

Islam and Terrorism

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Islam and Terrorism

Resource Supplement

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“A Cold War for the 21st century”

Meeting the challenge of Islam and terrorism will be a twilight struggle on the order of the battle in the 20th century to contain and ultimately defeat communism. Winning this new war starts with an understanding of the enemy and his worldview-and a commitment to defend ours. This WORLD special report examines the Islamic heart and mind, and our role in the war whose first shots were fired on Sept. 11, 2001

Fifty years ago Whittaker Chambers, a Marxist-turned-Christian, wrote in his book *Witness* that the next several decades would decide "whether all mankind is to become Communist, whether the whole world is to become free, or whether, in the struggle, civilization as we know it is to be completely destroyed or completely changed. It is our fate to live upon that turning point in history."

Chambers was pessimistic-he thought in leaving Communism he was leaving the winning side-because he saw a power among his former comrades. "Their power, whose nature baffles the rest of the world, because in a large measure the rest of the world has lost that power, is the power to hold convictions and to act on them," Chambers wrote. "Communists are that part of mankind which has recovered the power to live or die-to bear witness-for its faith."

The United States decided to make a mighty effort to contain that power. The Cold War had its hot wars in Korea and Vietnam, but with God's grace containment succeeded and the Soviet Union fell. From 1991 to Sept. 11, 2001, the United States enjoyed a decade of victory and peace, marred though it was by flare-ups abroad and scandal at home. Now, though, it is our sad but providential task to face another turning point in history.

Our new war is similar in some ways to the Cold War. Our opponents are once again men who hold terrifying convictions (although this time they are even willing to kill themselves as they murder others). There are major differences: The Cold War was fought between two superpowers with the ability to obliterate each other, so neither fired a shot directly at the other. Nevertheless, in terms of longevity, dire threats, and the perseverance required for victory, the Cold War is a more fitting model than the 100-hour Gulf War or the four-year war against Germany and Japan.

At the start of Cold (sometimes hot) War I in 1946, Harry Truman and Winston Churchill decided not to characterize that long twilight struggle as a battle of Christianity vs. atheism, but one of freedom vs. dictatorship. They were wise to do so, for the anti-Communist coalition that grew included people of many religions and no religion, and even some socialists. All were needed as the alliance just barely survived Soviet punches that finally came slower and slower until the exhausted threat finally slumped to the canvas.

At the start of Cold (sometimes hot) War II in 2001, George W. Bush has made a similar decision. He has characterized the new conflict not as a battle of Christianity vs. Islam, but one of civilization vs. terror. He is wise to do so, given both the diversity of America and our reliance on the oil of Muslim countries. But this characterization makes it essential to assess whether most Muslims will be willing and able to join a new coalition, or whether Islam is a breeding ground for terrorists.

“What's right with Islam”

My goal here is not to do a detailed theological critique of Islam, but-in five sets of five propositions each-to look quickly at the cultural and political implications of the worldview that arises from Islam. I'll start by noting five positives concerning Islam, because it's good when approaching any religion to see its strengths as well as its weaknesses.

Islam moved Arabs and many other people from polytheism, often accompanied by grotesque practices, to monotheism. Muslims believe in one god, all-powerful and ever-present, uncreated, without beginning or end, completely sufficient to himself and ordaining everything that occurs.

Islam is strongly creationist, arguing both from the Quran but also from intelligent design within nature. Once, when a Bedouin was asked what made him believe in Allah, he pointed to marks in the sand, which made it clear to him that a camel had gone by, even though he had not seen the camel. He then pointed to the mountains and said that it was equally clear that Allah had made them, although he did not witness that either. So Muslims say that the beauty and order of the universe, as well as the integration and complexity of a single cell, show that there is an intelligence behind it. They say that such complexity could not be the product merely of time plus chance.

Muslims developed a civilization that made great advances in science, medicine, and mathematics. Among other things, they gave Arabic numerals to Europe. They emphasized health through rules of cleanliness and diet. In medieval times they emphasized medical research, because Muhammad had taught that "God has not created an illness without creating a cure for it ... some already known and some are not."

