

# THE LURE OF FANTASY ISLAM

Just because you ignore the reality of Islam, doesn't mean it will ignore you.

July 8, 2015 Dr. Stephen M. Kirby



Fantasy sports such as football and baseball have become increasingly popular on the internet. For those not familiar with fantasy sports, the emphasis is on fantasy. The simple explanation is that you pretend to be the owner of a team, join a pretend league which has other pretend teams, and then man your team with actual professional players from that particular sport. In this fantasy world you can pick players from any team to be a member of your own team.

When it comes to Islam, there is a similar world that has been created. In this world there are two teams involved, of differing sizes and membership, and interacting at different times and places. The large team consists of a group of non-Muslims who know little if anything about Islam, generally wish with all of their hearts that it is a "Religion of Peace," seem to prefer any presentation that will support that wish, and frown on anyone who expresses skepticism about that wish during the presentation, or afterwards. The small team usually consists of one Muslim making a presentation that largely fulfills the wish of the large team. The accuracy of the presentation is not questioned because the presenter has already established his credentials simply by being a Muslim.

In this world of Fantasy Islam, the presenter is able to create his own version of Islam, react with patronizing sympathy or condescending dismissiveness toward any non-Muslim who questions his version, and knows that the majority of his audience will

support him in maintaining the comfort of this fantasy.

Since the make-up of the large team changes regularly and this team is the more passive of the two, let's look at two of the individuals who have appeared on the small team:

**Dr. M. Zuhdi Jasser, MD**

Dr. M. Zuhdi Jasser is the Muslim Founder and President of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy (AIFD). He is well-known as a proponent of reforming and modernizing Islam, and for years has been a guest on countless television and radio programs. Unfortunately, for years Jasser has also played Fantasy Islam.

**Mickelson in the Morning**

We can go back to October 11, 2010 when Jasser was on a major Iowa radio station with host Jan Mickelson here. During the interview (<http://mickelson.libsyn.com/monday-october-11-2010>), Jasser said he didn't believe that Muhammad had really spoken what was in the *hadith* about killing a Jew hiding behind every stone (Time: 17:58). Here is that *hadith*:

*Narrated Abu Hurairah: Allah's Messenger said, "The Hour will not be established until you fight against the Jews, and the stone behind which a Jew will be hiding will say, 'O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, so kill him.'"*

*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, No. 2926

The collection of *hadiths* by Al-Bukhari has been considered by Muslim scholars to be the most authoritative collect of *hadiths* since the 9<sup>th</sup> Century. Jasser simply has no doctrinal basis for dismissing Al-Bukhari.

Later in the same program, Jasser talked about the Verse of the Sword in the Koran (Time: 24:09 and 26:20). He said that this verse only referred to a specific battle against a specific tribe and applied only to 623 AD; it no longer had any relevance today. Here is that verse:

*Then when the Sacred Months have passed, then kill the Mushrikun wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them, and lie in wait for them in every ambush. But if they repent [by rejecting Shirk (polytheism) and accept Islamic Monotheism] and perform As-Salat (the prayers), and give Zakat (obligatory charity), then leave their way free. Verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*

Chapter 9, Verse 5

Where did he come up with 623 AD? 9:5 was among the verses from Chapter 9 that were revealed in early 631 AD. And these verses were not related to a specific battle or to a specific tribe, but rather directed toward all non-Muslims (*Life of Muhammad (Sirat Rasul Allah)*, pp. 617-619; *The History of al-Tabari: The Last Years of the Prophet*, pp. 77-79; and *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 4, pp. 370-376).

There is no basis in Islamic doctrine for Jasser's assertion that 9:5 has no relevance today. His assertion ignores the facts that Muslims believe the Koran consists of the eternal words of Allah, and Chapter 9 of the Koran was the last chapter to be "revealed" to Muhammad. Consequently, the commands found in Chapter 9 are the final, eternal words of Allah on the matters addressed in that Chapter.

### **Abraham's Tent**

Over the years Jasser has continued playing Fantasy Islam. He was interviewed on a segment of the *Abraham's Tent* radio program, which was aired on September 29, 2014. In this interview (<http://www.abrahamstentradio.com/archives/AT092914.mp3>) he made his standard assertion that 5:51 of the Koran, which commands Muslims not to be friends with Jews and Christians, had been intentionally misinterpreted (Time: 25:38). Here is that verse:

*O you who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians as Auliya' (friends, protectors, helpers), they are but Auliya' of each other. And if any amongst you takes them as Auliya', then surely, he is one of them. Verily, Allah guides not those people who are the Zalimun (polytheists and wrongdoers and unjust).*

Jasser claimed that *Auliya'* really meant "legal representatives." He said this verse simply meant that when it came to picking such a representative, Muslims should pick someone who understands the legalisms in Islam, meaning a Muslim, and not somebody of another faith. It had nothing to do with prohibiting Muslims from being friends with Jews and Christians.

