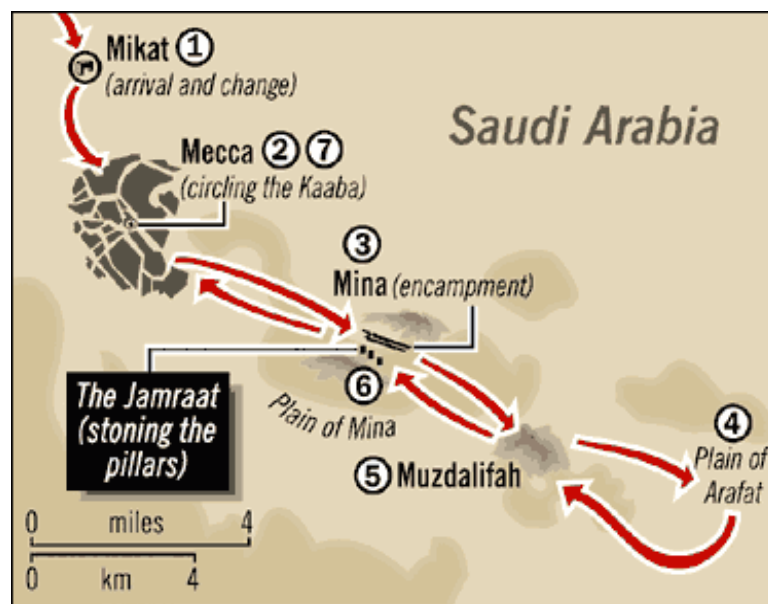


The Haaj and Christmas

Commentary for December 18, 2008 — What Do They Have in Common?

Earlier this month in Mecca, the holy city of Islam in Saudi Arabia the Haaj (sometimes spelled Hajj) was conducted. The Haaj is the name of the sacred Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. The Haaj is one of the five requirements that an Islamic believer should perform in his lifetime. The pilgrims should travel to Mecca and perform certain simple rituals as commanded and as a tribute to their beliefs. Below is a graphic showing what is done. It is the largest religious pilgrimage in the world with over 1.7 million people participating.¹

They pray and read the Koran at certain times in their procession. Hundreds of thousands of devout pilgrims fulfill the pilgrimage each year. They march seven times around the sacred Black Stone, the Kaaba, throw stones at three pillars that represent the devil, perform other ritual acts at other locations, and then return to the Kaaba in Mecca.² Here is the route of the pilgrimage. Each stop has its unique actions and performance by the pilgrims.



Why should we care what they do in Mecca? After all, the Haaj is not Christian, what they do is not commanded by the Bible, and in fact it had its origins in overtly pagan practices. The actions are not Jewish, not Christian, and certainly not biblical. They should not be practiced by those who believe the biblical revelation.

“Christmas, Christmas Time Is Near ...”

Indeed, look around you at the so-called “Christian” world. Note that the practices by most people in the Western World during the so-called Christmas season are no more Christian than the Islamic Haaj pilgrimage to the Kaaba. The celebration of Christmas is not commanded by the Bible. The celebration of Christmas also originated with overtly pagan practices. The

1. See the Wikipedia article “[Haaj](#).”

2. Videos of some of the Haaj activities can be seen at <http://www.mefedia.com/tags/haaj>.

actions are not Christian in origin, not Jewish in origin, not Muslim in origin, and they certainly are not biblical in origin. Yet, why do so many do them anyway?

Toward the end of this month people will gather around a tree with their loved ones in their homes, exchange gifts, go to houses of friends and relatives, and gather around a different tree and exchange gifts. They will drink appropriate holiday libations, eat appropriate holiday treats (some are formed to look like little people). The more devout even gather in religious houses of worship to view an icon hanging on a piece of wood in the shape of a cross to celebrate the birth of the person, a baby, supposedly symbolized by the image of death.

Both the Haaj pilgrimage and the Christmas celebrations are non-biblical and should be rejected both in practice and observation for that reason alone. Both are voluntary and mass social rituals. (At least Muslims can rightly claim that their holy book, the Koran, commands that they perform the Haaj pilgrimage.)

Self-styled Christians who would never perform a Haaj pilgrimage blithely go on with their lives performing their own holiday rituals, all the while probably looking down on Muslims for being faithful to their traditions.

The Bible nowhere says Christmas, the incorrect time period for Christ's birth, should be observed or celebrated. Christians have no real excuse for doing so. There have never been any instructions in Scripture to pray before the icon on the cross,³ celebrate the person's birth at the winter solstice time, go before a tree, put gifts under the tree, and then exchange those gifts with each other.⁴ The excuses are many: "It's for the children." "It's fun, I enjoy the holiday spirit."

Each of us should examine why we do things in life.

Next year, why not just scrap all vestige of biblical understanding from your life and become a Muslim? Then you can go perform the simple ritual of the Haaj with a million other people. Then you can have that sense of community and participation (that so many claim they feel by celebrating Christmas), which at least is required by Islamic religious teaching.

After all, if people do not care about how they live, if people cannot defend their beliefs, if people yearly perform unbiblical practices and activities so they can "go along to get along," then why do they bother with the Bible at all? One old joke asked the question: if you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

My handy computer dictionary defines "hypocrisy" as:

"The practice of professing beliefs, feelings, or virtues that one does not hold or possess; falseness; An act or instance of such falseness."

Indeed, would there be any evidence to even accuse you of being a Christian? Each of us answers that question every day by how we live our lives week by week, month by month, year by year — by the thoughts that we think, by the actions we take, by the habits we have — and by the excuses we make.

I have been criticized, as Dr. Martin was, of writing excessively about this subject. Christ was never in Christmas. He never will be. He should not be. It has no relationship to Him. Does it have a relationship to you?

David Sielaff
david@askelm.com

3. Even that is incorrect. Jesus was crucified on a tree.

4. The Bible says the gifts were given to the Christ child, not to each other. Oops!