ISIS
THE THEOLOGY BEHIND THE IDEOLOGY

a feature message from
Jesus and the Jihadis

الله إلّا الله

CRAIG A. EVANS
JEREMIAH J. JOHNSTON
As ISIS dominates news headlines, attention is given to the terrorist group’s ideology… when the true motive of their mayhem is actually revealed in their theology!

Major General Michael K. Nagata of the Special Operations forces in the Middle East explains that “we do not understand the movement… and until we do, we are not going to defeat it.”

**The key to defeating ISIS’ regime of terror is understanding its theology.**

This is why two leading Biblical scholars offer this go-to guide to understanding ISIS’ distorted theology. Through fresh historical and Biblical insights, discover how ISIS’ acts of violence, terrorism, and persecution impact your life and your faith today.

**Get revealing answers to questions such as:**

- How did three faiths come out of one man—Abraham?
- Why does ISIS utilize social media and technology for terrorist propaganda?
- Is ISIS Islamic and would Muhammad himself join this group?
- How do the Gospels and the Qur’an see Jesus differently?
- How does Biblical history address the development of ISIS?

The question millions are asking is Why? Why the hate? Why the persecution? Why the murder? To find the answer, you will trace the origins of ISIS’ radical theology and discover why these acts of terrorism are happening, what they mean, and where they are taking us.
The rise of the Islamic State (aka ISIS or ISIL) in the last several years and the atrocities this organization has committed have stunned the world. Child executioners, preteen wives, destruction of antiquities, crimes against humanity, genocide, killing science and progress, terror tweeting, torture, crucifixions, amputations, and slavery all in the name of Allah characterize this movement. This is carried out with the enthusiastic blessing of the caliphate—the first self-styled, self-proclaimed caliphate in nearly a hundred years.

Most people in the West have no idea what to make of it. Western leaders have been taken completely by surprise. That this group is willing to kill, and to kill brutally, to commit heinous acts against men, women, and children, is well known. What is not so well known is why they do it. Why such violence? Why do these people do such horrible things? And why do they do these things in the name of God? Are their actions true to the teachings of Islam? Their leaders and members say they are, but why do they hate Jews and Christians so much? Perhaps even more disconcerting is why there are so many young people from around the world joining ISIS. What is the attraction to this group? We must answer these questions before a solution can be found.

ISIS is the richest terrorist group in the world. At last count, ISIS has some sixty oil fields under its control and is collecting revenues of $3 million per
day. But ISIS is not simply a threat in the Middle East. The FBI believes that ISIS has operatives in all fifty states in the USA. It is a growing threat abroad and at home.

“Know you are fighting men who look into the barrel of your gun and see heaven…. We are promised victory and we will surely get it,” were the words cryptically incised by Dzhokhar A. Tsarnaev on the wall of a boat in Watertown, Massachusetts, where he was hiding in the days following the Boston Marathon bombing. In Dzhokhar’s frenzy to evade the police, he ran over his jihadist brother with a hijacked black Mercedes. Tamerlan was wounded in a firefight with greater Boston’s transit police. “I’m jealous of my brother who… received the reward of Jannutul Firdaus before me. I do not mourn because his soul is very much alive,” scrawled Dzhokhar. Clearly, Dzhokhar’s goal is to enter the “highest paradise” (Jannutul Firdaus) and there join the holy prophet Muhammad in eternal bliss. As the Qur’an foretells in 56.17-24:

Round about them will serve youths of perpetual freshness, with goblets, shining beakers, and cubs filled out of clear-flowing fountains: No after-ache will they receive therefrom, nor will they suffer intoxication: And with fruits, any that they may select; and the flesh of fowls, any that they may desire. And there will be companions with beautiful, big, and lustrous eyes, like unto pearls well-guarded. A reward for the deeds of their past life.

Then again a little later on it reads:

We have created their companions of special creation. And made them virgin-pure and undefiled, Beloved by nature, equal in age, for the companions of the right hand. (56.35-38)

Dzhokhar’s chilling comment of seeing paradise in the barrel of your gun is representative of the scope and perspective of the Islamic State and their rigid adherence to the Holy Qur’an and Sharia law. We cannot effectively oppose the Islamic State without an adequate consideration of their theology, which drives their ideology. Much of the discussion, publication, and media attention have suffered from a lack of understanding of Islamic theology, which is a theology of conflict, world conquest, and domination.

