

Christ in Prophecy
Religions 1: “Mark Gabriel on the Nature of Islam”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: We constantly hear from both religious leaders and governmental leaders that Islam is a religion of peace. Is it really? Our special guest today was a professor of Islamic history at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. He says that the history of Islam is a river of blood. Stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus our blessed hope. I’m Dave Reagan, senior evangelist for Lamb and Lion Ministries, and I am delighted to have with me this week a very special guest by the name of Mark Gabriel. Mark is a former professor of Islamic history at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, the world’s premier Islamic university. Welcome to Texas, Mark.

Mark Gabriel: Thank you; thank you very much for inviting me on this program.

Dr. Reagan: Well, Mark, is this your first visit to Texas?

Mark Gabriel: No, this is actually the second visit to Dallas.

Dr. Reagan: I see, ok.

Mark Gabriel: I visited Texas, especially Houston, more than once.

Dr. Reagan: Did you know that Texans refer to Texas as “God’s country?”

Mark Gabriel: This is the first time I know that.

Dr. Reagan: You know that, you know how proud Texans are of Texas!

Mark Gabriel: Amen.

Dr. Reagan: Folks Mark has very graciously agreed to do two interviews with us. This week we are going to focus on his remarkable personal story and what it reveals about the nature of Islam. Next week, the Lord willing we will discuss with Mark the nature of the Quran, and the contrast between Mohammed and Jesus. But, before I ask Mark my first question, let me point out that he is a very gifted writer. Since he came to this country just a few years ago, he has written several best sellers. The first one, this one, "Islam and Terrorism," is really fantastic, and he has written some others, for example, he has written one, the second one was called, "Islam and the Jews," and the next one was called "Jesus and Mohammad." This is his newest book that has just come out. Later in our program, we'll tell you how you can get a copy of "Islam and Terrorism." It is must reading for anyone who wants to understand the war against terrorism, in which this nation is engaged.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: Mark, let's begin by talking about your upbringing in Egypt. Were you born and raised in Cairo?

Mark Gabriel: No, actually I was born in the south part of Egypt, and my family moved to Cairo when I was almost 14 years old.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, when you were 14?

Mark Gabriel: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: Ok, were your parents strict Muslims?

Mark Gabriel: They are.

Dr. Reagan: Very devout, not the secular type of Muslim that we often encounter in this country.

Mark Gabriel: No, no.

Dr. Reagan: In fact, you had an uncle who was an imam, wasn't he?

Mark Gabriel: He is a cleric, mostly cleric, and imam also.

Dr. Reagan: Wasn't he the one who first began to inspire you to memorize the Quran?

Mark Gabriel: Yes, he took me when I was 5 years old, and he started helping me in memorizing the Quran.

Dr. Reagan: And is it true that by the time you were 12 years old, that you had the Quran memorized?

Mark Gabriel: Absolutely, I spent almost seven years, exactly, to finish memorizing the entire book.

Dr. Reagan: Now, Mark, I have a copy of the Quran that is about that thick, and it is in very small print.

Mark Gabriel: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: We're talking about quite a lot of material there.

Mark Gabriel: Exactly, the size of the Quran actually is exactly like the size of the New Testament.

Dr. Reagan: So you had a book, equivalent to the New Testament in length, memorized by the time you were 12 years old.

Mark Gabriel: By heart, absolutely, yes.

Dr. Reagan: And you had it memorized in classical Arabic, right?

Mark Gabriel: Exactly, because the language of the Quran is classic Arabic, it's not dialect Arabic.

Dr. Reagan: It's not the Arabic you speak on the streets.

Mark Gabriel: No, absolutely not.

Dr. Reagan: And probably at the age of 12 you didn't understand all that, did you?

Mark Gabriel: No, even when I finished my secondary school, only when I started my high school, I started to recognize the meaning of the verses of the Quran, and the teachings of the Quran. But it was a development you see from the time I finished the

Quran when I was 12 years old, till I finished my bachelor degree. From time to time it was a development taking place in understanding the meaning of this book.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Mark Gabriel: But when I finished my bachelor degree, I already had the proper understanding of the meaning of this book.

