

“THE ISIS CRISIS”



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Ecclesiastes 4:1-3

King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, wrote the book of Ecclesiastes almost 3,000 years ago (935 B. C.). In these verses he refers to the oppression (vs. 1) and the evil (vs. 3) in the world. These verses remind us that we live in a fallen and sin cursed world (Romans 5:12). The reason for evil and wickedness in our society is because of the sinfulness of mankind (Romans 3:23). There is currently a global crisis taking place in our world. This crisis is a result of a radical, Islamic group known as ISIS. The two words that King Solomon uses in this passage can be used to describe this terror organization. They are oppressive (verse 1) and evil (verse 3). The height of the evil and oppression of ISIS was seen on Friday, November 13, 2015, when ISIS attacked Paris in six different incidents killing at least 130 people.

What is ISIS? ISIS stands for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. Some refer to ISIS and ISIL. ISIL stands for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. The Levant includes the countries of Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, and the area of southern Turkey. ISIS was founded by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in 1999. He claims to be the successor of the Prophet Mohammad. The most recognizable symbol of ISIS is their flag. The white banner on top of the flag reads, “*There is no god but Allah.*” Underneath is a white circle containing the phrase “*Mohammad is the messenger of Allah.*” The white circle is meant to resemble the seal of the Prophet Mohammad.

There are several important considerations related to the crisis of ISIS.

First of all, there is **THE CONFLICT OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE**. As we consider the atrocities of ISIS, it is important to remember that as Christians we are engaged in a spiritual warfare. This battle is much deeper than flesh and blood. It is a battle between light and darkness, and it is a conflict between good and evil. This warfare is invisible, intense, and important. Ephesians 6:12 states, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (NIV) After the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 by al-Qadea, President George Bush said, “On 9/11, our Nation saw the face of evil.” Make no mistake about it, ISIS is pure evil. The mastermind behind ISIS is not necessarily Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, but Satan himself. First Peter 5:8 declares, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” This spiritual warfare is certainly a clash between Christianity and Islam. Warren Wiersbe, author and Bible scholar, reminds us, “*The Christian life is not a playground; it is a battleground, and we must be on our guard at all times.*”

Secondly, there is **THE CONDITION OF THE MIDDLE EAST**. The Middle East is marked by three things: **1. Complexity** – The Middle East is a very complex and diverse place. It consists of ethnic groups, tribal clans, and religious factions. From a historical perspective, much of this complexity stems back to the end of World War I in the division of countries. Boundaries of countries were drawn with no regards to religious ideology or ethnic connections. **2. Instability** – The Middle East is unstable politically, economically, religiously, socially, etc. **3. Hostility** – The Middle East is filled with violence and war. It is a volatile place in the world. “*If you live by the sword, you die by the sword.*” (Matthew 26:52).

The animosity in the Middle East is a result of the birth of Ishmael. Abraham had two sons – Isaac and Ishmael. Isaac is the father of the Jews and Ishmael is the father of the Arabs. Genesis 16:10- 12 says the following concerning Ishmael:

Then the Angel of the Lord said to her (Hagar), ‘I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.’ And the Angel of the Lord said to her: ‘Behold, you are with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because of the Lord has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, And every man’s hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

The complexity, instability, and hostility of the Middle East can be traced all the way back to the Patriarch Abraham and his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael.

Thirdly, there are **THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ISIS**. In order to understand the radical views of ISIS one must have a basic understanding of Islam. The word, “Islam,” means “submission” to Allah, the god of Mohammad. Thus Islam for a Muslim is accepting the supremacy of God’s will above one’s own. Islam was founded by Mohammad (570-632 A. D.). Mohammad is known in Islamic theology as the messenger of God who brought God’s final revelation to the world. This final revelation is recorded in the *Qur’an*. The *Qur’an* is the sacred text of Islam. It is a record of Allah’s revelation to the Prophet Mohammad by the angel Gabriel over a span of twenty-three years. It is about four-fifths the length of the New Testament and includes 114 suras or chapters. The *Qur’an* is the guidebook for Muslim life.

There are “**Five Pillars of Islam.**” They are as follows:

1. **Statement of Belief** – “*shahada*” – the act of professing the belief that Allah is one and Mohammad is his prophet.
2. **Worship and Prayer** – Muslims pray five times a day – at daybreak, noon, mid-afternoon, after sunset, and early evening. Muslims kneel and bow in a prescribed manner in the direction of the holy city, Mecca.
3. **Alms** – Muslims are to give at least one-fortieth of their profit (2.5%) towards the unfortunate such as widows and orphans.
4. **Fasting** – The ninth month of the Islamic lunar year is called Ramadan. It is the highest of Muslim holy seasons. Muslims are required to fast for the entire month from dawn to dusk.
5. **Hajj** - Pilgrimage to Mecca – A pilgrimage to Mecca is expected at least once in a lifetime of any man who is able to go physically and financially.

ISIS is Islam to the extreme. It is a radical form of the Islamic teachings. There are several words to help us understand the goal and mission of ISIS. They are as follows.