In fact, there is no country on earth where large numbers of Muslims live in peace with non-Muslims. Essential to Islam is the question of how to crush
and suppress unbelievers. An honest reading of the Qur’an reveals that 64 percent of its content is driven by the question of what to do with the Kafir (ٌ in Arabic—non-Muslim, infidel, unbeliever). One Islamic scholar opposes the standard use of the word “unbeliever” in place of the Islamic word Kafir because “unbeliever” is an indifferent term; rather, the Qur’an defines the Kafir as not simply one who does not accept Islam, but more descriptively as one who is “evil, disgusting, (and) the lowest form of life.” The political reality of Islam, according to the Qur’an, Hadith and Sira, is that the Kafir has no human or civil rights. Therefore, any non-Muslim can be killed, or worse, sold into slavery, sexually abused, raped, mistreated, dismembered, and mutilated—all sanctioned by the Qur’an.

Subjugating the Kafir is not a sidebar issue in Islam. Rather, it could be demonstrably argued that terrorizing and eradicating the Kafir is a central tenant in Islam. Kafir, in all of its grammatical forms, occurs over four hundred times in the Qur’an. Furthermore, over 80 percent of the Sira, Muhammad’s biography, records his struggle with the Kafir. Seventy-five percent of the Sira describes all manner of jihad and political domination, while nearly 40 percent of the Hadith is the struggle of dealing with the Kafir. The Center for the Study of Political Islam has quantitatively noted that 132,315 words are devoted to jihad in the “Islamic trilogy” of the Hadith, Sira, and Qur’an. By comparison, there are slightly over 138,000 words in the Christian New Testament, which is a striking meta-narrative that nearly as many words are devoted to jihad in the holy writings of Islam.

### Amount of Text Devoted to Kafir

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hadith</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sira</td>
<td>81%</td>
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<td>Koran</td>
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The West is confused. And nowhere is this more seen than in the United States where the former president infamously remarked to The New Yorker that ISIS was a “jayvee” team in comparison to al-Qaeda. He even referred to ISIS as “un-Islamic,” ignoring ISIS’ strict adherence to their interpretation of the Holy Qur’an. Is this assessment correct? Is ISIS really un-Islamic? In reality, the Islamic State is characteristically and prototypically Islamic.

Today’s Christianity suffers due to a woefully inadequate understanding of the world’s second most populous religion, which is estimated at 1.6 billion Muslims globally. Christians are unaware that Jesus—only eclipsed by the prophet Muhammad—plays a central role in Islamic eschatology. According to the prophet Muhammad and Islamic tradition, Isa (Jesus) is a hero who will return (either to Damascus or Jerusalem) and defeat the Dajjal (anti-Christ figure), saving the faithful remnant of the caliphate and ushering in the day of judgment, after which Jesus will Hajj, marry, have children, and then die. Jesus is the agent who will with finality institute everlasting Sharia law (see Chapter 10 “The ISIS Endgame“).

**The Islamic State and Their Multi-Billion Dollar War Chest**

According to the 9/11 Commission Report, the deadliest attack ever to occur on US soil cost al-Qaeda somewhere between $400,000 and $500,000 to execute. The Islamic State makes six times that amount—$3 million—per day. Notwithstanding the fact that numerous political leaders across the West have denounced the Islamic State as illegitimate, neither a state or Islamic, ISIS continues to legitimize itself while demoralizing the people of Syria and Iraq. The Islamic State is the wealthiest terrorist regime in the world. How much does it cost to operate a twenty-first-century caliphate? In January 2015, the Islamic State approved a $2 billion budget while projecting a $250 million surplus. It has established its own central bank in Mosul, named the Islamic Bank, and announced plans to mint its own currency consisting of gold, silver, and copper.

