

MID-EAST e-NEWS

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Welcome

Well, we've gone all Religious this issue, since it will be distributed either immediately after or before Easter, depending upon where you live. For all you could ever want to know about dating Easter, see page 2.

At our Easter service this weekend I was reminded again about the sacrifice made for us on the first Good Friday. It is amazing how deeply a drama can convict us, when we have become inured to the same statements in a text. This should also remind us that the response to the Gospel by those from different cultures than ours can depend upon how it is presented.

Email your responses to pkclark@pmbx.net & check the web for back issues.

History of Islam

In discussing Islam, reference is frequently made to *Shari'a Law*. It seems relevant to point out in this article that there are actually 4 Sunni schools of Islamic Law, as well as a fifth that is recognized by the Shia.

These schools of law developed during the Middle Ages. Each of the four schools is named after its founder, and has a proportion of adherents from the worldwide Muslim community: **Hanafi** (*Abu Hanafi*, 699-765, 45%), **Hanbali** (Imam *Ahmad bin Hanbal*, d.855, 5%), **Maliki** (*Malik Ibn Annas*, 715-796, 25%), and **Shafi** (*Abu Abdulillah ash-Shafi*, 767-820, 15%). Though each school has its own adherents, these do not constitute sects, but *schools* of jurisprudence, (*fiqh*, in Arabic). These schools form the basis of interpretation of law within the regions where they are dominant.

Though there are differences in the four schools' interpretation and application of Islamic Law, there is unanimity on the penalty for apostasy: death.

A recent email reminded me of the frequent claims of Muslim leaders when they have a western audience. "London-based Mufti Abdul Barkatullah said that the Shafi'i school of Islamic law eschews the death penalty for apostasy. This assertion is so easily refuted from the Shafi'i texts that one can only think the mufti assumes that no non-Muslim would ever bother to check his words. The classical Shafi'i manual of law, [known in English as *The Reliance of the Traveller*] by Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri (died 1368) is unambiguous on this point.

8.1 When a person who has reached puberty and is sane voluntarily apostatizes from Islam, he deserves to be killed.

8.2 In such a case, it is obligatory for the caliph to ask him to repent and return to Islam. If he does, it is accepted from him, but if he refuses, he is immediately killed."

We will return to this topic in the next issue of e-NEWS.