Once again Jasser is flying in the face of Islamic doctrine. As I pointed out in an earlier article (<http://www.frontpagemag.com/2015/dr-stephen-m-kirby/dont-take-jews-and-christians-as-friends/>), in 5:51 Allah commands Muslims not to be friends with Jews and Christians. And, as I also pointed out in that article, this understanding is supported by five modern translations of the Koran; the messages of additional verses of the Koran; five authoritative Koran commentaries, written at different times between circa 900-1995 AD; and the teachings of Muhammad.

Jasser also expressed the basis for his Fantasy Islam: "Every Muslim has the right to interpret their faith." (Time: 29:11). This too flies in the face of Islamic doctrine, e.g.:

*Muhammad bin Jarir reported that Ibn 'Abbas said that the Prophet said,*

*'Whoever explains the Qur'an with his opinion or with what he has no knowledge of, then let him assume his seat in the Fire.'*

*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 1, pp. 32-33

In this interview Jasser suggested that 5:38 of the Koran, which commands amputation for theft, was "metaphorical" and "not literal" (Time 54:25). Here is that verse:

*And (as for) the male thief and the female thief, cut off (from the wrist joint) their (right) hands as a recompense for that which they committed, a punishment by way of example from Allah. And Allah is All-Powerful, All-Wise.*

Not only is this verse not a metaphor, it is explicit in commanding the amputation of hands for theft. In addition, Muhammad, who is the example of conduct for Muslims, ordered the hands of many thieves to be cut off; he even said he would cut off the hand of his favorite daughter if she committed theft (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, No. 4304).

### **A Battle for the Soul of Islam**

In 2013 the paperback edition of Jasser's widely acclaimed book *A Battle for the Soul of Islam* was published. After reading only the eleventh chapter, "How the Qur'an is Misinterpreted," I decided not to read the rest of the book.

Jasser's version of Fantasy Islam is best epitomized in this eleventh chapter with the following statement he wrote on p. 252:

*Nowhere in the Qur'an does God tell Muslims that they must repeat and thus emulate the Prophet Muhammad's role and actions as a military or governmental leader.*

This statement is immediately repudiated by 33:21 of the Koran:

*Indeed in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad) you have a good example to follow for him who hopes for (the Meeting with) Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much.*

There are no limitations here on the circumstances in which Muhammad is to be considered a good example. In fact, this verse was actually "revealed" as a result of Muhammad's military leadership and the example he set for his Muslim warriors during the Battle of the Trench in 627 (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 7, p. 658; *Tafsir Al-Jalalayn*, p. 900; *Tafsir Ibn 'Abbas*, p. 546; and *Tafsir Ahsanul-Bayan*, Vol. 4, p. 374).

Since 33:21 is a verse that counters Jasser's Fantasy Islam, he has apparently decided to deny it, which means he has apparently also decided to ignore this warning from his

prophet Muhammad:

*It was narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that the Messenger of Allah said: "Whoever denies a Verse of the Qur'an, it is permissible to strike his neck (i.e. execute him)..."*

*Sunan Ibn Majah*, No. 2539

**Dr. Syed Mohiuddin**

Dr. Syed Mohiuddin is President of the American Muslim Institute (AMI), the Muslim group involved in building a new mosque as part of the Tri-Faith Initiative in Omaha, Nebraska. I recently attended a presentation he made at St. Pius X Catholic Church in Omaha. The presentation was titled *The True Nature of Islam*. Here is how Mohiuddin presented "the true nature" of Islam.

When asked about the treatment of women, Mohiuddin assured the audience that the Koran repeatedly stated that men and women were equal, without, however, mentioning any supporting verses. In reality, the Koran says that it takes the testimony of two women to equal that of one man (2:282); a woman is to receive only half the inheritance of a man (4:12); a Muslim woman can only marry a Muslim man (2:221), while Muslim men can marry Jews and Christians (5:5) and have up to four wives (4:3).

