

# His Kingdom Coming to Afghanistan?

Peter Bruce

*Editor's Note: We celebrate the lives of the ten aid workers murdered in Afghanistan on August 5, 2010. Their mission of love and mercy in service to the people of Afghanistan will not be forgotten.*

On May 31, 2010 a local, private Afghan TV station, Noorin TV, showed video clips on the evening news program in Kabul of Afghans worshiping and being baptized in the name of Jesus. The TV station continued to air these video clips for the next week in an apparent attempt to incite a fundamentalist Islamic outcry against these Afghan citizens who would dare to deviate from the national religion of Islam.

If nothing else, this event had a major impact on Afghan society:

- It highlighted for the Afghan believers that their government wasn't ready to recognize them as a legitimate and protected minority.
- While demonstrations occurred against Afghans changing their religion, and while threats were made by some government officials, it is now common knowledge that a small but growing number of Afghan believers reside within their communities.

- The "shock and awe" factor of the existence of Afghan Christians has come and gone and will never again have the same impact.
- Western governments must now evaluate the idea of real freedom for the Afghan people. Is the West (those countries that are funding this new government and sending our young people to fight for freedom) motivated to hold the Afghan government accountable to protecting their citizens according to their own constitution and the UN Charter that they have signed?

## Conflicting Allegiance

Islam is inherently apostaphobic, and leaving Islam (apostasy) is a capital offense under Afghan law. It is illegal to proselytize. At the same time, the Afghan Constitution agrees to abide by the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states clearly in article 18, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

This conflict between the old Islamic/Afghan Tribal system and the desire of the new Afghan Government to join the community of nations (nearly all of whom have signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) highlights the ideological struggle for the soul of this nation.

A vigorous debate centers around the opening clause in the Afghan Constitution that states that no law can be passed that contradicts Sharia Law.



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The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not a law, but a treaty, which in their constitution they have agreed to follow. Many in the West are now saying, "You cannot have it both ways. Either you wish to move forward and be recognized as a member of the community of nations, or you revert back to your old tribal ways as a closed Islamic country."

In this small nation, roughly the size and population of Texas, most of the major armies of the world have converged to fight for freedom for the Afghan people. Donor nations, including the United States, have poured in billions of taxpayer dollars to fund this experiment called a representative government. In many ways religious freedom, or the lack thereof, is a benchmark in how successful we are in ushering in "The New Afghanistan."

The Taliban who represent the local insurgency are supported by the international terrorists (Al Qaeda) and some of the neighboring countries who have an interest in maintaining the turmoil and confusion. Recent attempts by the Afghan government to reach out to the Taliban to discuss reconciliation have resulted in one clear demand by the insurgency: Sharia Law must be the Law of the Land.

This struggle is not only a battle of armies, resources and ideologies. This is a major spiritual battle for the heart and soul of this nation. After the Soviet Union left in defeat in 1989, the Mujahedeen period began and plunged the nation into chaos and lawlessness.



It produced the largest refugee migration in human history. Fully one-third of the nation was in exile, with roughly 3.5 million refugees fleeing to Pakistan and another 3.5 million camped out in Iran. That is when the Taliban emerged to attempt to bring order out of chaos and return the country to conservative Islamic practices. This movement was soon hijacked by the fundamentalists who were intent on enforcing strict Sharia Law.



The harsh treatment at the hands of the Taliban, their strict, almost medieval enforcement of their version of "pure Islam," including the amputations of hands and feet, stoning, public executions, banning of music, kite-flying and disrespectful treatment of women, have all led to many Afghans becoming disillusioned with Islam. This, coupled with the influx of foreign UN workers, NGOs (non-government organizations), contractors, business people and foreign troops from around the world, following the events of September 11, 2001, have prompted Afghans to ask, "What do you believe?" And now with another clampdown from the Afghan media and government condemning those who might consider another way of thinking, Afghans are wondering, "What are they afraid of?"

Many other Muslim countries are open to Christian churches operating in their land. That is why I see this struggle as a battle for the soul of Afghanistan, because the reason and logic of the country's current leaders do not hold up to the experience of Muslims around the world. Nations like Indonesia, Egypt, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates and even Pakistan, to name a few, allow Christians a safe place in their society to worship. Now it is time for Afghanistan to do the same. In their own constitution, they have declared that they will become like these other nations and abide by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

### **Why Are Afghans Turning to Christ?**

"The gospel of the Kingdom is first and foremost attractive," says my good friend Joseph. This is true everywhere and especially in Afghanistan. One Pushtun tribal leader said last year, "These Taliban are not good Muslims; they do not obey the Q'uran; they do not care about the Afghan people; they are cruel people."