Thousands of “State of the Islamic Caliphate” passports have been distributed to “citizens” across the expanse of their 35,000-square-mile controlled
region. ISIS passports promise doom to anyone inflicting harm on a citizen of the caliphate: “If the holder of the passport is harmed we will deploy armies for his service.” Unlike other terrorist organizations, the Islamic State has achieved multi-billion-dollar financial independence through a diversified portfolio of economic terror and multiple revenue streams. The strength of ISIS is its ability to self-finance complex and simultaneous terror initiatives via diverse revenue streams. According to a report released by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) in April 2015, ISIS is financially self-sustaining and self-perpetuating in six key areas: oil/natural gas, sale of looted antiquities on the black market, taxes/extortion/asset seizure in the name of Allah, kidnapping for ransom, external donations in an ever-increasing caliphate capital campaign, and through agriculture.

The Islamic State occupies a region larger than the countries of Jordan and Great Britain, which has allowed the regime to secure billions of dollars of revenue in oil derivatives. The International Energy Agency claimed it possessed 3 million barrels of oil with the capacity to ship 30,000 barrels per day. Patrolling the porous Syria-Turkey-Iraq-Kurdish border is a near impossibility, as truckloads of crude oil are sold on the black market. ISIS has no problem selling oil to their archenemies like the Syrian Assad regime, Turkey, and the Kurds in exchange for cash or gifts in kind. The CRS points out that airstrikes by the United States and coalition forces have slowed the growth of Islamic State oil production and dissemination; however, ISIS has diversified.

Reports broadcasting the shocking images of ISIS vandalism and looting at museums across Iraq and Syria are concerning. Few are aware the second largest revenue generator for the Islamic State is the sale of looted antiquities from museums, private collections, and hundreds of archaelogical sites across Iraq and Syria, yielding over $100 million per year. One report revealed that over a hundred Byzantine and Roman artifacts have been smuggled by the Islamic State for sale in the United Kingdom alone.
ISIS robs banks on an epic scale that makes Public Enemy Number 1, John Dillinger, look like an altar boy (Dillinger allegedly robbed more than twenty banks). Sixty-two Iraqi banks were seized across sixteen cities, including Mosul, Tikrit, and Fallujah, rendering the Islamic State a cool $500 million in cash. Corruption, extreme taxation, and asset seizure are hallmarks of the Islamic State’s internal financing. ISIS has instituted the Islamic tithe, known as zakat (Sura 2.43, 110, 177, 277; 9.5). All businesses, from mobile phone companies to farmers or commercial shops, operating in ISIS territories are required to pay a percentage of their earnings to the caliphate, generating an estimated $168–228 million per month. Students from elementary through university are taxed monthly to continue educational pursuits. Following the guidelines prescribed by Muhammad in Qur’an 9.29, Christians are required to pay the humiliating jizya tax as a reminder of their inferior status. Not all religious groups are so lucky, however. The Yazidis, for example, are unlucky—unlike the Jewish–Christian groups, they are regarded a polytheists and therefore executed or enslaved with no option of paying jizya.

Kidnapping and ransom continue to be a significant revenue driver for the Islamic State as well. The United Nations reported ISIS extorted nearly $50 million in ransom fees in 2014 alone. For example, the CRS reported that France might have paid $18 million to recover four of its captured journalists
in April of 2014. Last year, nearly 200,000 refugees migrated from Africa and the Middle East, many of them aided by ISIS militants, generating over $300 million for the Islamic State.

The Islamic State has amassed significant revenue through donations as well, generating $40 million in 2013–2014 alone. Millions of dollars in external support have flowed into it from sympathizers in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait. The CRS stated that the Islamic State is also profiting off of agriculture, trading wheat and barley, generating upwards of $200 million per year for their cause.

**Iraq wheat silos held by Islamic State**

Islamic State fighters have seized more than a dozen wheat silos in northern Iraq since pushing into the territory from neighboring Syria in June. The militants have essentially replicated Baghdad’s subsidized food distribution system in a bid to create a self-sufficient “caliphate”. Iraqi government officials say the group has not damaged the silos and the employees are still receiving government salaries.

