

“UNDERSTANDING ISLAM” with Imam Shamshad on KCAA -- **SHOW #23** (02-09-2010)

SHOW: #23 TITLE: *“Alcohol & the Bible: to Drink or Not to Drink.”*

AIR TIME: between 9:20am and 9:30am DATE: Tuesday, February 9th, 2010

PAUL: It’s time for our weekly installment of “Understanding Islam” with Imam Shamshad from the Chino Mosque. . . Salaam Alaikum, Imam Shamshad. Peace be upon you.

IMAM: Wa alaikum salaam, Paul. . .

PAUL: Now, Imam Shamshad, last week we talked about why Islam forbids intoxicants. . . We focused on alcohol, largely because alcohol abuse is so wide-spread and its harmful effects are something tens of millions of Americans have personally experienced. . .

You also quoted a lot of statistics on how alcohol abuse and addiction impact us in so many terrible ways. . . Tragedies like drunk driving, domestic abuse, murders, rapes, cancer, strokes and alcohol-related diseases. . .

To listen to last week’s “Understanding Islam” go to www.kcaaradio.com and select Tuesday’s “Morning Show” then click on the PODCAST button, then download the show to listen to it. The episode starts at 9:25am.

So in today’s installment, entitled “Alcohol in the Bible: to Drink or Not to Drink” we will be examining what the Bible says about drinking. Now, Imam, why talk about drinking in the Bible? How does this connect to Islam?

IMAM: Paul, Islam is a complete religion -- one that deals with every problem or evil in society and in mankind. . . Islam prescribes commandments that some people may not like, but these rules have been proven to eliminate sins and evils from society. Evils like alcohol abuse.

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PAUL: So in order for people to appreciate why Islam forbids alcohol and other intoxicants, they need to see how their Scriptures deal with alcohol and whether it prevents the problems created by its abuse, is that right?

IMAM: Absolutely. And since most people in the US consider themselves to be Christians of one denomination or another, we will confine our comparison to the Old and New Testaments, both of which condemn alcohol abuse.

PAUL: You know, it seems to me that the problem with the Bible on the subject of drinking is that some verses seem to forbid drinking alcohol but others condone it.

IMAM: Yes, that's true, Paul. Take, for instance, the case of Jesus (as). One of his most well-known "miracles" is when he turns water into wine at a wedding. Now, what could possibly be the spiritual message in this? How can Christians tell their kids not to drink alcohol when Jesus turned water into wine so people could get drunk? The miraculous wine even becomes a Sign that Jesus is true.

PAUL: I know that in Catholicism they have Holy Communion every Sunday, where the Priest gives a thin wafer and a drink of wine to all the parishioners -- even children. . . It's never more than a sip of wine, but the same problem of credibility in forbidding alcohol would naturally arise.

OK, let's talk about some Bible verses on alcohol. . .

IMAM: In the Old Testament, the High Priests were forbidden to drink alcohol before going into or while in the Temple -- Leviticus, chapter 10. This was to differentiate the clean from the unclean, the holy from the unholy.

PAUL: So, drinking was associated with being unclean, unholy.

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IMAM: Yes. Here are some other Old Testament verses on the subject of drinking. . . In Proverbs, chapter 20, verse 1, it says: “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler; and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.”

Hosea 4:11 reads: “Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the understanding.” Another, modern-style translation reads: “Alcohol and prostitution have robbed my people of their brains.”

And several verses in Habakkuk address drinking. . . In 2:5, it says: “Wine betrays the arrogant man, so that he does not stay at home.” And verse 15 reads:

“Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, pressing your bottle to his mouth to make him drunk, that you may look on his nakedness!”

PAUL: Drinking does tend to lead to the removal of clothing.

IMAM: Now let’s turn to the New Testament. In Luke 1:15, referring to John the Baptist, it says: “For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink.”

PAUL: So. . . being great in the sight of the Lord seems to go hand-in-hand with not drinking wine or hard liquor. . .

IMAM: Muslims believe that all the chosen messengers of God are righteous and clean-living. That’s why we do not believe – nor does the Holy Quran validate – that God’s prophets can ever commit evil acts or intentional sins.

God never chooses the worst people to be His divine messengers, He always chooses the very best -- people like Noah, Lot, Abraham, Moses & Jesus (peace to all).

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IMAM: As for the unrighteous who do not repent and stop their evil ways, St. Paul, in 1st Corinthians 6, verses 9-10, lists the types of sinners who will not enter Heaven:

“Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionists will inherit the kingdom of God.”

PAUL: Well now. Heaven looks to be a mighty spacious space, considering the list of the un-invited you just read.

IMAM: And St. Paul, writing in Galatians 5:20-21, lists the sins for which people won't be allowed into Heaven; sins such as: adultery, fornication, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, jealousy, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambition, envy, murder, drunkenness, and the like.

PAUL: So. . . are there any verses in the New Testament that clearly forbid drinking alcohol?

IMAM: In Ephesians, chapter 5 there are many verses that talk about what is unrighteous behavior, and in verse 18 it says this about alcohol: “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit. . .”

PAUL: It seems the Bible doesn't outright forbid drinking alcohol, only that it's a sin to get drunk or to become an alcoholic. . . where-as Islam completely forbids any drinking of alcohol or using any other intoxicants.

IMAM: That's right. You know, before the prohibition on drinking alcohol was revealed, the Muslims used to drink. But when the commandment forbidding alcohol was revealed, the Muslims stopped immediately, out of love for, and obedience to, God and the Holy Prophet.

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IMAM: Even today, if Muslims drink alcohol, they are considered bad Muslims, disobedient to the Law of God. Islam has maintained this protection for society and its members for 1400 years, while Christians have never been able to rid themselves of their enslavement to alcohol.

PAUL: Imam, we're almost out of time. Any closing thoughts on this subject of Biblical alcohol use and abuse?

IMAM: One of the most shocking examples of the abuse of alcohol in the Old Testament is in Genesis, chapter 19, where the story is told about Lot and his family, and the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

PAUL: Most people know the story of Lot, his wife and two daughters. Lot's wife gets turned into a pillar of salt for looking back at the city as they escape.

IMAM: That's right. Lot and his two daughters end up in a cave in the mountains. Genesis chapter 19, verses 31 to 36, recount the acts of incest that Lot's daughters willfully commit with their father after they first get him drunk.

PAUL: When you think about it, why would God save Lot from the destruction of two cities where sexual immorality and perversity were rampant -- cities God destroyed for those very reasons -- only to have Lot's daughters get him drunk and commit incest with him to get pregnant.

IMAM: There does not seem to be any point to this story except to show the evils created through drunkenness and to make a prophet of God look weak and immoral, which we Muslims can not believe is true. You will never read such shameful stories about prophets in the Holy Quran.

PAUL: And speaking of shame, it's a shame we are out of time.