Islam stands with Christianity on many social issues. Islam opposes homosexuality and (generally) abortion. Islam emphasizes honesty in business. Muslims are not supposed to sell blemished produce, to cheat in weights and measures, to hoard, or to conceal a product's faults.

Islam has gained probably one billion adherents-only 15 percent of them Arabs-by welcoming adherents of every skin color and ethnicity. Muslims have had their own problems with racial reconciliation, given the history of Arab development of the slave trade, but the Quran, like the Bible, is colorblind. The six million Muslims now living in the United States can trace their ancestry back to many countries of Asia, Africa, and Europe.

“Islamic worldview and how it differs from Christianity”

Those are five positives, but it does not take long before we start seeing ways in which Christians and Muslims do not worship the same God. And in examining the differences, let's go beyond the simple task of pointing out the Quran's historical inconsistencies in some of its 114 chapters, known as suras. Sure, Christians can point out that in Sura 20 a Samaritan helps the Israelites build the golden calf, and in Sura 28 Pharaoh commands a person named Haman to build a tower like the tower of Babel. These look like Muhammad's mix-ups, but Muslim scholars have had over a millennium to prepare credible-sounding responses to charges that the Samaritans did not exist as a people, or Haman as a name, until at least a millennium after the time of Moses.

Instead of dueling over such matters, it's more productive to emphasize the competition of Christian and Muslim worldviews, and the way that differences there lead to vast cultural and governmental differences.

Here are five important ones:

The Quran states that in the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve both sinned, then repented and were forgiven, with no consequences from their rebellion: "Adam learnt from his Lord certain words and his Lord forgave him." Allah then makes Adam his deputy (caliph) and the first of the prophets. So Islam does not acknowledge original sin. Muslims say they revere the whole Bible, but when it and the Quran are in conflict-that's frequent-they go with the Quran. That means Muslims have a tendency to revere strong leaders who put forth an image of perfection; Christians, realizing that all have sinned and fall short of God's glory, tend to be skeptical.

Christians read in the Bible honest reporting about twisted, sinful individuals whom God chose not because of their own righteousness but because of His love. Muslims, though, see a record of great heroes that Jews and Christians somehow twisted during centuries of transmission. What to Christians makes the Bible ring true-its record of how Noah got drunk, Lot committed incest, etc.-is exactly what makes it ring false to Muslims. Muslims believe that biblical leaders must have been picked by God to carry His messages because of their strong character. Christians emphasize God's grace in changing people like Jacob and Joseph who were liars and braggarts.

Since Muslims think we can be sinless if we have strong character and follow all the rules, they have lots of rules, and very specific ones. Some of these are terrific, emphasizing humility: Don't boast about how you've contributed to build a mosque. Don't set up elaborate grave markers. Don't wear clothes just designed to attract attention. Some are common sense: Don't defecate near a place where people draw water. Some are incredibly precise: Do not eradicate insects by

burning them, because fire is to be used only on rats, scorpions, crows, kites, and mad dogs. Do not read the Quran in a house where there is a dog, unless the dog is used for hunting, farming, or herding livestock.

The nature of Islamic prayer periods during the day is also rule-driven. Each time of prayer is made up of units containing set sequences of standing, bowing, kneeling, and prostrating while reciting verses from the Quran or other prayer formulas. The sequences are repeated twice at dawn prayer, three times at sunset prayer, and four times at noon, afternoon, and evening prayers. No deviation is allowed. Muslims do not gain from their religion a sense of liberty.

The God of the Bible knows our sinful frames and is grieved by our disobedience. He is portrayed as a husband who feels pain because of an unfaithful wife, or as a father broken-hearted by his children's rebellion. Allah, on the other hand, is described as all-merciful, and indeed he sends prophets who warn people-but if those people disobey, so be it. The Noah stories of the Quran and the Bible provide a good basis for comparison. In Sura 71 of the Quran, Noah warns his people, they disobey, they drown in the flood. Game, set, match. Same thing happens in the Bible, but there God's "heart was filled with pain" (Genesis 6:6).

