

GLEANINGS — January 10, A.D. 2016  
Star and Crescent, Part One

Isis...Jihad...world wide Islamic terror attacks: how can the Christian interact wisely with his neighbor when discussing and dealing with these stark realities of today? How can the believer bear witness for Christ toward a Muslim neighbor? What is the significance of the type of clothing, holidays, and traditions which are increasingly noticeable in much of the western world, and even dominant now where Muslims were once a tiny minority?

Today's and Lord willing next week's "Gleanings" will help equip the ambassador of Christ (every disciple) with a basic knowledge of the world view associated with a man named Mohammed or Mahomet, whose dates are A.D. 570 - 632.

He was born in Mecca in South Arabia and was of the tribe of the Koreish, which controlled a pagan shrine known as the Kaaba. The Koreish (or Quraysh) tribe claimed descent from Ishmael, the son of Biblical Abraham and Hagar. His father Abdallah died before Mohammed was born, and his mother Amina died when he was six or eight years old. He was cared for by his grandfather for two years, then by an uncle, Abu Talib. A nervous, sensitive child, some scholars say he had a tendency toward epilepsy.

At age twenty-five he became a camel driver for Kadijah, a wealthy widow of Mecca, whom he married a little later. Of this union one child, Fatima, survived infancy. She later became the wife of Ali, one of Mohammed's followers and later his successor.

Trading trips took Mohammed to Syria, where he came in touch with both Judaism and a degenerate form of Christianity. At age forty he claimed to have received a vision and a call to preach. He began a new religion of mingled Judaism, Christianity, and Arabian paganism, blended together by his imaginative mind. His first converts were Kadijah his wife, Ali and Zaid, two adopted sons, and Abu Bekr, a close friend.

Persecuted in Mecca, in 622 A.D. he fled to Medina. This flight, the Hegira, is considered to be the historical origin of what we know as Islam, which means "submission". Although Islam is a religion with a prophet (this same Mohammed), a holy text (the Koran or Quran), and various rites and ceremonies, underneath those things is a movement that envisions global domination and sanctions the use of violent force to realize that goal. Jihad means "holy war." The Islamic idea of peace is not tranquil co-existence with other world religions or with Biblical Christianity, but their elimination.

Mohammed gained strength in Medina, a city in what is now Saudi Arabia. He established a "theocratic" state, eliminated internal strife in the city, repulsed attacks of the Meccans, and before long returned to and gained possession of Mecca, which became the holy place of Islam. He became judge, lawgiver, and administrator among his followers. By 632, the time of his death, nearly all of Arabia was at his feet; within the next one hundred years North Africa, Palestine, Asia Minor, Persia, and Spain were conquered for Islam.

Mohammed's early life was perhaps one of sincerity and truth-seeking; but his later years were manifestly a time of power-seeking and corruption.

*to be continued...*