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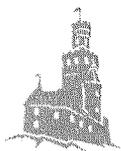
GETTING  
**J E S U S**  
RIGHT

HOW MUSLIMS GET JESUS AND ISLAM WRONG

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JAMES A. BEVERLEY AND CRAIG A. EVANS

INCLUDES A CRITIQUE OF REZA ASLAN'S *ZEALOT* AND *NO GOD BUT GOD*



CASTLE QUAY BOOKS

# GETTING JESUS RIGHT: HOW MUSLIMS GET JESUS AND ISLAM WRONG

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CASTLE QUAY BOOKS

In memory of Jennifer Susan Keirstead  
Daughter of David and Darlene Keirstead  
March 3, 1993–September 6, 2014

Memories of fun times, your loving spirit,  
your amazing creativity and your fabulous smile  
will hold us

Until we meet in that place where God will wipe away all tears from our eyes

(Revelation 21:4)

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# Table of Contents

Introduction . . . . .	9
Chapter 1: Are the New Testament Gospels Reliable? . . . . .	15
Chapter 2: Are the Manuscripts of the New Testament Gospels Reliable? 25	
Chapter 3: How Did Jesus Understand Himself and His Mission? . . . . .	37
Chapter 4: Did James and Paul Preach a Different Gospel? . . . . .	53
Chapter 5: Was Jesus a Zealot? . . . . .	65
Chapter 6: How Do Muslims View Muhammad? . . . . .	81
Chapter 7: How Reliable Is the Historical Record about Muhammad? . . .97	
Chapter 8: Is Muhammad the Greatest Moral and Spiritual Model? . . . .109	
Chapter 9: How Do Muslims View the Qur'an? . . . . .	125
Chapter 10: Is the Qur'an God's Infallible Word? . . . . .	145
Chapter 11: Does the Qur'an Get Jesus Right? . . . . .	161
Chapter 12: Does the Qur'an Get the Death of Jesus Right? . . . . .	171
Chapter 13: Does Islamic Tradition Get Jesus Right? . . . . .	183
Chapter 14: Does Islam Liberate Women? . . . . .	193
Chapter 15: Is Islam a Religion of Peace? . . . . .	207
Chapter 16: Easter Truths, Muslim Realities and Common Hope . . . . .	223
Appendix 1: Reza Aslan's <i>Zealot</i> : Wrong at Many Points . . . . .	229
Appendix 2: Was Jesus Married to Mary Magdalene? . . . . .	235
Appendix 3: Modern Studies on the Qur'an . . . . .	239
Appendix 4: New Testament Background and the Growth of Christianity 243	
Appendix 5: Timeline of Islam . . . . .	249
Appendix 6: The Islamic State and <i>The Atlantic</i> . . . . .	261
Appendix 7: The Infamous Fox News Interview . . . . .	265
Resources . . . . .	267
Endnotes . . . . .	269
Index of Scripture and Ancient Writings . . . . .	331

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# Introduction

Peace on planet Earth depends on Christians and Muslims. It is quite simple. There are over 2 billion Christians on planet Earth and 1.6 billion Muslims. If demographic trends continue, followers of these two world religions will make up more than 50 percent of humanity. As Hans Küng has stated eloquently, if these two groups don't learn to live with each other and with other religions or philosophies, we are doomed as God's creatures to lives of discord, hatred, bloodshed and terror.

Given numbers alone, understanding Islam and Christianity is an imperative.

The necessity is made more acute by the tensions of our current world, particularly given the failure of the Arab Spring and the rise in 2014 of the Islamic State and its brutal takeover of large areas of Iraq and Syria. For the first time in recent history an Islamic caliphate has been announced and a new caliph is now celebrated by radical Muslims from all over the world. The familiar questions are back: What is jihad? Is Islam a religion of peace? Does Islam liberate women? Is shariah law the right path for humanity?

Behind these issues lie fundamental matters about the nature of God, how Christian and Muslim Scripture should be evaluated, what a proper assessment of Muhammad is and how one gets accurate information about Jesus. In spite of common ground between Christians and Muslims, their respective religions offer largely different views on these four general matters and the related sub-topics noted previously. At one level, one must choose Christianity or Islam, the Bible or the Qur'an, Muhammad or Jesus. While binary options are not always

necessary and nuance is usually crucial, in this case a choice must be made. Both Islam and Christianity demand either a yes or a no: one cannot choose both together. They are largely irreconcilable religions and worldviews.

