

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## Comparative Religion?

(Jerry Fite)

A Recent CBS poll was taken asking 1019 adults, “Generally speaking, do you think the Islamic religion encourages violence more than other religions around the world, less than other religions around the world, or about the same as other religions around the world?” The results were filtered through a political perspective. Are you shocked to learn that 63% of Republicans affirmed that the Islamic religion encourages more, while 66% of Democrats stated that the Islamic religion encourages the same amount of violence as the religions around the world? How could one, alert to world events today, believe Islam and Christianity are about the same in encouraging violence?

Islamic terrorists may be beheading, burning and drowning “Kafirs” (unbelievers) around the world now, but did not Christianity “Crusade” through the Byzantine Empire in the latter eleventh century killing Muslims and non-Muslims? One could respond with an argument that the Catholic Church used the sword to relieve Christians from Islamic oppression. If so, does this accurately depict Christianity?

Jesus Christ stood before Pilate, emphasizing a distinction between His spiritual kingdom, and the kingdoms of this world by saying, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews” (John

18:36). There is warfare in Christianity, but it is not characterized by the violence of Islamic Jihadists. Paul writes, “*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds) ...*” (2 Corinthians 10:3-4). These strongholds are of the mind. Man’s exalted thoughts against God are to be torn down, and brought into “*captivity to the obedience of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 10:5). This is accomplished in Christianity through the persuasive “good news” of salvation from sin, not violent force. Peter used the spiritual sword of the Spirit, the word of God, to persuade hearts toward becoming Christians (Ephesians 6:17, Acts 2:22-41).

The Catholic church entered the realm of fighting like the kingdoms of this world when they answered the call for help from the Byzantine Empire. They used the physical sword to fight back the oppressor, and warred according to the flesh. This is not Christianity in action.

One might say, is this not what has happened to the religion of Islam? Are we not told today that Islam is peaceful, and the Jihad of killing scores of human beings lies at the hands of some radicals, who are not following the dictates of Islam? If you say the violent Crusades were not Christianity, could one likewise say that the Jihad of the sword is not

Islam? The answer is no, the facts will not allow it.

The Islamic religion is founded not only on the Koran, but on Sira (biography of Mohammed) and the Hadith (traditions). The Koran is not in chronological order. Mohammed lived in Mecca where he preached the religion of Islam. After being forced to Medina, he took on a new strategy of engaging in war or Jihad. His thirteen years of preaching in Mecca produced about 150 Muslims. But waging warfare on his enemies in the last nine years of his life, Mohammed had 100,000 followers. Those who opposed him were either enslaved or put to death.

When Mohammed died in A.D. 632, his followers arose from the sands of Arabia doing exactly what their leader did, practicing Jihad. They infiltrated the Middle East, and brought it into submission. By force, the Jihadists subjugated people, territory and commerce throughout the Mediterranean. They carried out a successful plan initiated by Mohammed, striking terror into the hearts of unbelievers: “...Strike them over the necks, and smite over all their fingers and toes” (Koran, chapter 8:12).

The Islamic Jihadists today are not hijacking the Islamic religion, but are following the ways of Mohammed, the founder of the Islamic religion. Violent political Islam, instituted by Mohammed, has been on the move for almost 1400 years.