

Muhammad

(by Bob Pulliam)

His name has had many spellings through the years (as has the Quran); but most recognize it and who it refers to. Yet many do not know the details behind this man's life. He went from relative poverty to powerful religious leader in a matter of years. His name is venerated among millions. Here is a brief picture of his life, including my thoughts on his motives in starting Islam. We will not offer details on caravan raids and killings. These may be considered in a future article.

Forces at Work...

It is important to emphasize that Islam did not originate from Judeo-Christian influence. While these were present to some degree, and had their influence, it was actually forces at work much closer to home.

For centuries, Arab cultures evolved in their superstitions and cultic followings. Mecca was a great trading center, and traders from many distant lands would bring their wares. While there, gods were worshiped and added as new ones appeared. Many deities were being worshiped in Mecca at the time Muhammad was born (360 to be precise). Among these was Allah. Allah was taken to be married to the Sun goddess, and to have three daughters: Al-Lat, Al-Uzza, and Manat. Making Allah the number one god was not a new idea with Muhammad. He was taken by many Meccans to be the chief deity at the Kabah.

While these people had their religion, it was not a terribly important aspect of their lives among the wealthy and prominent. The Kabah, for the wealthy, was a tourist attraction and point of power for them. At the same time, these were in the minority. Wealth was held by very few, and the distinction between the two created a great deal of tension. With this tension, there was a desire for more unity and compassion among the people. For Muhammad, there was only one good way to accomplish this.

Humble Beginnings...

We have already noted Muhammad's beginnings in Origins of Islam. His father died before he was born, and his mother when he was very young. Although his family was wealthy, he was ineligible to inherit, being under legal age. His eventual wealth would come from his first wife (Khadijah), who was about forty when he married her.

We are often told that even a Christian recognized the divine origin of Muhammad's revelations. When Muhammad received his call from Gabriel, he told his wife. She had a cousin (Waraqah) whom she told of these visions. He supposedly encouraged Muhammad, telling him that they were the same kinds of revelations as those given to men like Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Waraqah never professes Islam and remained a Christian to his death. At the same time, we should remember the character of "Christianity" that was possessed in this region during this time. It is reflected in the gross errors and traditions presented in the Quran.

Muhammad's Original Purpose...

Everyone has their thoughts on why Islam got started. I don't see why I should be any different. Some ascribe evil motives to Muhammad from the start. As I look at the historical

details, I see a much different picture. In Muhammad, I see a man who wanted to unite his people under one god, and stir them to a deep devotion to that god, which would alleviate the social injustices of his day. This opinion of Muhammad makes me unpopular with most everyone, but so be it. I do not believe that pure motives remained throughout his life, however. When I consider the stealing and bloodshed that escalated as his career flourished, I see a man who became drunk with power. I do not wish to enrage any Muslim readers, but they must realize that their views of the Bible are also not altogether pleasing to Christians (See [A Note to Muslim Visitors](#)).

Muhammad's Wives...

The wives of Muhammad have always been a sore spot in Islam. Not just the number, but also the circumstances. The Quran allows a man to have no more than four wives (Sura 4:3). Yet it is very clear that Muhammad had 15 wives at once. While some contest this number, if he had five he would still have had one too many!

Here is a list compiled by the Muslim scholar, Ali Dashti (in his work 23 Years):

- 1) Khadija (died before any others were married)
- 2) Sawda
- 3) Aisha (taken when she was nine)
- 4) Omm Salama
- 5) Hafsa
- 6) Zaynab (from Jahsh)
- 7) Jowayriya
- 8) Omm Habiba
- 9) Safiya
- 10) Maymuna
- 11) Fatema
- 12) Hend
- 13) Asma (from Saba)
- 14) Zaynab (from Khozayma)
- 15) Habla
- 16) Asma (from Noman)

This would clearly make Muhammad a sinner. But not just any sinner. He was "a spokesman" for Allah while he was practicing his sin! Some would deny that Muhammad ever sinned, but the Quran clearly indicates such. Muhammad was told to repent of his sin in Sura 40:55. Sura 48:1f speaks of Muhammad's sins, past and future! That Muhammad ever sinned is beyond doubt. Could he have taken more wives than allowed?

It is not necessary that a prophet never have sinned. But that a prophet would receive divine messages for others while he himself is involved in open, reprehensible sin is absurd.

Just a note: Muhammad's sixth wife was originally the wife of his adopted son. Muhammad conveniently received a revelation that she was to be given to him (Sura 33:36-38).

The Death of Muhammad...

From time to time you may run into those who confidently affirm that Muhammad never died. Instead, he is supposed to have ascended into heaven (rivaling the departure of

Jesus). Islamic history is actually very clear on this aspect of his end. While some controversy exists on whether he was poisoned by a Jewish woman, or contracted a deadly disease, we do know that he died in AD 632.

Muhammad did not know that he was going to die. How do we know this? He did not do two things that he would have certainly tended to had he known his end was near:

- 1) Select a successor.
- 2) Gather past revelations together.

The lack of a successor led to much civil strife and mayhem. The Sunnis and Shiites are a monument to this ancient struggle.

To conclude, let me offer a time-table of events for the life of Muhammad:

570 - Muhammad Born after death of his father

576 - Mother Died (Aminah)

610 - First Vision (call to be a prophet)

613 - Began Public Preaching

619 - Death of first wife (Khadijah) and uncle (Abu Lahab)

622 - Muhammad emigrates to Medina (the hijrah or hegira)

7/16/622 - Islamic calendar begins (dated to the above pilgrimage)

624 - Battle of Badr

625 - Battle of Uhud

627 - Meccans lay Siege to Medina

627 - Jewish clan of Qurayzah Attacked (after surrender, men executed/women sold)

632 - Death of Muhammad