*Getting Jesus Right* is an extended argument that humanity should choose Christian faith for spiritual truth, not Islam. We argue that Islam makes major errors in its understanding of God, teachings on Jesus, views on salvation, attitudes about Muhammad, stress on the Qur'an, downplaying of the Bible and ethical guidelines for humanity. These flaws in Islam have real-life, negative consequences for the Muslim world, for Muslim families, for Muslim men, women and children and for those who do not follow Islam. Our book, then, is an invitation for the Muslim world and everyone else to consider the Christian gospel of Jesus Christ as the true and better alternative to Islam.

We are not naïve. We know that the vast majority of Muslims reject our fundamental beliefs and our arguments. For Muslims, Islam is the one true religion, Muhammad is the final prophet, the Qur'an is the eternal, perfect Word of God, Jesus is not the Son of God, and true liberation is achieved only through following the will of Allah. We recognize that Muslims believe we should abandon Christianity, submit to Allah as the one true God, follow Muhammad as the prophet of God and believe and obey the teachings of the Qur'an. We respectfully disagree, and our book tells why.

In defending Christian faith and offering our critique of Islam, we decided to use the work of a very popular Muslim writer as our way to examine key issues. In the summer of 2013, Reza Aslan, a former evangelical Christian, became a publishing sensation courtesy of a Fox News interview with him that went viral. Aslan was grilled over his new book, *Zealot*, which was his study of Jesus of Nazareth. Both of us wrote articles on Aslan and *Zealot* shortly after his interview. We decided quite quickly to expand our work into a book but with the added element of analyzing Aslan's popular apologetic for Islam called *No god but God* (now in a revised edition and published in several languages). While we deal with the basic subjects at the core of the Christian-Islam divide, there are some complicated topics left for future analysis (like the Israel-Palestinian conflict and the contours of Sufi Islam).

We chose Reza Aslan not because of his accuracy but because his ideas express well what so many believe and repeat about both Islam and Christianity. To be clear, in spite of his popularity with Muslims and with mainstream media, Reza Aslan is not the source to seek for careful, accurate, truthful information

on Jesus. His book on Jesus is an academic failure, proof that distinguished publishers sometimes place sales above scholarship. Likewise, Reza Aslan's apologetics for Islam is a failure. It is based on misleading argument, special pleadings, avoidance of crucial issues, misrepresentation of others, twisting of issues and hollow, unsupported assertions about Muhammad, the Qur'an, jihad and the treatment of women. Of course, it is hard to be totally wrong, so we celebrate his choice of moderate rather than radical Islam. We share his dislike for many Islamic traditions and shariah law, but in the end we believe Aslan should give up his inconsistent, mangled defense of Islam and return to the worship of Jesus of Nazareth as Savior and Lord. He owes the world an apology for his reckless views on Jesus and his weak arguments for Muhammad as prophet and the Qur'an as God's word. The same holds for his distorted understandings of jihad and his strained reasoning that Islam is the best path to liberate women.

We do not expect the assertions of our introduction to convince anyone. This is simply laying out our general positions. The rest of the book provides the evidence that clearly supports our views. Did we say clearly? Yes. On the matters we address, we believe that the evidence is overwhelming that Reza Aslan and the vast majority of Muslims do not get Jesus or Islam right. In terms of specifics, the New Testament is the place to turn for accurate information about Jesus (see chapters 1–5), not the Qur'an or Islamic tradition (chapters 11–13). The historical worth of the New Testament is excellent, and the manuscript tradition supporting the New Testament is superb. In contrast, in spite of the highest regard for Muhammad in Islam (chapter 6), the historical reliability of Muhammad is doubtful (chapter 7). Likewise, the traditional Muslim portrait of the prophet is morally questionable (chapter 8). The Qur'an is not divine, as Muslims believe (chapter 9), but is a flawed human product that contains mistaken teaching about Jesus, huge distortions of the Bible and unethical guidelines, and all in a confusing, disorderly and often nasty text (chapter 10).