Dr. Reagan: Now, why was it important for you to memorize the Quran as a child? Why did anybody put any importance on that? Is that something important in Islamic society?

Mark Gabriel: This is actually came as culture, mainly its Islamic culture. And it wasn't just from the past ten years or fifty years, it's from the very early time, the first century of Islam. Muslims started to take care of giving the Quran from generation to generation, by memorizing the book by heart.

Dr. Reagan: Ok, now were you ever exposed to any Christians while you were growing up, either missionaries, or Coptic Christians, the basic Christianity of Egypt?

Mark Gabriel: Absolutely, I saw Christians living in my neighborhood, living in my country, Egypt as a minority, but the Christianity in Egypt didn't have really the power to influence Muslims. And this is the reason why I wasn't influenced by this type of Christianity during all my life, because the Christianity in Egypt is so traditional. More than 90% of Egyptian Christians are traditional.

Dr. Reagan: A very liturgical type.

Mark Gabriel: Exactly, but there was one incident that happened when I was a little child. A Christian priest from that church. What happened at that time really left a huge influence over my spiritual life.

Dr. Reagan: Tell us about it.

Mark Gabriel: I was really became upset and very angry you see of Christians and the Jews because of the teaching I started to receive every day in my school, especially when I was in my secondary school at Al-Azhar Islamic Institute. So, one day I decided to find the Christians, and so I found a Christian priest in that church who was using the road outside of my house, going from his place to his monastery every day. So every day I would stand in front of my house and I started to just hit him with stones.

Dr. Reagan: How old were you at that time?

Mark Gabriel: At that time I was 15 years old.

Dr. Reagan: And you were throwing stones at the Coptic priest.

Mark Gabriel: Absolutely, and I injured his head. I injured him in his head terribly and they took him to the hospital. But this man, when he got out of the hospital, he came to find out what was going on with me, why I was treating him that way.

Dr. Reagan: He came back and found you?

Mark Gabriel: Yes, yes, and he knew my house and he knew my family even. So anyway, this man did not come for revenge or to treat me in the same way, but he came to advise me that there is a fire inside me, and that fire was going to burn me before burning others. So he came to tell me that he forgave me, even though I injured him, he just came to show me that he loved me, he forgave me and he said, "there is no reason for you to hate me or treat me that way."

Dr. Reagan: That really impressed you, didn't it?

Mark Gabriel: Absolutely, this really influenced my spiritual life even when I grew up and became one of the best students at my university.

Dr. Reagan: Now you were basically sitting on top of the world as a person who was a professor of Islamic history at Al-Azhar University. You were also a Muslim imam at a mosque in Giza, right?

Mark Gabriel: Yes, Giza city, yes.

Dr. Reagan: I mean you had all the prestige in the world, and yet one day you made a comment, I had it marked here, it's in your latest book, "Jesus and Muhammad," you were a person who questioned things, and you were told at the university, "you don't question." You were told that. You don't question, and you kept questioning, and one day in a conversation with colleagues, you made this statement: "We say the Quran is directly from Allah, but I doubt it, I see in it the thoughts of man and not the words of God."

Mark Gabriel: Absolutely.

Dr. Reagan: And the moment those words came out of your mouth, you knew your fate was sealed, right?

Mark Gabriel: Absolutely.

Dr. Reagan: What happened that night?

Mark Gabriel: This is what happened in the meeting between me and the other professor from the university, and they just met with me and they discussed what was going on and what they heard from the students, they were thinking that I was under the pressure of former Christian influence. So they just wanted to find out why I am doubting Islam, so I made this statement to them...

Dr. Reagan: And then what happened that night?

Mark Gabriel: They became very upset, they kicked me out of the university, they fired me, the university fired me, and in the same day in the evening time I was kidnapped by Egyptian secret police, because they accused me that I had converted from Islam.

Dr. Reagan: We'll come back in just a moment and I want you to tell us what happened to you when you were kidnapped by the secret police. Folks, we are going to take a brief break at this point and when we return, we will hear the incredible story of what happened to Mark, simply because he questioned some aspects of Islam.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: Now you were telling us that you were arrested by the secret police of the Egyptian government for simply questioning some of the principles of Islam. What happened to you after that arrest?

