

Unlike the subjectivity of our hopes, dreams, speculations and most desperate fantasies, with their rigid and inflexible numbers, demographics force us to face reality.

The Christian Church is about to have a head-on clash with a very real demographic giant. Recognizing the epic proportions of this coming clash, some are even now shouting from the rooftops to prepare you for the massive challenge ahead. Others, however, seem to be determined to lull the church back to sleep. "Don't worry," they say, "The giant will suffer a massive heart attack before he even arrives at the battle lines. Go back to sleep."

Present demographic realities make it all too abundantly clear that as the church continues to slow down in its growth globally, the religion of Islam is simply outpacing us. Any simple acknowledgment of these demographic trends will make it all too abundantly clear that Islam represents the single greatest challenge the Christian church will face before the return of Jesus. If the church rises to meet this challenge, then it will succeed in fulfilling one of its primary callings. If the church fails to recognize and meet this challenge, it will have failed to fulfill one of its most important mandates before the return of Jesus. Shepherds, whose job it is to look after the sheep, must not allow this to happen.

It is necessary then to identify and expose any wrong ideas within the church that are holding her back from meeting this challenge. One of the most powerful lies being propagated in certain quarters of the church is rooted in a brazenly false interpretation of not only the Scriptures, but also global demographics. This lie, which is infecting many quarters of the church, says that through a series of prophesied battles, the religion of Islam is simply going to go away all on its own, perhaps even quite soon. If you do not believe that this is being widely taught, then consider just a small sampling of comments made only recently by various teachers as they articulate this view:

"There is no need whatsoever to warn the Bride of Christ [the church] about some non-existent islamic (sic) myth ... Islam will not exist by the time the 70th Week begins." – Sean Osborne-Lomax

"The war of Psalm 83 followed by the war of Ezekiel 38 will result in the annihilation of nearly all the armies of the Muslim nations of the Middle East ... [The] Middle East will be reduced to ashes! ... There are two wars that are indicated most likely before or just at the beginning of the Tribulation... In my opinion, those wars are going to pretty well wipe out the Muslims in the Middle East." – David Reagan

"Islam is just another system that will be wiped out before the Antichrist instills (sic) his system ... The Gog-Magog Battle of Ezekiel 38-39 that will soon end the Islamic threat before the Antichrist even comes on the scene. Islam's days are numbered well before the Antichrist's empire." – Nathan Jones

"The sense that Islam is becoming stronger and more unified ... has caused many to assume that they [Muslims] will realize their goal. Certainly, Islamic leaders of the Middle East believe this. But it also seems that their belief is beginning to convince Western society and even Christians! And this, in spite of the fact that Bible prophecy specifically calls for an unprecedented destruction of Islam in a coming great war." – Gary Stearman

The many problems with these comments are actually too legion to detail here. But one factor that these men have obviously failed to recognize is the actual demographic reality of the Muslim world. Too many wrongly believe that most of the world's Muslims live in the Middle East. The truth, however, is that the vast majority of Muslims live outside of the Middle East. In fact, close to half of all Muslims globally live in the four countries of Indonesia, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. (Indonesia has a Muslim population of 202 million, Pakistan has 175 million, India has 161 million and Bangladesh has 145 million.) Yet neither Psalm 83 nor Ezekiel 38,39, the two passages that some wrongly claim will soon "wipe out" Muslims and Islam globally, include any of these nations.

As I said, the large majority of the World's Muslims lives outside of the Middle East. Today there are more Muslims in either France (3.5 million) or Germany (4 million) than in Lebanon (2.5 million).

So here is where a mixture of biblical prophecy and fantasy collide with the harsh realities of demographics. If we list every single nation that has ever been even suggested as being part of both Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 38,39, this would still only represent less than one-third of the total Muslim world population. If every single soldier in every nation that has ever been suggested as being part of Psalm 83 or Ezekiel 38,39 was gone, this would only represent less than 2 percent of the total 1.6 billion Muslims of the world. So because a mere 2 percent of the Muslims of the world are defeated, somehow this means that the other 1.6 billion Muslims will no longer exist or that they will all suddenly convert to a new religion?

Let's take this scenario even further. Let's imagine that every single person in every one of these nations was removed from the picture, leaving not a single survivor, man, woman or child, something no one is even suggesting will occur, then how would this change things? Would Islam be "wiped out" as the denialists claim? Far from it. In fact, there would still remain well over a billion Muslims worldwide. Islam would continue to have more adherents than Protestant Christianity globally. Muslims would continue to be a vast and vibrant force worldwide. Let's look at the actual statistics:

Nation	Percentage of Global Muslim Population	Total Number of Active Military
Russia	1	21,781,000
Kazakhstan	0.6	80,500
Turkmenistan	0.3	22,000
Uzbekistan	1.7	87,000
Kyrgyzstan	0.3	20,400
Tajikistan	0.4	16,300
Turkmenistan	0.3	22,000
Azerbaijan	0.6	382,000
Turkey	4.7	1,151,200
Lebanon	0.2	175,000
Palestinians	0.1	56,000
Syria	1.3	747,000
Iraq	2	578,270
Iran	4.7	3,833,000
Jordan	0.4	175,500
Saudi Arabia	2	250,000
Kuwait	0.2	46,300
Bahrain	0.1	19,460
Oman	0.2	47,000
UAE	0.2	51,000
Egypt	5	1,345,000
Libya	0.4	116,000
Sudan	1.9	211,800
Total	29.6%	31,213,730

So, as we can see, even if every single nation that anyone has ever been suggested to be part of the nations detailed within Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 38,39, were wiped out, more than two-thirds of all Muslims globally would remain. The four largest Muslim nations in the earth would be entirely untouched. Any suggestion that Islam will disappear from the earth several years prior to the return of Jesus is a fantasy.

No amount of denial, prophetic or interpretive manipulation, wishful thinking or hiding our heads in the sand will make Islam go away. And this is where all genuine Christian shepherds should be deeply

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concerned. Far too many Christians, rather than encouraging the Christian church to obey Jesus and fulfill the Great Commission among Muslims, are sitting back and daydreaming about the time when Islam will simply go away on its own. It's not going to happen. It's time for the church to wake up and get ready. There is a clash ahead. How this clash concludes will depend on how we respond now.

The challenge of Islam is indeed great. But if even a small portion of the church hears the alarm, chooses to obey Jesus and rises to meet the challenge, then I have every confidence that the church can overcome the giant that lies ahead.

Then it happened when Goliath the Philistine rose and came and drew near to meet David, that David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him.

You know the rest of the story.

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