Summary Table: The Four Schools

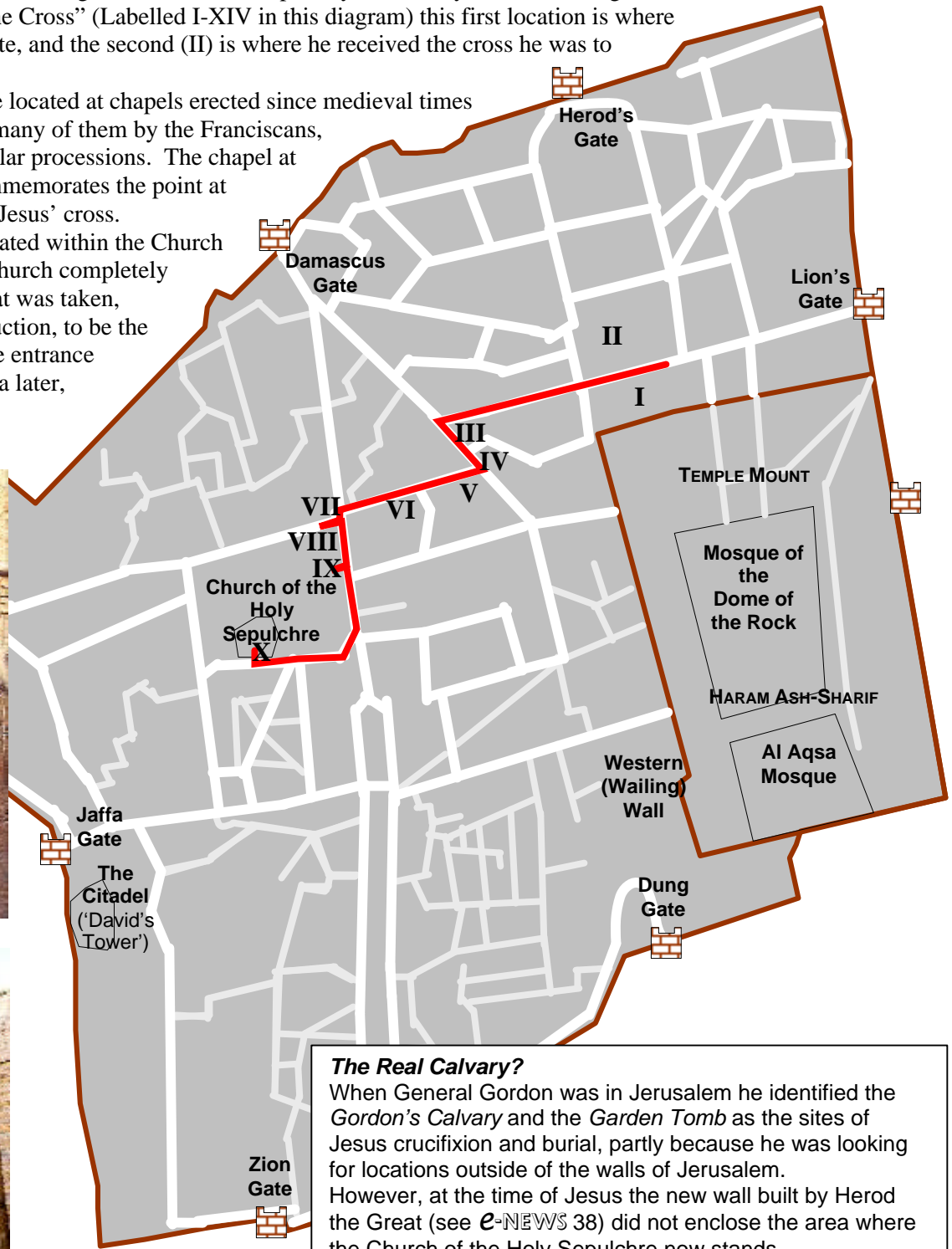
	Hanafi (45%)	Maliki (25%)	Shafi (15%)	Hanbali (5%)
Dominant in ..	Bangladesh India Pakistan Bosnia Kosovo Albania Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, etc.) Russian & Ukrainian Muslims	North Africa West Africa Central Africa	Kurdistan Somalia Yemen Indonesia Thailand Singapore Philippines Sri Lanka Malaysia Brunei	Saudi Arabia
Significant	Egypt Turkey Syria & Lebanon Iraq	Egypt	Egypt Turkey Syria & Lebanon Iraq	Qatar United Arab Emirates
Key Features	According to Hanafi <i>fiqh</i> , blasphemy is not punishable by the state, despite being considered a civil crime by some other schools. The state should not be involved in personal religious faith.	The Maliki school uses the practice of the people of Medina as a source, in addition to the familiar sources of the <i>Qur'an</i> , <i>hadith</i> , <i>ijma'</i> and <i>qiyas</i> . This reduces the usual emphasis on hadith found in Islam.	In forming legal decisions this school value consensus of the Umma (Muslim body) and reasoning by analogy.	The Hanbali school insists that those who do not recognize its rulings do not deserve equal representation in law. Opinion and analogy are rejected, with strict reliance on the <i>Qur'an</i> and <i>Hadiths</i>
	Liberal	Moderate	Moderate Conservative	Strict Conservative

The Via Dolorosa (Via Crucis)

The Roman barracks known as the Antonine Fortress is located to the north of the Temple Mount (Haram Ash-Sharif). The street that runs westwards into the city from Stephen's Gate (aka. Lion Gate) runs through where the Antonine Fortress was located. The southern part of the grounds is now occupied by Al-Omariye Islamic college. In the Roman Catholic tradition of the "Stations of the Cross" (Labelled I-XIV in this diagram) this first location is where Jesus was condemned by Pilate, and the second (II) is where he received the cross he was to carry to Golgotha.

Most of the 'stations' are located at chapels erected since medieval times to commemorate the events, many of them by the Franciscans, who mark the route with regular processions. The chapel at station V (picture below) commemorates the point at which Simon of Cyrene took Jesus' cross.

The final stations are located within the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. This church completely encloses a buttress of rock that was taken, during the 4th Century construction, to be the site of Jesus' crucifixion. The entrance shown in the lower picture is a later, Crusader, addition.