Mark Gabriel: They put me in a little cell in the headquarters of the Egyptian secret service in the center of Cairo. They put me in for three days with no food, with no water, and the fourth day they started to interrogate me. They took me to one of the offices, maybe on the sixth or seventh floor, and interrogated me during the day. On the fourth day they started giving me food and water because they wanted to stimulate me and just wanted to get whatever information they could. And they found out during that, that they could not just get what they were looking for. And they started interrogating me during the evening time. So the evening time was the time of torture. They burned me

with cigarettes on different places on my body, as you can see here on my hand. They beat me, they put me in cold water, they put me in a little tank filled with water, and they put hungry rats inside that tank, and they put me inside the tank.

Dr. Reagan: So you had rats crawling all over you.

Mark Gabriel: All night!

Dr. Reagan: All night?

Mark Gabriel: All night, and the rats were just swimming over the water, you see, around my head.

Dr. Reagan: Did the rats bite you?

Mark Gabriel: No, not at all.

Dr. Reagan: This is like Daniel in the lion's den!

Mark Gabriel: And the next day they took me out and I was just surprised that I was still alive. But I did not know what was next. And after that they put me in a little cell with a vicious, hungry dog. And when they put me in the room and they closed the door and I sat in the middle of the room, and I was thinking that I was going to be eaten by the dog, the dog will eat me but I was surprised when the dog just came and sat at my right hand side.

Dr. Reagan: In fact he licked you on the ear didn't he?

Mark Gabriel: And he licked me on my ears.

Dr. Reagan: They must have thought that you were Satan or something to have such power.

Mark Gabriel: They said that, they said: "is this a human being or something else?" They believed that there was some spirit or some ancient power...

Dr. Reagan: So at that point didn't they decide to just turn you over to some guys in a cell and tell them that you had renounced Islam and let them kill you?

Mark Gabriel: Yes, so their understanding was that I had been questioned by professors at the university, I had been fired by the university. To them it meant that this guy is just out of Islam now, he has converted now.

Dr. Reagan: In fact they wanted to find out what missionary had converted you, didn't they?

Mark Gabriel: Exactly.

Dr. Reagan: And you hadn't been converted.

Mark Gabriel: Exactly. No, I had no idea about Christianity at that time, or about Christ. I never even discussed Christianity, but automatically in Egypt when someone decides to leave Islam, they will accuse him automatically that he came under pressure of the church or some Christian, and he converted to Christianity.

Dr. Reagan: Well how in the world did you get out of that situation without losing your life?

Mark Gabriel: I was crying to the God who created me at that time. I didn't know who he was, and after 15 days, my uncle, he was working as the Vice President of Egyptian Parliament, he was visiting Russia at that time. When he came back he heard about my kidnapping. So he came with permission from the government, and he came with his car and he took me out of the prison.

Dr. Reagan: So you got out of prison due to the political influence of a relative who had been out of the country.

Mark Gabriel: Absolutely.

Dr. Reagan: And then when you went home, I understand your father tried to kill you.

Mark Gabriel: My father tried to kill me later, after one year. I was searching for God, trying to find out who God was, you see, till I received a Bible from a Christian pharmacist. So when I started reading the Bible, I started to find the truth about Christ. After I gave my life to the Lord, I lived one year, a whole year, as a secret believer. When my father heard about my conversion, he shot me with his own gun, he tried to kill me.

Dr. Reagan: So you were given a Bible by a Christian pharmacist, and that brought you to the Lord.

Mark Gabriel: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: And when that happened your father decided to kill you, for the honor of the family I guess?

Mark Gabriel: Because he felt that there was a shame that was going to be over him, his life, the family, even the community.

Dr. Reagan: And so he shot at you several times and all the bullets missed.

Mark Gabriel: No, one bullet missed me about maybe five, or six bullets...

Dr. Reagan: I understand that your sister finally got your passport, and got you out of the country, and where did you go?