The Bible, in short, emphasizes that God adopts us into His family. The Quran emphasizes that a just master allows us to be his servants-but not his children. Biblical passages about God's majesty have their parallels in the Quran. But look at the biblical passages that emphasize God's tenderness, showing Him as a father who teaches His child to walk or as a shepherd carrying His lamb in His arms (Deuteronomy 1:31, Hosea 11:1-4, Isaiah 40:11). Those do not have their parallels in the Quran.

This leads to the most important contrast. The Old Testament-chapter 53 of Isaiah-describes the most important character in history in this way: "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering.... He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed." The New Testament, in Hebrews 4, makes clear the significance of this: "[W]e do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Muslims respect the rejected and wounded Jesus Christ-sure they do, as one of perhaps 124,000 messengers or prophets Allah has sent, and one of the 25 listed in the Quran. Jesus is right there in the list with Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Aaron, Ezekiel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Zechariah, John, three others not cited in the Bible, and Muhammad. But Muslims do not believe Jesus died when crucified. They do not believe He was resurrected. They do not see Him as God.

Within Islam, that unbiblical depiction makes logical sense: Since there is no original sin there is no need for a redeemer. Man is basically good but mistake-prone; Muslims who sincerely repent and submit to God return to a state of sinlessness, with no help from Christ needed. Man, using his intelligence and guided by the Quran, can distinguish good from evil. Sincerity and good works bring salvation: As Sura 7:8-9 states, "for him whose measure (of good deeds) is heavy, those are they who shall be successful."

“Brutality and dictatorship: How Islam affects society”

These basic differences in theology have implications not only for individuals but for society as a whole. Let's look at five in particular.

Christianity by its very nature is about the one and the many, monotheism with a trinity. Muslims think there is a tension in holding firmly to both, and they are right. That tension has pushed Christians to build a society that emphasizes both unity and diversity and in that way reflects the Trinity.

Muslims often find diversity suspicious. For example, they are suspicious of the many different authors who produced the Bible over a period of more than a thousand years. They look amiss at the story of Christ's life and death being given in four separate Gospels: If there are four separate accounts they must all be false. The Quran, seen as having come through one mediator over 23 years, is much more credible.

The emphasis on tawhid-making everything united-has huge cultural implications. Abraham questioned God about the destruction of Sodom, but the word islam means "submission," period. This carries over into a reluctance to accept the legitimacy of critics. Salman Rushdie had to hide to preserve his life, and a host of other critics of Islam have been shot or knifed. Concerning intellectual liberty in Muslim countries, Hisham Kassem of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights said, "It's not safe to think in this part of the world."

Although the Quran states that "there is no compulsion in religion," Islamic states often interpret that to mean that "there is no competition in religion" within their borders. Iraq, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Pakistan, Indonesia, Kuwait, and Egypt are among the countries blasted by the State Department's year 2000 Report on International Religious Freedom. In hard-core Muslim countries, any Muslim who violates tawhid by becoming a Christian may forfeit his life, family, or property. In several "moderate" Muslim countries, churches are allowed behind walls within which Bibles and church bulletins must remain.

The emphasis on unicity also has governmental implications. Without a sense of original sin, Lord Acton's idea that (among humans) power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely does not arise. A system of checks and balances seems redundant, and dictators abound. Originally, Islamic countries had no separation between religious and civil law, between Islam and the state, and that is the way radical Muslims want things to be once again. According to this thinking, Islamic societies should not shape laws to fit their specific histories; they are to submit.

Because Islam in many ways trains people not to govern themselves but to be governed by dictates, Muslim countries almost always are run by dictators. Those rulers have had much in common with the rulers of Marxist countries. It's not surprising that Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Libya, and other countries in the 1960s turned away from the United States even though the United States successfully pressured British, French, and Israeli forces to withdraw from the Suez Canal in 1956. It's not surprising now that terrorists from Marxist remnants and radical Islam work well together.

