

What About ... the Gospel and the Middle East Culture

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In June, twenty-three of us went to study biblical geography in the land of Israel. After a week in the land, Clark began one of his teaching sessions with this observation:

**One thing is clear.
There is no way that the gospel came
out of the Middle East culture.
The gospel came from heaven.**

Cultural anthropologists usually make a case that religion is a development of culture. And that seems to be generally true. Hinduism came out of Animism, the culture of the Indus Valley before 1500 B.C. [Animism is the belief that all things (people, rocks, animals, plants, etc.) are invested with a life force, soul, or mind.] Buddhism came from the meditations of Siddhartha Gautama (563-483 B.C.), a Hindu wanting to reform the caste system. Rabbinic Judaism was developed by the Jews during the Babylonian Captivity (605 B.C.) because they could not sacrifice through the Levite priests at the Temple. Islam adapted Judaism into the aggressive Arab culture through the private “recitings” to Mohammed (A.D. 570-632).

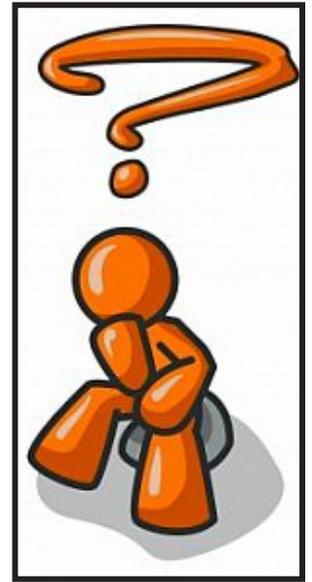
But Christianity? No Way!

The gospel is not from an earthly culture. It’s counter-cultural—always has been, always will be.

If you look at the Middle East culturally today, you see that the Arab and Palestinian Muslims are a people of aggression. God told Hagar, concerning Ishmael, *he will be a wild donkey of a man, His hand will be against everyone, And everyone’s hand will be against him* (Genesis 16:12). Mohammed just provided them with a “holy” reason to practice aggression against everyone.

Today’s Jews practice rabbinic Judaism, which is the religion of the hypocritical Pharisees in Jesus’ day, with updates from the Talmud but with the same exclusive self-righteousness. But the Jews have always been a *stubborn people*. Moses told them:

Know, then, it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people. Remember, do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness ... (Deuteronomy 9:6-8).



But what about this?

... love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you ... (Luke 6:27-28).

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16).

This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you (John 15:12).

... walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God (Ephesians 5:2).

Where do you find that in the Middle East cultures? You don’t have to visit Israel and the West Bank very long to realize there is no way the Gospel came from these cultures. The Gospel came from heaven!

Paul wrote:

... the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12).