Increasingly Afghans are meeting others who follow Jesus. Some have arrived as soldiers from NATO countries to protect Afghanistan from its enemies. Some are UN workers or members of other aid organizations, or contractors and business people who are there to assist in rebuilding this country. Some are Afghans who lived in exile from their nation during the Taliban regime, found a new faith in Christ, and have now returned to their native land.

What Afghans are finding is that it is possible to live in real freedom! Galatians 5:1 says, "It is for freedom that Christ has set you free, do not again put on a yoke of slavery." They no longer need to be ruled by fear and intimidation. Some, like Abdul Rakhman, who was sentenced to death by some Afghan fundamentalists, and later was deported from the country, have learned that it would be better to suffer death at the hands of fundamentalists rather than renounce their faith in Christ.

Stories abound in Afghanistan about meeting the Lord in a dream or vision. Some workers have begun to ask Afghans, "Have you ever had a dream about a man in white?" as a way to open a conversation. A young man in Eastern Afghanistan, Najib, tells this story: "I had a copy of the Injil (New Testament) and had read parts of it. One morning I awoke early and went to the forest for a walk in the cool part of the day. On my walk I was met by Isa Masi (Jesus). I was so amazed! The next day I got up early to see if we could meet again. Yes, He was there! I was afraid to tell anyone because I thought He might not come back. Every day for three months I walked with Him in this forest."

### **Truth is its own best defense.**

#### **Truth will defend itself.**

In Afghanistan today, the forces of darkness are determined to hold on to this country, but the truth of God's plan for His people is beginning to prevail.

In the words of the Prophet Isa Masi (Jesus) in Matthew 12:42-43, an evil spirit is cast out only to return with seven other spirits more wicked than itself.

The spiritual struggle for Afghanistan is very evident and mirrors these verses in Matthew 12. Following the events of September 11, 2001 the Taliban were driven from power in Afghanistan. The commitment of the West was to help establish a legitimate representative government and to support the establishment of a national army and police force for the country.

To this end a perimeter was established around the capital city of Kabul to provide security. Soon, the Taliban began to seep back into the country and set up operations outside of this perimeter in the rural provinces. Today it is reported that the Taliban have a shadow government in all 34 provinces.

As the Body of Christ we should not look to military leaders or others to win this battle. Only the Body has the right motivation and knows what to do to see real transformation

happen in Afghanistan. We have all the resources necessary to accomplish the task. What we lack most is a vision for how to accomplish this work.

### **Vision**

The Bible teaches that "Without a vision the people perish." The gospel is what Afghanistan needs. A blueprint for action is found in Isaiah 58:6 and Matthew 25:35.

Both of these verses talk about meeting the felt needs of people. When we who are called by His name begin to demonstrate the unconditional Love of God, people respond. Often the response sounds something like this: "Tell me again why you are doing this? What is motivating you?" Then we have earned the right to share our personal testimony and the freedom in our own lives. People then can begin to explore this "Good News" themselves.

The government of Afghanistan is searching for answers as it struggles to move forward. Corruption, violence, fear and confusion continue to plague this country. The solution is for a clear vision to be presented to the Afghan people, followed by committed leadership to oversee its implementation.

Afghanistan needs people of vision, wisdom and truth to help them move forward. Now is the time for the Church to respond and to help Afghanistan to become a nation that honors God and begins to receive His blessings.

For more information on how you can be involved in the future of Afghanistan, please contact Peter Bruce at [afghan.concern@gmail.com](mailto:afghan.concern@gmail.com). 

## **Afghan Christians Respond**

Excerpts from a letter to the Body of Christ worldwide  
June 9, 2010:

*To the Body of Christ:*

*We left our country because we were sentenced to death on account of our Christian faith. So, dear brothers and sisters (the Body of Christ), we (Afghan Christian Community in New Delhi) on behalf of all Afghan Christians request you to support us by your prayers and practical measures. Let's tell the Afghan Government that we are not pagans and infidels, we are not criminal because of our Christian faith, and let's tell them not to sentence us to death.*

*May God bless you!*

*Afghan Christian Community in New Delhi, India  
(Obaid S. Christ)*