The father-son relationship that exists between God and redeemed man in Christianity, as opposed to the master-servant relationship of Islam, also has its tensions. Fathers face conflicting impulses: Do you hug a child with a mild injury or do you tell him to be a man? That leads to a creative tension between soft and hard in Christianity, a tension that comes out in the compassionate conservative goal of being tough-minded but tender-hearted, a tension between God's holiness and God's mercy that is resolved through Christ's sacrifice.

That tension does not exist in Islam, with its master-servant relationship. Nor does Islam understand compassion-suffering with the poor-in the way that Christianity does. Jesus tasted hostility from men and knew what it was to be unjustly tortured and abandoned, to endure overwhelming loss, and to then be killed (see my column on p. 66). Muhammad encountered opposition but died in his bed, with wives ministering to him.

In Christianity, the church is the bride of Christ, who gave His life for her; husbands are to love their wives enough to die for them. The husband-wife relationship in Islam also mirrors its theology, which means marriage is in many ways a master-servant relationship. Men can beat their wives, although Muslim apologists say only a light tap is socially correct. Men get four wives and keep the kids if they divorce one; Muslim apologists defend polygamy by pointing to American adultery and trophy wives, but our cultural embarrassments do not justify institutionalized humiliation. Genital mutilation, although not in the Quran, is practiced on one in five Muslim girls.

Different understandings lead to very different laws. Here's one of the best-known: Under Islamic law, according to the Quran and the hadith (sayings of Muhammad), the right hand of a thief is cut off at the wrist. Even if the thief makes restitution and pledges never to steal again, his hand is to be cut off. That's very different from the Bible, which has a thief paying back what he has stolen and asking for forgiveness. (What has to be paid back depends on what he stole, whether he has already disposed of the item, and whether he shows repentance. The amount given in the Bible is 1.2, 2, 4, or 5 times what he stole, but never is he marred for life.)

The Muslim penalty not only seems cruel but somewhat unusual for a creator-god to decree. Hands are such an incredible result of God's creativity. They are marvels of engineering and movement. Why would their creator ordain their destruction for the theft of property, when alternative ways of doing justice abound? God in the Bible ordains as a maximum penalty an eye for an eye and a hand for a hand, but not a hand for a thing. The one-handed person is not only marked for life but unable to work at many jobs. That doesn't speak well for the all-compassionate Allah.

Christianity is the religion of the second chance. With Islam, it's often one strike and you're out. Jesus tells the woman caught in adultery, after he has shamed those who might have condemned her publicly, "Go and sin no more." One hadith tells about a woman pregnant by adultery coming to Muhammad: He has her treated decently until she gives birth, and then has her stoned to death. Islam teaches that Allah loves the righteous, but Christianity teaches that "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

In a religion of grace we do not have to be worried about being zapped at any moment if we freelance unsuccessfully. Muslims, though, try to sleep, eat, drink, and even dress as Muhammad did. They try to repeat the special prayers he uttered upon going to sleep and waking up, or even upon entering and leaving the bathroom. Islamic scholars have developed an enormous list of what to do and what not to do-and that raises the question of what happens to those who break some rules.

Many Muslims are relaxed about that, content that the "five pillars of Islam" (daily prayer, a pilgrimage to Mecca, etc.) will cover over a multitude of sins. But some become frenzied when they break the rules-and there are so many to break. Among some, that leads to a search for a "get out of jail free" card-if there is such a thing.

Those who have investigated the last days of the Sept. 11 hijackers found that some took advantage of America's freedom to break lots of Quranic rules. But on the day of their death, according to notebooks of two of the suicide-murderers, the plan was to "purify your heart and clean it from all earthly matters. The time of fun and waste has gone.... You have to be convinced that those few hours that are left you in your life are very few. From there you will begin to live the happy life, the infinite paradise." There's the "you will be entering paradise" pass, with one fiery ending purportedly making up for a multitude of sins.