The Real Calvary?
 When General Gordon was in Jerusalem he identified the *Gordon's Calvary* and the *Garden Tomb* as the sites of Jesus crucifixion and burial, partly because he was looking for locations outside of the walls of Jerusalem. However, at the time of Jesus the new wall built by Herod the Great (see e-NEWS 38) did not enclose the area where the Church of the Holy Sepulchre now stands. When he saw the cliff (which today stands above the bus station near Damascus Gate) giving the appearance of a 'place of the skull' and a burial cave nearby, he was convinced that this was the true site of Jesus' death & burial.

2. Conditions

Of the Bible passages listed in the previous issue of e-News, prophesying concerning the land of Israel, a number of them appear to be conditional. These include some which make it clear that those present in the land will have a new heart, “a heart of flesh,” or be clearly included in the company of believers, “everyone whose name is found written in the book.” Other passages suggest that those who rebel against God “will not enter the land of Israel,” or that “the Lord your God will restore your fortunes...” when “you and your children return to the Lord.”

We will make observations according to the headings introduced in issue 62.

Even when the prophecies are referring to the Covenant, Ezekiel makes it clear that *individuals who rebel will be purged from the land*. (Ezekiel 20:38 I will purge you of those who revolt and rebel against me. Although I will bring them out of the land where they are living, yet they will not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.) Similarly, when the Redeemer comes, it will be “to those in Jacob who repent of their sins. As for me, this is my covenant with them,” (Isaiah 59:20).

Passages that emphasize God’s glory include Deuteronomy 28:1-3, which is clearly dependent upon Israel’s obedience, and a warning is presented in 1 Samuel 12:25.

Regarding the Returning Remant, Jeremiah 12:14-17 includes a warning that refers to both the Jews and aliens. “17 But if any nation does not listen, I will completely uproot and destroy it,” declares the LORD. Frequently, in this context, a clear change of heart of the people of Israel is implied: “For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land... I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” (Ezekiel 36:24,26) and see also Zephaniah 3:9-13.

The blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 30:1-10 clearly link Restoration with repentance “...when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, 3 then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes,” as does Ezekiel 36:33-36.

According to the prophecy in Daniel 12:1, when Michael intercedes, “There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.” This implies either general faith amongst the people, or that only the faithful are included in the promise of Deliverance.

Some of the prophecies related to Forgiveness & Redemption imply a people of pure faith, as with Malachi 3:3-4: “...he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years.” Another passage reflects the importance of justice: “1 This is what the LORD says: ‘Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed.’ ”

Similarly, Repentance is expected of the people, when they find themselves in exile, (Leviticus 26:40) but the passage continues... “They will pay for their sins because they rejected my laws and abhorred my decrees. 44 Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them. I am the LORD their God. 45 But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the LORD.”

Conditional Prophecies		
Covenant	Ezek	20:36-38
	Isa	59:20,21
Holy, Glory	Deut	28:1-3
	Ezek	36:22
Chosen by God	1Sa	12:25
	Kingdom	1Ki 02:4
The Land	Isa	58:13-14
	Ezek	36:27
Remant & Return	Jer	12:14-17
	Jer.	23:3
	Ezek	20:40-41
	Ezek	36:24, 26
Restoration	Zeph	3:9-13
	Deut	30:1-10
	Ezek	36:33, 34
	Ezek	36:33-36
Rebuilding	Isa	61:4-6
Deliverance	Dan	12:1
Upheld / Protected	Mal	3:9-12
	Deut	07:14-15
	Zech	14:12
Forgiveness/Redemption	Isa	56:1
	Zech	03:6-10
	Mal.	3:3, 4
Exile	Lev	26:40-45
The Land	Deut	06:3
	Deut	30:1-3
Evil	Deut	04:25-31
Judgement	Deut	28:15-20
	Isa	01:26
	Jer	18:5-10
	Jer.	20:32, 34
	Jer.	20:36, 38
	Jer.	30:11
	Ezek	34:17-22
Gentiles	Mal	3:2-4
	Jer	04:1-2

Easter Celebrations

In the West we celebrate Easter this Sunday, April 16th, but for Eastern Christians this date is Palm Sunday; Easter is the following week. The difference stems from the modifications that were made to the Gregorian Calendar in 1583. Up until this date the dates were the same, but the Orthodox Churches of the East did not adopt the changes made by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582.

In 2007 (and again in 2010 and 2011, for those who care) Easter will fall on the same dates in the Western and Eastern regions.

For a fuller explanation, see the US Naval Observatory web site at <http://aa.usno.navy.mil/faq/docs/easter.html>, or a web page that will do the calculations for you: <http://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/easter.html>

