

**The Muslim World Today**  
**Responding Biblically to Muslims and Islam**  
By Vivienne Stacey- December 1987

**Introduction:** We are all becoming more aware of the world of Islam and Muslims. We continue to hear of Iran and Khomeini, the Iran/Iraq war, oil and the Persian Gulf, Libya and Gaddafi, Afghan refugees in Pakistan, communal riots in India etc. In our own country we live in a multi-faith and multicultural situation. This is something new for many of us. As rational human beings we should be concerned with Muslims in that one person in every five in the world is Muslim and their religion of Islam is spreading. In the UK we may meet:

1. Muslim students from abroad studying in colleges and universities
2. Muslim refugees from Iran, Afghanistan and other lands
3. Muslim immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India etc.
4. Fellow citizens who have become Muslims
5. Second and third generation British citizens who were born Muslim in the UK.

As Christians we should have a spiritual concern for the more than 800 million Muslims in the world of whom more than one million live in the UK.

**Isaiah 52: 13-15**

In these first three verses of the most famous of the prophet Isaiah's servant songs there are three themes mentioned which also occur in the holy book of Islam – the Quran. Both the Bible and Quran have servant hood, success and the nations as major themes but treat them very differently.

**Servant hood and success- Isaiah 52:13:**

“Behold my servant shall prosper”- Isaiah is speaking of the suffering servant of God- Jesus the Messiah. His song is about the servant's suffering and God's vindication of him. As the writer to the Hebrews says, Jesus was “crowned with glory and honor through the suffering of Jesus”. (Hebrews 2:9). The Quran portrays Jesus as the servant of God (Adbullah) and in order to preserve the honor of this prophet Jesus (Isa), denies the fact of a shameful death by crucifixion. The Quran does not deny that Jesus was willing to die or that the Jews intended to kill him, but that in order that God's prophet be successful and victorious, he was delivered from the shame and defeat of the cross by being taken up alive into heaven. The Quranic view of Jesus is like that of a photograph out of focus.

### **Nations – Isaiah 52:15**

“So shall he startle many nations” – the meaning of the Hebrew verb is uncertain and can be translated –“he shall sprinkle (with his blood) many nations”. The Bible and the Quran have a theology embracing the nations as well as individuals. For Muslims religion and politics cannot be separated. The world is divided into areas under the rule of Islam and areas yet to come under that rule .So Muslims have a mission to win the nations.

The independence of more Muslim nations and the benefits of possessing over half of the world’s known oil resources as seen by Muslims as signs of God’s blessing.

In our time we can see God startling the nations through Jesus Christ specially in the following areas:

1. **The dispersions of people:** mainly through economic factors (oil and development in the Arabian Peninsula) political oppression (Afghanistan and refuges in Pakistan, Iran, India and the West) and religious persecution. There are Christians from many countries living in the Middle East and more Christians living in Arabia than at any time in the whole history of the Christian Church. Also more Muslims than ever before liv in the West. – Jeremiah 29: 1&7.
2. **The revival of ancient churches in Muslim lands:** These ancient churches were present before the arrival of Islam and although they have lost most evangelistic vision they have, unlike the churches of North Africa, survived. God is reviving some of these churches by His Holy Spirit as members study the scriptures.(Joel 2:28-29). These churches are like large river beds running through the lands. They can be completely dry, have a trickle of water, a stream, a river or a flood. We can pray for the further revival of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt which numbers several million ,the churches in Jordan where 10% of the population is Christian and for Syria (9% Christian) Iraq (4% Christian), Iran (1% Christian)and Turkey( ½% Christian).
3. **Harvest:** Jesus is startling the nations through dispersions of people and revival of churches. God will further startle the nations by bringing thousands, tens of thousand and hundreds of thousands of Muslims to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour before Jesus returns in glory. The picture will come into focus for many. This may happen suddenly and soon.(Amos 9:13). We should prepare for harvest as well as evangelism. So far there have been only two large movements of Christians into the Christian

church- one in Spain in the thirteenth century and a bigger one in Indonesia in this generation ( starting in the 1960's).Lilias Trotter, a missionary to Algeria in the early part of this century, described her vision of the Muslim world in this way. She said:

“When I look outside my bedroom window in winter, the almond trees look dead. In late February I look out and two or three are in blossom and then two days later when I look out, the whole hillside is in blossom. It will be like that in the Muslim world one day”.

### **Are Muslims resistant to the gospel?**

It is true that Muslims sometimes seem hard to reach for Christ but we as Christians have also to ask ourselves if some of the hardness is not in us. It seems that some of the hardness is in us because:

1. The Christian church has kept such a small embassy in the Muslim world. 20% of the world is Muslim but only 2% of missionaries work among Muslims.
2. The church spends little time considering the most sensitive and suitable ways to approach Muslims and share the gospel with them. The good news needs to be understood as good news by Muslims if they are to accept it. Once two boys were fighting. An adult asked the 8 year old why he was bashing the 6 year old. The 8 year old said: “He won't learn”. ”What won't he learn?” “He won't learn the Sunday School verse”. “What is the verse?” “God is love”. Sometime we are like this older boy in our approach to Muslims. The theology is excellent but the method is too confrontational.
3. We learn a lot about Islam from TV, radio and newspapers. The picture is not always fair or pleasant and we are in danger of reacting in a natural carnal way rather than in a Biblical , spiritual way.

However God is giving the Christian church another chance to win Muslims by:

- Increasing the embassy and sending missionaries to Muslim lands which still receive them like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Senegal etc and to lands where there are large or small accessible Muslim minorities like India, Philippines, and China etc.
- Supporting and encouraging tentmakers – those disciples of Christ who work among Muslims in a cross cultural situation, using their secularly marketable skills as a way of entry into the country. Teaching English as A Foreign Language is one sphere in great demand in over forty Muslim countries but there are

openings for many other trained workers.. Professional journals often contain advertisements and job notices.

- Responding to crisis situations as in the Sudan, Ethiopia etc., through Christian relief organizations like TEAR Fund.
- Reaching out to Muslim students, immigrants, refugees and fellow citizens in the UK.

**Conclusion:** God has generally worked in two main ways in drawing Muslims to Jesus:

1. Through the love of God shown in the life of a Christian they have known
2. Through hearing, reading or studying the Bible and sometimes also through a dream or visions of Christ.

**NOTES:**

1. Some easily obtainable paperbacks about Muslims who have come to Christ are:
  - a. **Jesus- more than a prophet by RWF Wooten- published by IVP in 1982**
  - b. **The unexpected enemy by Ghulam Masih Namaan – published by Marshall Pickering in 1985**
  - c. **I dared to call Him Father by Bilquis Sheikh –published by STL Books in 1978**
2. A study book helpful for individuals and churches seeking to reach Muslims is:
  - a. **Ishmael my brother. A Biblical course on Islam – edited by Anne Cooper and published by MARC in 1985**