“Islam for terrorists”

Now that we have looked at five positives of Islam, five key differences between it and Christianity, and five societal implications, let's dig a little deeper into the particular type of Islam that its terrorists embrace.

It's not hard to find bloody Quran verses. For instance, Sura 8:39, "And fight with them until there is no more persecution and religion should be only for Allah." Or 9:14, "Fight them, Allah will punish them by your hands and bring them to disgrace." Or 9:29, "Fight those who do not believe in Allah ... until they pay the tax in acknowledgment of superiority and they are in a state of subjection."

Islamic scholars in turn tend to point to exterminate-the-Canaanite passages in the book of Joshua, or the order in 1 Samuel to commit genocide against the Amalekites, to which Jews and Christians reply that those writings reflect special circumstances, to which Muslims say, "So do ours."

Thrusts and parries can continue on those lines, but two pairs of facts are unarguable. First, Jesus was a man of peace, Muhammad at times a man of war. Christians read the Old Testament's bloody passages in the light of the New; Muslims have nothing to take the edge off. Second, Christianity initially spread through nonaggressive means, especially the blood of martyrs, while Islam initially spread at least in part through military conflict, with the blood of its opponents often flowing. Christianity held up its peaceful dead for imitation, Islam its warlike victors.

It is also easy to find verses promising that good things will happen to all who die in a campaign to spread Islam. "Those who fly in Allah's way and are then slain or die," Sura 22:58 promises, "Allah will most certainly grant them a goodly sustenance, and most surely Allah is the best Giver of sustenance." Some of Muhammad's hadith sayings indicate that those who die fighting for Allah receive special benefits.

On the other hand, mainstream Islam has never considered self-martyrdom or kamikaze suicide as a guarantor of immediate access to Paradise. Muslim jurists over the centuries have emphatically considered terrorist attacks against unsuspecting and defenseless victims to be immoral and downright evil. Arson and attacks against travelers also received harsh treatment, whatever the reason, and whether victims are Muslim or non-Muslim.

Even if another country's attacks have created civilian casualties among Muslims, traditional Islam still does not justify terroristic acts, because the injustice of others does not create a license to kill.

Nor are historical grievances such as the Crusades supposed to justify revenge brutality nine centuries later. (As one Crusader reported the brutal conquest of Jerusalem in 1099 a.d., "With drawn swords our people ran through the city; nor did they spare anyone, not even those pleading for mercy.... They did not spare the women or children. The horses waded in blood up to their knees, nay, up to the bridle. It was a just and wonderful judgment of God.")

Significantly, while Muslims agree that it's not right to attack civilians or innocent bystanders, some are making up new definitions of noncombatant categories. Some Palestinian groups war on every Israeli, conveniently claiming that almost all citizens receive some military training so that few people are civilians and no one is innocent. It's only one step from that to claim that every Pentagon worker is an enemy because the U.S. supports Israel. It's one step further to declare everyone at the World Trade Center an enemy because capitalists control the world. It's a further step beyond to state, as bin Laden did in 1999 to Newsweek, that "any American who pays taxes to his government ... is our target, because he is helping the American war machine against the Muslim nation."

At various times in Muslim history, factions arose that took extra steps down what can quickly become a slippery slope. The Kharajites became infamous within early Islam for murdering Muslims who disagreed with them. Centuries later, some Muslims who used hashish to get themselves ready to kill originated the word assassin. Orthodox Muslims saw these killers as evil, much as Ku Klux Klan clowns claim to be Christian but clearly are not, much as the Northern Ireland IRA or Serbian leadership's claims to be waging Christian holy war are full of holes. But, with Islam's early history of violence and its tendency to respect dictators pushing for unicity, violent movements within Islam continue to arise.

The new terrorists of the bin Laden school largely come from the latest violent movement, Wahhabism. Founded by Ibn Abdul Wahhab (1703-1792), Wahhabis from the start were willing to kill civilians who opposed them. They did just that in the city of Qarbala in 1801, leaving 2,000 ordinary folks dead. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Wahhabis opposed the "decadence" of the Ottoman Turk empire. Now they are out to overthrow "the American empire," and have trained a generation of students for that pursuit through a network of madrassahs (religious boarding schools) funded by Saudi oil money.

