

- Rev. Grant Mangold, www.RiversideChurchIowa.com

9/11 MESSAGE FOR AMERICA

How are you observing 9/11, the anniversary of the 2001 Islamic terrorist attacks on American soil? Some people consider these primarily political strikes, while others point to underlying religious reasons. Most media reports fail to mention the terrorists are adherents of Islam, called Muslims.

They consider America "the Great Satan" and Israel "the little Satan." Founded as a Christian nation for personal and religious liberty, America is considered the world's leading democratic republic. The Jewish nation of Israel is the only democratic republic in the Middle East, and offers personal and religious freedom, unlike any Arab neighbor. And when you examine the goals and tactics of Islamic terrorists, what would you describe as "satanic"?

Islamic political demands are expressions of religious belief, but many experts regard Islam as not primarily a religion, but rather a legal system demanding certain life behaviors and verbal statements. The phrase "religion of peace" is a misleading translation. "Islam" in Arabic means "submission" to the "will of Allah" who for the Muslim is the supernatural creator, ruler and judge of the universe. Islam's founder Mohammed delineated people as either the "House of Allah" meaning those who submitted, or the "House of War" meaning all others who have not yet submitted. "Allahu akbar" means "Allah is the greatest god." Muslim "sharia" is the moral and religious law of Islam, including personal and community requirements, and which supercedes ALL other law, including political.

Islam considers ALL people as Muslims by birth. Submission to Allah comes by reciting the "shahadah" which says "there is no god except Allah, and Mohammad is his messenger." Muslims perform "salat" ritual prayer five times per day, "zakat" giving 2.5% of one's savings to the poor, "sawm" fasting and self-control during the month of Ramadan (determined by sightings of the crescent moon), and "haji" pilgrimage to Mecca. These are the "five pillars" of Islam.

The "Koran" (Qu'ran) is the primary guiding document of Islam, written in Arabic. Muslims regard it as an angelic revelation from Allah to Mohammed, who lived about 600 years after Christ. Completed long after his death, significant differences exist between various versions. The Koran is completely different from the Bible, though it claims to accept the Torah (first five books of the Old Testament), the Psalms of David, and the New Testament. It recognizes Jesus only as a revered prophet and teacher, not the divine Son of God or Savior of the world. Many scholars point out numerous incorrect and inconsistent statements and beliefs of Islam in relation to the Bible and Jewish and Christian teachings, especially related to Jesus, the trinity, resurrection, and personal salvation.

To the Muslim, God is not personally knowable. Assurance of salvation comes only by martyrdom, with the incentive of "72 virgins in paradise." Islamic writings present "jihad" as "the path of Allah." All 199 references in the "Hadith" explanatory writings of the Koran relate jihad to "holy warfare" as obligatory for ALL Muslims, to impose Islamic law on ALL people. The Hadith was compiled about 200 years later, from oral reports of teachings and deeds of Mohammed, recounted by his many wives, companions, and relatives. "Tafsir" are commentaries on the Koran, used with different versions of Hadith to determine the meaning of Islamic teachings. A trained Muslim cleric is a "mufti, qadi, faquh or muhaddith," and a "mullah or iman" is a relatively untrained teacher. A "fatwa" is a legal opinion about Islamic teaching.

Christians account for about 2.1 billion people, 34% of the world population. Muslims account for about 1.6 billion people, 25% of the world population. Of these, 80% are "Sunni" who follow "Sunnah" teachings. The second-largest "Shia" group follows Mohammed's son-in-law cousin who they deem his rightful heir. The many sects of Islam ALL claim to derive their teachings from the Koran, and many regard each other as apostate enemies deserving death. Personal deception is permissible in jihad.

In short, the message of Islam is "convert or die - obey Allah as we understand him or we will shed your blood." In contrast, Christians proclaim the message of Jesus Christ the Savior: "I shed My blood and died for you - receive My life and live, abundantly on earth and forever with Me in heaven."

This is why on 9-11 and indeed every day, Christians around the world PRAY for Muslims AND everyone who does not yet know Jesus, who lovingly says, "Do not be afraid, My peace I give to you."