Mohiuddin was wise not to mention things that Muhammad said about women, e.g.:

*It is not wise for anyone of you to lash his wife like a slave, for he might sleep with her the same evening.*

*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, No. 4942

*Treat women well, for they are [like] domestic animals with you and do not possess anything for themselves.*

*The History of al-Tabari: The Last Years of the Prophet*, p. 113

Mohiuddin was asked why, if Islam says we are all brothers and sisters, do we see beheading of Christians on the beaches of Libya? He replied that Islam,

*if practiced appropriately and correctly, would never, never allow that... And the true Muslims in true Islamic countries would never allow that to happen.*

In reality, there are two verses in the Koran (8:12 and 47:4) and numerous *hadiths* that allow Muslims to behead people, even captive non-combatants.

Mohiuddin said there were “major differences” in how the Koran was interpreted. And he said there were instances when people added their own thoughts to provide an incorrect interpretation. He gave an example from *Al-Fatihah*, the first chapter of the Koran, in which he said the translator had included in parenthesis the words “Jews” and “Christians” to explain “those who go astray” (1:7). For some reason, much of the audience laughed when he said this.

In reality, Muhammad himself said that the Christians had gone astray (e.g. *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 4, p. 410, and *Tafsir Al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 1, p. 127), and it was also an accepted belief among later Muslim scholars that the Jews too had gone astray (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 1, p. 87). But in Mohiuddin’s version of Islam, this was a bad translation.

I asked Mohiuddin to explain the Doctrine of Abrogation. His first response was to confuse it with apostasy. To prompt him a bit, I pointed out that abrogation meant that when there was a conflict between the meanings of two verses, the verse “revealed” later would supersede the earlier verse (meaning that the belligerent Medinan verses found in Chapter 9 supersede the peaceful Meccan verses elsewhere in the Koran). I asked him to comment on this principle. After some general, and not necessarily germane remarks, he concluded by saying that the message “was the first one which supersedes the other one.”

The Doctrine of Abrogation is fundamental to understanding the messages of the Koran. How can one talk about the “true nature of Islam” without understanding the Doctrine of Abrogation?

When asked about 5:51, which prohibits Muslims from being friends with Jews and Christians, Mohiuddin said this verse only referred to a specific tribe of people during a specific time of war. He said this verse had to be specific to a time and tribe because of the other verses in the Koran that “repeatedly emphasized the importance of” Jews and Christians. He did not mention any supporting Koran verses.

So let’s consider some supporting Koran verses that emphasize Jews and Christians: Allah is angry with the Jews, and the Christians are misguided because they believe that Jesus is the son of God (1:7); Jews are among the worst enemies of Islam (5:82); Muslims are commanded to fight Jews and Christians until the Jews and Christians pay protection money with willing submission and feel themselves subdued (9:29); Allah curses the Jews and the Christians (9:30); and Jews and Christians are among the worst of creatures and “will abide in the fire of Hell” (98:6).

These verses show us that Jews and Christians are certainly important to Islam, but not in the positive way implied by Mohiuddin.

In hindsight, Mohiuddin’s presentation should have been titled *Dr. Mohiuddin’s Personal Impressions of Islam*, or more simply, *Fantasy Islam*. After the presentation, the

audience of 60-70 people walked out misinformed, but also feeling comforted about Islam; the latter which, from the apparent attitude of the hosts and much of the audience, appeared to be the main purpose of the event.

### **Conclusion**

For many years non-Muslims in the West have been fed a steady diet of how Islam is a “Religion of Peace” and is similar, and even related to, Judaism and Christianity. At the same time we have seen an increasing number of acts of violence done in the name of Islam.

For those willing to learn and investigate, the irrefutable conclusion is that most, if not all, of the violent acts committed by the *jihadists* are truly supported by Islamic doctrine, just as the *jihadists* themselves claim. But this conclusion can create a cognitive dissonance between what we have heard about Islam and what we see actually being done in the name of Islam and supported by Islamic doctrine. This dissonance can create stress. The antidote to this stress for many is to turn to Fantasy Islam, where Islam is what any peaceful-sounding Muslim wants it to be, and the *jihadists* are the hijacking outliers.

But this is only a temporary resolution. Just because you continue to ignore the reality of Islam, doesn't mean that the reality of Islam will continue to ignore you. The Christians in the Middle East and Africa are the canaries in the coal mine.

**Dr. Stephen M. Kirby is the author of three books about Islam. His latest book is *Islam According to Muhammad, Not Your Neighbor*.**

🏷 **Tags:** Islam, Leftist, Moderate

### **ABOUT DR. STEPHEN M. KIRBY**

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