When the traditional Islamic view of Muhammad gets combined with traditional Islamic interpretations of shariah law and morality, we often get the consequent mistreatment of women (chapter 14) and the emphasis on jihad in terms of military conquest, dominion over non-Muslims and the harsh binary division of humanity into the Abode of Islam and the Abode of War (chapter 15). This goes a long way to explain the military expansion of Islam after the prophet gained power in Medina, the Arab conquests after the death of the prophet and the reality of Islamic imperialism ever since.

Three caveats are in order here. First, we ask readers not to use the bare assertions of this introduction as grounds for aligning us with extreme and ill-informed critiques of Islam. For example, we do not share the view of some right-wing critics that radical Islam (aka jihadist Islam) is obviously the true understanding of Islam. Does this mean we believe Islam is a religion of peace? We will save that question for later. For now, we gladly acknowledge that most Muslims today are deeply disturbed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his Islamic State (aka ISIS, ISIL). From another angle, while we do not believe that Islam offers women true liberation, we do not think that every Muslim woman who veils herself is a slave. The veil can be a liberating reality for Muslim women in our sex-saturated cultures, West and East. Likewise, our hatred of Islamic jihad interpreted as conquest and terrorism should not be taken to mean that we have a Pollyanna view of Western societies or of British, German, French, Dutch, Russian, American or other non-Muslim imperialisms.

Second, our strong critique of Islam and our confidence in Christian faith does not mean that there are no serious problems in the Bible or in understanding the Christian view of God, the nature of humanity, the extent of salvation, the problem of pain and evil and so on. Nevertheless, in spite of ambiguities and problems, we assert that Christian faith in Jesus of Nazareth offers true liberation and salvation to all humans.

Third, we ask readers to pay special attention to the fact that the concerns of our book in relation to Muhammad are directed to the traditional interpretation of him and not to Muhammad directly. We do not believe that anyone can credibly describe or reach the historical Muhammad. We do argue, however, that the traditionalist perspective creates many of the moral complications about the prophet and, consequently, that Muslims like Reza Aslan need to learn how to better handle these serious issues for the survival of a healthy Islam.

In our respective disciplines we are used to debate and polemic, but we have written this book to inform, not inflame, even when we offer blunt verdicts about Reza Aslan's numerous errors in scholarship on both Jesus and Islam. The same applies to our critique of Islam. Our concerns about the traditional view of Muhammad and the standard Islamic view of the Qur'an are raised because of our serious, lengthy academic study of the historical Jesus, Christian tradition and Islamic faith. Given this, our book invites rational examination. We remain open to correction of any errors of fact or interpretation. And we are eager to engage in debate on the matters we address. Since

there is a rich philosophical tradition in Islamic thought, we hope that Muslims will meet our perspectives and evidence with reasoned argument.

As the authors of the book we alone are responsible for its content. But we have many people to thank, some of whom are listed. Foremost among all, we thank our respective wives (Gloria Beverley and Ginny Evans) for enduring another book project. We also express our appreciation to Tyndale Seminary and Acadia Divinity College for consistently supporting our research in general and this project in particular. We remain appreciative to Brett Potter and Dwight Crowell for helping on various research tasks. It has been a pleasure to work with our publisher, Larry Willard, and his wife, Marina, on all the details that go into getting a book into print.

Lastly, readers will note the dedication page in memory of Jennifer Keirstead, Professor Beverley's niece, who died unexpectedly on September 6, 2014, at the age of 21. A month before her death she sat beside him at a baby dedication and sang with others "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." We offer this book in the unwavering conviction of the truth of that simple affirmation.

*James A. Beverley*  
*Craig A. Evans*

Note: For spelling alternatives, we usually adopt the spelling *Muhammad* for the prophet and *Qur'an* for Islamic Scripture. We use different translations of the Qur'an but highly recommend Arthur Droge's new annotated version (Equinox, 2014). Generally, we avoid diacritical marks. To contact authors write [professorjamesbeverley@gettingjesusright.com](mailto:professorjamesbeverley@gettingjesusright.com) and [professorcraigevans@gettingjesusright.com](mailto:professorcraigevans@gettingjesusright.com).

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