The instructions some of the Sept. 11 terrorists carried with them clearly reflect Wahhabi emphases and interpretations: "Read al-Tawba and Anfal [traditional war chapters from the Quran] and reflect on their meanings and remember all of the things that God has promised for the martyrs.... Know that the gardens of paradise are waiting for you in all their beauty, and the women of paradise are waiting, calling out, 'Come hither, friend of God.' They have dressed in their most beautiful clothing."

The Wahhabi wing of Islam and the "national liberation" wing of Marxism are able to make common cause by attacking a free enterprise system in which people prosper by fulfilling the needs and desires of others. That some of those desires lack virtue is all the excuse Wahhabis need to join the neo-Marxist assault on capitalism. Islam has a respect for private property but it also pushes for unicity, and when the latter overcomes the former, Wahhabi Marxists (such as bin Laden's crew) and dictatorships (such as that of Saddam Hussein) emerge.

Among the terrorist spawn of these two movements, is Islam or Marxism more influential? Here's one thing to watch for: Those who have any respect whatsoever for Islamic laws are less likely to threaten our water supply, because poisoning of wells in a desert culture is the most heinous crime imaginable.

Why don't mainstream Muslims speak out forcefully against the terrorists who claim Quranic warrant? Part of the answer is theological, as clerical apologists for terrorism are able to point to particular verses that they say have been ignored or misinterpreted by traditional Islam. But a large part is simple momentum. Islam has been on an international losing streak during the past several centuries. Many mainstream Muslims, while opposing the terrorists theologically, have been unwilling to stand up to those who seem to be on a winning streak.

As William & Mary professor Tamara Sonn put it, "If you are a young man and you've been involved in the Palestinian or Afghanistan situation, your emotions are high and you'll want action." In some instances older clerics and academics have abdicated before the young, much as many U.S. professors in the late 1960s began following their students instead of leading them. The head of Egypt's Al-Azhar University, the Harvard of the Muslim world, pleased his students when he agreed (contrary to the Islamic tradition) that self-martyrdom was acceptable; he still opposed suicidal attacks on civilians, but the pressure on mainstream Islam to "go with the winners" is growing.

That's why scholar David Forte says, "If we have respect for ourselves, if we have respect for Islam, we can no longer tolerate the evil they [the terrorists] represent. Two civilizations hang in the balance." Islam needs reformation, and it needs America to show that Wahhabi Marxism is not the vanguard of the future.

By **Marvin Olasky**, editor in chief of *World magazine*. "Reprinted with permission from WORLD magazine (www.worldmag.com), Copyright 2001. For subscription information call 1-800-951-NEWS."

Resources

Books:

Norman Geisler, *Answering Islam* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993).

John Ankerberg & John Weldon, *Fast Facts on Islam: What You Need to Know Now* (Harvest House, 2001).

Larry A. Poston, Carl F., Jr. Ellis, *The Changing Face of Islam in America : Understanding and Reaching Your Muslim Neighbor* (Horizon Books, 2000).

Ron Rhodes, *Reasoning from the Scriptures With Muslims* (Harvest House, 2002).

Vinoth Ramachandra, *Faiths in Conflict: Christian Integrity in a Multicultural World* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

Patrick Sookhdeo, *A Christian's Pocket Guide to Islam* (Christian Focus, 2001).

Timothy George, *Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad?* (Zondervan, 2002)

Ravi Zacharius, *Light in the Shadow of Jihad: The Struggle for Truth* (Multnomah Publishers Inc., 2002)

Ravi Zacharius, *The Prophet and the Prince* (expected, fall of 2004)

Websites:

www.answeringislam.org (An excellent resource with articles and related links concerning the differences between Christianity and Islam and provides a forum for dialogue between the two faiths.)