Mark Gabriel: When my father shot me and tried to kill me, I was just running away from his faith, and I went to my sister, and at my sister's house I put the whole situation in front of the Lord, and the Lord showed me to get out of Egypt. On the same evening, the same day, my sister helped me, she brought my stuff.

Dr. Reagan: And where did you go to when you fled?

Mark Gabriel: I fled to South Africa, by the road, traveling from Cairo to South Africa for three months, over the road. And I was the first Egyptian who did an overland journey between Cairo and Johannesburg. The trip took almost three months.

Dr. Reagan: Ok, and so then you got to South Africa, and did you meet some Christians there?

Mark Gabriel: Yes, in South Africa I met with many Christians and many churches there started to hear about my story because the public media in South Africa wrote an article and published articles about my story.

Dr. Reagan: Is it true that assassins were sent to South Africa to kill you?

Mark Gabriel: Absolutely. In South Africa, especially after I wrote my first book in South Africa, and my activity became very well known and the Muslim community felt

threatened by my activity there, and by this book being released there in Johannesburg in 1996, and they tried to end my life there, 3 times.

Dr. Reagan: So this “religion of peace,” just because you questioned Islam, this religion of peace kidnaps you, tortures you, tries to kill you, and even sends assassins to kill you in South Africa. That’s some “religion of peace” isn’t it?

Mark Gabriel: Yeah, this is how the world has been really deceived by the media, by the world media, by the secular media. But Islam is not a religion of peace.

Dr. Reagan: Well, Mark, we’re going to pause again here folks and we’ll be back with you in just a moment.

Part 4

Dr. Reagan: Ok folks; let’s just take a moment to summarize. Mark was a professor of Islamic history at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, and he was also serving as a Muslim imam, the equivalent of a pastor of a mosque, when he openly questioned some things about Islam. He was immediately arrested, he was tortured for several weeks, and when he was finally released and went home, his own father tried to kill him. You were finally able to escape to South Africa, Mark.

Mark Gabriel: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: And tell us, when you arrived in South Africa, you said you met some Christian friends, in fact I think you lived with a Christian family for a while.

Mark Gabriel: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: But let’s just back up for a moment, because I know you became a Christian before you left Egypt.

Mark Gabriel: Egypt, yes.

Dr. Reagan: What appealed to you about Christianity?

Mark Gabriel: Before I met Christ, I lived for 34 years under Islam, believing in Islam, serving Islam, learning about Islam, teaching about Islam. And I lived another year without faith, after I found myself out of Islam. So I lived for 35 years searching for

peace, searching for the true God, who was going to show me that he loves me more than anything in this world. Through the Quran, through the teaching of the prophet of Islam, I never experienced something like that. So, when I got the Bible from the Dr. of pharmacy, before I got the Bible, I lived for a whole year searching for God, asking myself who God could be. I had terrible headaches. Every day I went to the Dr. of pharmacy to get headache tablets, so finally she gave me the Bible and she gave me the headache tablets. I took the Bible in one hand, and headache tablets in the other hand. When I started reading the Bible, I met with the Lord Jesus Christ, face to face, through the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew in chapter five, telling me about love. Love your enemy.

Dr. Reagan: Not kill your enemy.

Mark Gabriel: Not kill your enemy. So the word of the Bible, the word of Jesus Christ, that evening came to me just like a beautiful rain.

Dr. Reagan: And so you began to find the peace that had eluded you all those years.

Mark Gabriel: Exactly, peace, forgiveness. I felt for the first time that my sins had been forgiven, and I had been justified already, by the blood of Jesus. I had lived for 35 years with guilt, the guilt of my sin, the guilt of living as a lost person. I didn't know who was going to forgive my sin; I didn't know who was going to rescue me from the punishment of Allah. I had no assurance that I could be in a right place, you see, to live there eternally.

Dr. Reagan: In Islam you never really know for sure whether you are saved or not. Muhammad didn't know whether he was saved or not.

Mark Gabriel: Absolutely not. Isn't that something? Yes, this is true.

