is only one god.

Jesus had a similar moment in the Temple at Jerusalem. Here, the enemy was not all the world's religions. It was the activities of those calling themselves the people of God inside Judaism. People making a profit on the commandments, the rituals, the prescribed sacrifices of Moses.

So Muhammad attempts to rid the world of false religion, Jesus tries to cleanse His own people. It's an important distinction, I think. The current religious situation has not changed. Islam self-righteously goes from nation to nation proclaiming that Allah and Muhammad need to be

accepted. Jesus persists in visiting each heart and each church that will allow Him in, preparing His people for the New World He will soon establish.

For Jesus, a nametag and a series of prayers is not enough.

31. The reward.

"I am your reward," said Muhammad to the Medina Muslims who helped him go back to Mecca in triumph. He said this as consolation to some suddenly very resentful men, who had given their very life blood for his cause, then watched him give away rewards to his Meccan family. But he was the reward for all men of all time. He, the Prophet, was enough for everyone.

Only One Person can say that He is everyone's reward. It is God Himself, and God Himself said it, to Abraham: "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

The Son was in the Father when these words were spoken. So here we have a choice to make. Is Muhammad truly the reward for all Islam's labors? If it is true, it is tragically true. And is Jesus our reward, we who know Him personally? If that is true, it is our eternal delight.

32. One true religion

The Koran is at times confusing because of the law of abrogation that Muhammad introduced mid-stream. That law states that Allah is permitted to change certain teachings as time goes by and as necessity demands. It is important to know, in reading the Koran, which teachings were given first and which later, for the book's order has nothing to do with chronology, rather, with the size of each chapter. The largest chapters come first, and gradually dwindle in size until the last surahs are just a few words long.

Muhammad spends a lot of time condemning those who condemn Koran and Islam. The theme of Islam's purity and the corruption of other religions fairly shouts at the reader throughout. But there are other lines of thought too, like this one: (V,48)

"For each We have appointed a law and a path; and if God had wished He could have made you one people... So vie with one another in good works. Unto God ye will all be brought back and he will then inform you of those things wherein ye differed."

So join whatever religion you like, just keep those good works coming. You'll be all right. If that is the message of Muhammad, it is in contradistinction with the message of Jesus, Who clearly proclaimed, (John 14:6)

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father, but by Me."

Jesus leaves no one hanging in suspense here. It's Jesus' Way or the highway to hell. This is not a competition for the niceness award. This is life and death. John said, "He that has the Son has life. He that does not have the Son of God does not have life." Period. Discussion closed.

Muhammad could never say that about himself.

33. Curses.

Muhammad cursed those who came against him. Lings relates the story of such a man, and his subsequent death.

Jesus was about blessing. He cursed a fig tree once, but not men. He came to bring life and blessing, not cursing and death.

34. Who is this Jesus?

Muhammad and Jesus had two different ideas as to Who Jesus is.

Throughout Koran, Jesus is called a created being, equal to all the prophets except in the area of His virgin birth. His mother is actually honored more in the Koran than He is. Perhaps this is borrowed in part from Romanism, as so much of Islam seems to be.

Jesus said He was One with the Father, preexistent with Him, in fact. He said that He had the power on earth to forgive sins, a power only God has. He said He and the Father would come personally to those who loved and obeyed Him.

35. End-time events.

Muhammad claims that a Mahdi, an Islamic Caliph-like Messiah, will one day come to earth. He will reign seven years. Antichrist will pick up where he leaves off. Then Jesus will descend to lead us all in an Islamic prayer.

Jesus, and through Jesus' Spirit, John, taught that a world ruler will ascend to the world stage one day, yes. He will be interrupted in his reign by the man of sin, the antichrist. It will look a little like Hitler's takeover of Germany and then his outreach to the world.

Antichrist will bring the world to the brink, and then Jesus will return. Fairly close to the Islamic view, minus the Mahdi and the Islamic prayer.

36. Death and burial.

In 632 A.D., Muhammad died and was buried. He was 63 years old at the time of his death.

In 33 A.D., Jesus died and was buried. He was 33 years old at the time of His death.

37. Resurrection. Appearances. Ascension. Present ministry.

As we have come to the end of the story, we once more find things with which we cannot offer a comparison to the life of Muhammad.

Jesus rose from the dead. He is not in any of the tombs designated as His final resting place. For 40 days He appeared to witnesses who saw Him and touched Him, and ate with Him, and had deep discussions with Him. He is alive.

He then ascended back to the Father, and from His present location He pours out His Spirit on those who call upon His Name. He forgives their sins, hears their prayers, and gently leads them into the perfection He promised He would give them.

38. Following.

Muhammad. 1.5 Billion souls.

Jesus Christ. 2.1 billion souls.