<http://www.leaderu.com/focus/islamandjihad.html> (A collection of essays on Islam and Terrorism which provides an in-depth look at the connection.)

www.probe.org (This website provides information and essays on Islam as well as other world religions, worldview issues etc.)

www.christianitytoday.com (Christianity Today has many articles, essays and book reviews concerning Islam Search "Islam" on the website.)

www.worldmag.com (The official website for World Magazine, a weekly news publication. World will keep you updated and informed about world events, Iraq and developments in the Middle East.)

“Important dates in the development of Islam”

- c. 1900 B.C. Abraham is willing to sacrifice Isaac; Muslims say Ishmael was the almost-sacrifice.
- c. 30 Christ, crucified, dies, and is resurrected; Muslims say He was a Muslim and did not die.
- 610 Muhammad rejects both Christianity and Judaism and begins to develop his own monotheistic religion.
- 622 Muhammad flees Mecca-this becomes year one in the Muslim calendar-and over the next 10 years succeeds as both teacher and general.
- 632 Muhammad dies without a clear political heir; Muslim infighting begins.
- 637 Muslims capture Jerusalem and soon possess Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia.
- 661 Muhammad's nephew Ali is murdered and the Sunni-Shiite division begins.
- 700 Muslims, sweeping across North Africa and virtually wiping out Christianity there, conquer Algiers.
- 711 Muslims conquer most of Spain.
- 732 Muslims are defeated at Tours/Poitiers in what is now southern France; they conquer little more of western Europe.
- 786 Harun al-Rashid, Caliph in Baghdad, leads the way toward a golden age of Muslim learning.
- 846 Muslims sack Rome and the Vatican; meanwhile, mathematician and geographer al-Khwarazmi (algorithm is derived from his name) advances knowledge.
- 900 The writing of 1001 Arabian Nights begins, and the Arab physician Rhases becomes the first to describe smallpox, plague, and other infectious diseases.
- 963 Al Sufi's Book of Fixed Stars, which mentions nebula, is one indication of Muslim superiority in astronomy.
- 1006 Muslims settle in northwest India.
- 1037 Ibn Sina (Avicenna), the most influential Islamic medieval philosopher/physician, dies.
- 1094 El Cid defeats Muslims in Spain.
- 1095 Pope Urban II calls for a Crusade.
- 1099 Crusaders capture and sack Jerusalem.
- 1187 Muslims under Saladin retake Jerusalem.
- 1250 First Muslim states in southeast Asia are developing.
- 1380 Ottoman empire emerges.
- 1453 Muslims capture Constantinople, renaming it Istanbul, and turn St. Sophia Basilica into a mosque.
- 1492 Muslim governments, gradually pushed back for centuries, lose their last toehold in Spain.
- 1529 Muslims besiege Vienna but do not take it.
- 1571 Battle of Lepanto ends Muslim naval power in the Mediterranean.
- 1654 Taj Mahal completed.
- 1669 Muslim rulers in India prohibit Hindu worship.
- 1683 Muslims besiege Vienna, again unsuccessfully, but over the years control big chunks of southeastern Europe.
- 1792 Ibn Abdul Wahhab, founder of the radical Islamic movement known as Wahhabism, dies.
- 1816 British bombard Algiers and force its ruler to end the enslavement of Christians.
- 1869 The Tunisian government, in debt, accepts European financial control, in one of many changes throughout the century that resulted in north Africa falling under the control of France, England, and Italy.
- 1918 Ottoman Empire, allied with Germany, collapses.
- 1928 The radical Muslim Brotherhood is founded in Egypt.
- 1947 England relinquishes control of India, which is partitioned into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan.
- 1948 England relinquishes control of Palestine, which is partitioned into Jewish and Muslim states.
- 1967 Israel defeats Arab armies and takes control over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
- 1979 Iran taken over by Muslim radicals.
- 1991 U.S. and allies rout Iraqi army.
- 2001 About 6,000 die in Wahhabi Muslim attack on the United States.

Sources include Gerhard Endress, *An Introduction to Islam*; Malise Ruthven, *Islam*; and Bernard Grun, *The Timetables of History*
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