Dr. Reagan: Now, very quickly, we only have about two minutes in this segment. When you finally got to the United States, you were given religious asylum in this country, and you had a remarkable experience in Washington D.C. when somebody said that there was a Muslim imam who was going to be speaking at a university there.

Mark Gabriel: George Mason University, yes.

Dr. Reagan: And you went to hear him speak, and what did you find out about it?

Mark Gabriel: I went there and this man was a Baptist pastor from Texas.

Dr. Reagan: A Baptist pastor from Texas?

Mark Gabriel: Yeah, and he converted to Islam, and he is now preaching for Islam at George Mason University, and sharing his testimony. So, after he finished his speech, he asked if there was anyone who had a question to raise his hand, and I found that my hand was the first hand. So when I stood up, I asked him, "Sir, when did you make that decision to leave Christianity to become a Muslim?" He said, "Eight years ago." I thought, "This is like myself." And my next question, "Since you converted to Islam, and you left Christianity were any churches or any Christians order to kill you because the Bible said that the penalty of Christian apostasy is death?" He said, "No." "Did the F.B.I. persecute you here, or arrest you here, or torture you here because you left Christianity to become a Muslim?" He said, "No." I said to him, "Sir, I am a human being like you, and I have the right to make a decision to change my religion or my faith, like you, and I was a Muslim like you. I was an imam, as you were a pastor, and I made the same decision you made, but the difference between me and you is how I was treated by Islam. I was fired from my university, I was kidnapped by the secret police, I was tortured, I lost my family, I lost my country, and the sword of Islam is on my neck wherever I go. Why, because the Quran said so, "That the penalty of Muslim apostasy is death."

Dr. Reagan: That is an incredible story. In fact folks, there is something about this particular story that he did not mention, and that is that when the man stopped speaking and asked for questions, he was the first to raise his hand, stood up, and first of all identified himself as a former professor of Islamic history at the university. And the imam was so impressed by that that he said, "Oh honored professor, please come up here and take over the podium." And the next thing he knew, he was on the stage, at the podium, in charge of the whole meeting, and asking him questions.

Mark Gabriel: Absolutely. Yes, he was shocked.

Dr. Reagan: Isn't it amazing how the Lord works!

Mark Gabriel: Exactly.

Dr. Reagan: And he showed immediately the difference between Christianity and Islam; that he leaves Islam and everyone tries to kill him and kicks him out of his family. He leaves Christianity and none of that happens to him, and yet Islam is supposed to be the "religion of peace."

Mark Gabriel: He is still enjoying his life in America, because of the freedom brought to this country through the Christian and the Biblical principles.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, you know the point that you made a few moments ago about no one in Islam knowing for sure whether they are ever saved or not, unless they die as a martyr, then they have the assurance of salvation.

Mark Gabriel: Yes, absolutely this is true.

Dr. Reagan: But otherwise there is no assurance, even, again, Mohammad did not know for sure whether he was saved or not.

Mark Gabriel: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: That is a horrible thing, to think you have to earn your salvation, and no matter how hard you work, you still don't know.

Mark Gabriel: Exactly.

Dr. Reagan: You still don't know.

Mark Gabriel: Exactly. This is true.

Dr. Reagan: What a glorious thing it is to encounter grace. Grace!

Mark Gabriel: Absolutely. I was questioning the Dr. of pharmacy, who had given me the Bible, after Muslims, fanatics in Egypt, attacked a Christian church. I was so upset, I was such a baby Christian, I asked her, "Why can't your people defend your church, defend your people?" What she said to me, she said to me, "Mark, I want to say something to you. Our God, He is not in need for us to defend him, or to kill others to defend him, or to defend His church. Our God is strong enough to defend Himself, His name, and His people."

Closing

Dr. Reagan: I want to thank you for tuning in this week. I hope the program has been a blessing to you, and I hope you will be back with us next week when, the lord willing, Mark Gabriel will be back with us to discuss the differences in the Bible and the Quran. He will also talk with us about the contrast between Jesus and Muhammad. Until next

week, the Lord willing, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion ministries saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our redemption is drawing near."