1. **Radical** – The members of ISIS are extremists. They are radical in their ideology and philosophy. One of the goals of ISIS is to impose *Sharia Law* which is strict adherence to the *Qur’an* and Mohammad. Islamic fundamentalists believe in the concept of “*Holy War*” or *Jihad*. This idea is based on Surah 48:13 in the *Qur’an* which states, “Anyone who refuses to believe in God and His messenger, we have prepared for the disbelievers a hellfire.” Franjo Terhart and Janina Schulze in the book, *World Religions*, writes the following concerning Islamic terrorist groups such as al-Qaida, Hizballah, and ISIS.

The aim of Islamic fundamentalism is to return to the origins of Islam, and its values in life. Islamic fundamentalists strive to establish a social order that implements Islamic law in all areas of life. The civil rights, liberal way of life, and democratic values of the world community do not exist for fundamentalism, because they are not to be found in the Koran. Extreme fundamentalists are ready to die for their convictions and do not consider their deaths to be suicide (a deadly sin in the eyes of Allah), but as martyrdom. They destroy themselves and others in order to gain the necessary respect and recognition for Islam worldwide through aggression. page 116

The following quote by Mohammed Abu Wardeh of Hamas helps us to understand the motivation of suicide bombers and attackers. “I told them how God compensates martyrs when they sacrifice their lives for their country. God bestows on each of them seventy virgins of paradise, seventy wives, and eternally lasting happiness.”

2. **Ruthless** – The members of the ISIS organization are known for their barbaric forms of terrorism and torture such as crucifixion, rape, beheading, etc. In many ways they resemble the ancient warriors of the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrian Empire reached its height in 650 B. C. with Nineveh being its capital. ISIS currently controls much of the old Assyrian Empire. The Assyrian soldiers were violent and ruthless. Some of the tactics of the Assyrians included impaling victims on stakes, dismembering bodies and littering the ground with hands and feet, constructing a pyramid of human heads, and skinning prisoners while they were still alive.

3. **Relentless** – They are resolute and determined.

4. **Repressive** – Once they capture a city, area, or region they are repressive and controlling.

5. **Resourceful** – These are very clever individuals. They are resourceful politically, technologically, militarily, and economically. Craig Evans and Jeremiah Johnston in the book, *Jesus and the Jihadis*, write, “ISIS

is the richest terrorist group in the world. At last count, ISIS has some sixty oil fields under its control and is collecting revenues of \$3 million per day” (page 13). They also spread their propaganda through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

We are reminded of God’s warning in Deuteronomy 11:16 of those who would distort the truth of the Word of God, “Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them.”

A fourth consideration is **THE CERTAINTY OF PERSECUTION**. The Bible cautions and warns us that we will be persecuted for our faith in Jesus Christ. Second Timothy 3:12 states, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Jesus said in John 15:18 and 20, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you . . . if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” There are three types of persecution. They are mental, emotional, and physical. We should not be surprised when we experience one or all three forms of persecution. Jesus never promised His followers an easy pathway. History is paved with the blood of martyrs. All of the disciples were persecuted for their faith in Christ. Therefore, it should not surprise us when we are persecuted in some fashion for our Christian faith. Unfortunately, ISIS has targeted Christians with their barbaric acts. Only eternity will tell the story of how many Believers have lost their lives due to the hostile persecution of ISIS.

Finally, there is **THE CALL OF CHRISTIANS**. In light of the rise of ISIS, what should we do as Believers? We have a tremendous responsibility as Christians to make a difference in this world. First of all, we must **Identify** with Christ. It is imperative that we as Christians take a courageous stand for the Lord Jesus Christ (Joshua 1:9). We must resolve to be like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who stood for God in spite of their lives being threatened with the fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 6:1-30). We must be bold and courageous for God. Secondly, we can **Intercede** for the world. We must never underestimate what prayer can do (Jeremiah 33:3). We are to pray for our political leaders (1 Timothy 2:1), our country (2 Chronicles 7:14), and even our enemies, which includes ISIS (Matthew 5:44). Thirdly, we can **Impact** our society and world with the gospel message (Matthew 28:19, 20). The gospel is the “good news” of the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The message of the gospel changes lives (Romans 1:16). Finally, we can **Imitate** Christ. We are the only Jesus some people will ever see. The word, “Christian,” means “Christ-like.” We should emulate His life through our words and walk (1 John 2:6).

Many in our world today are asking the question, “Who is the real Savior of the world – Mohammad or Jesus?” Mohammad died in 632 A. D. and is still in the grave. Jesus Christ was crucified, buried, and on the third day came out of the tomb victorious over death and the grave (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The bottom line is this. Are you going to put your trust in a dead Muslim or in the resurrected Lord Jesus (Romans 14:9)? Jesus Christ loves you (John 3:16). Put your faith and trust in Him today (Romans 10:9, 10, & 13).

As we consider the future, we can be hopeful in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 1:1) and His imminent return (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, Acts 1:11). Corrie ten Boom said it best, “Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.”

*The title of this article, “*The ISIS Crisis*,” is also the title of the book written by Charles Dyer and Mark Tobey. However, the entire content of this article is the writing of Dr. Paul W. Noe.

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