In both cases there are many divisions, brand names. There are lukewarm and cold and fiery hot. There are ignorant and dead. There are intelligent and alive. Those who know their religion and those who are just a statistic. So who knows which man claims the most loyalty in today's world? Or in all the centuries before, technically all the way back to those who prophesied Christ, long before Abraham?

Jesus said with no apologies or shame that the road that leads to Him is a narrow one, and few there be that find it. Few compared to all the people who have ever lived? How few?

Militants on both sides, in either sense of that word, make lots of news and give false impressions. Jesus questioned, When the Son of man comes will He even find faith on the earth?

This is one category best left alone. Time and eternity will tell how many hearts have been claimed by each of these men.

39. His will.

More important than the above question of following is the question of ideal Muhammadan thinking and ideal Christian thinking. We have covered much of this in the above report, and the reader/listener must now ask, What is it really that Muhammad wanted, and what is it that Jesus still wants?

Was it war, or peace? Political peace or personal peace?

Was it righteousness imposed from without or from within?

Was it a worldwide governmental system?

Was it hate or love?

Was it a new leaf or a new life?

In Christ we have the option of stopping at any time and asking Him what His will is. And he has an uncanny way of letting us know. Unfortunately, Muhammad cannot now be accessed.

40. Conclusion.

The book of Hebrews says it best. Though the writer of that New Testament masterpiece does not compare Jesus to Muhammad, he compares him to beings greater than Muhammad. The Arabian leader would certainly agree that angels are at a higher level than himself. But Jesus is exalted above the angels. Never did an angel hear, "My son," addressed to him. Jesus did. Never was worship directed by God to an angel. But the angels are to worship the Son. No angel is given an eternal throne, but the Son is. No angel was involved in creation, but the Son was.

If Jesus is greater than angels, and angels, including Gabriel, are greater than Muhammad, the logic is inescapable... Though Islam's revelation makes Jesus just another man, like Muhammad, to whom many "God" things happened, the revelation of the Holy Spirit says that Jesus is God, and thus "better."

Hebrews goes on to say that Jesus' priesthood is better than Aaron's. That His New Covenant is better than the old one called the law. That His sanctuary, His own person, is better than the old Tabernacle or Temple. That His sacrifice is better than the animal sacrifices. He's just better.

And again I want to stress, as I did early in this report, that Jesus is the Last Prophet. This is the year of the Lord, as even our calendars attest. The great millennial day of the Lord follows soon, but we are now in the days the prophets saw of Jesus coming. In their prophecies, they saw first and second coming at the same time and wrapped it all together as one day.

Example: (Isaiah 9) Unto us a Child is born [first coming]... and the government shall be upon His shoulder [second coming].

Example: (Isaiah 61) The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor [first coming] and the day of vengeance of our God [second coming].

Example: (Micah 5) Out of you (Bethlehem) shall come forth to Me [first coming] the One to be Ruler in Israel [second coming].

Example: (Zechariah 9) Your King is coming to you... lowly and riding on a donkey [first coming]...His dominion shall be from sea to sea [second coming].

If the comings of the Lord are viewed as one big coming, with merely an age of grace in between them, it becomes obvious that Jesus is for all those hundreds of years the only Prophet speaking the Words of God to His people, and even to the world. All other voices that rise during the coming of the Lord that is now happening are mere distractions, and the sheep will not hear them.

Should a concern arise in someone's heart about this or that prophet, the Spirit gave us tests we can use to determine who is and who is not from God. Here are a few, in I John:

1. 2:19 Antichrists leave the fellowship of the church. "If they had been of us they would have continued with us." Islam claims to be a confirmation of the "Book" and its people, but in fact Muhammad led his people away from the church.
2. 2:22, 3:23 Antichrists deny Father and Son. "He is antichrist who denies the father and the Son." "This is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." Islam believes in Jesus, but not that He is the Son. They believe in "God", but not that he is a Father. They therefore deny Father and Son.
3. 3:16 Denial of the sacrifice of Jesus. "By this we know love, because he laid down His life for us." Islam denies that it was Jesus on that cross.

Though I wish not to insult or disparage or judge, the truth is that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation. Muhammad cannot save. His way is the way of worldly conquest. It works for awhile.

But it ultimately fails. All the kingdoms of this world have come down, including what looked like Christianity in the Roman Catholic System.

Only Jesus' kingdom will prevail. It will prevail because Jesus will see to it that it does when He returns. For now His people plod on, pulling souls out of the fire here and there, bringing the salvation of God to as many as possible, waiting for Jesus' revealing, and with Him, the revealing of all the Sons of God, who will transform this planet into a totally livable and enjoyable place again.

For, and once more we have no comparison for Muhammad, Jesus is the Eternal One. He lived in eternity past and He lives in eternity present and future. He is one with the Father, just as he said. Today He is speaking to as many as will hear, among Muslims, Jews, those calling themselves Christians but who do not know Him, to come out, be separate, be filled with Him, and wait for His appearing. Can you hear His voice?