With strict adherence to the Qur’an, the Islamic State continues to finance their genocidal activities with the swagger of mobsters in an organized crime syndicate. It steals, cheats, pilfers, swindles, extorts, skims, loots, victimizes, defrauds, robs, traffics, and racketeers all in the name of Allah. And the Qur’an endorses economic oppression:

*So enjoy what you took as booty; the spoils are lawful and good.*
(Qur’an 8.69)

*And He caused you to inherit their land and their houses and their wealth, and land ye have not trodden. Allah is ever Able to do all things.* (Qur’an 33.27)

*But (now) enjoy what ye took in war, lawful and good.* (Qur’an 8.69)

**Islam Means Surrender, Not Peace**

There is little doubt that calls for jihad from the Ottoman dynasty influenced the genocide of 1.5 million Armenian Christians in 1915, during the last Islamic caliphate. Those who refused conversion to Islam were systematically killed. Several thousand women and children escaped a cruel death by converting to Islam. In less than a decade (1914–1922), the Armenian population was reduced from 2.1 million to just 387,000. Islam should have a lot on its conscience. In 1,400 years, jihad has conservatively claimed the lives of 260 million innocents. Philosopher George Santayana once warned that those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it. As a more sophisticated, well-funded, social media savvy, extremely brutal caliphate emerges, what further lessons must we learn? In view of the evidence and horrors perpetrated by ISIS, it is an insult that so many of the media and political elite have referred to the Islamic State as “un-Islamic.”

Is the Islamic State Islamic or not? Yes, in fact, the Islamic State is quintessentially Qur’an-centric. Consider the following passages from the Qur’an and compare these passages with the brutality of the Islamic State that we read about in newspapers or hear about today:
So when you meet in battle those who disbelieve, then smite the necks until when you have overcome them, then make (them) prisoners. (47.4)

The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is: execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land: that is their disgrace in this world, and a heavy punishment is theirs in the Hereafter. (5.33)

There are four passages in the Qur’an that encourage sexual slavery of kidnapped women, two of which are quoted below:

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors. And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have Turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith. (2.190-91)

Warfare is ordained for you, though it is hateful unto you; but it may happen that ye hate a thing which is good for you, and it may happen that ye love a thing which is bad for you. Allah knoweth, ye know not. (2.216)

In total there are over a hundred verses in the Qur’an enjoining Muslims to fight, kill, torture, rape, pillage, and conquer in the name of Allah against the Kafir. Additionally, in the Bukhari Hadith (Islam’s most dependable Hadith) there are over two hundred references attributed to Muhammad related to jihad. Despite what western relativistic thinking has dogmatically said, all religions are not the same—they are not equal. The Islamic god does not love everyone. In Islam equality is the privilege of the few not the God-given right of all: “Muhammad is the messenger of Allah; and those who are with him are strong against Unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other” (Qur’an 48.29).
Current opinions about ISIS often suffer from a “politically correct” notion focused on this group’s ideology while ignoring its theology. We cannot properly assess ISIS ideology without taking into account ISIS theology. Major General Michael K. Nagata, of the Special Operations forces in the Middle East, stated, “We do not understand the movement, and until we do, we are not going to defeat it.” We need to take a fresh look at the shocking events that are happening around the world, understanding the theological underpinnings motivating the “why” question. The violence and extremism of terrorist groups like ISIS are rooted in a deeply flawed understanding of God and the human condition. Most Christians do not know how to respond to the growing ISIS threat. How would Jesus react to the jihadis? Ignoring ISIS is not an option.

Unfortunately, this problem is not going away. Mike Morrell, a thirty-three-year veteran of the CIA and former acting director, calls our conflict with ISIS a “great war” that promises to extend for “as far as I can see.” Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, says the US-led conflict with ISIS will last for “years.” Voices throughout the government and defense forces are saying we should prepare for a years-long conflict fighting the Islamic State. After stating that we are at war with ISIS, Secretary of State John Kerry said, “Our commitment (opposing ISIS) will be measured most likely in years.” Western powers are engaging an enemy that has theological and eternal motivations to desire death in the name of jihad.

The Islamic State is a culture in love with devastation. ISIS has created a socio-ecological system which loves death more than the West loves life. It is a theologically enhanced ideology that “sees heaven in the barrel of a gun.” The Islamic State is Islamic by de facto, with a mindset completely foreign to the values of Western civilization. In the face of the foremost evil of our time, the words of Jesus of Nazareth are urgently needed, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).
About the Authors

Dr. Craig A. Evans is Payzant Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Acadia Divinity College, Acadia University, in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada. Professor Evans has appeared on Dateline, The History Channel and National Geographic. He lives in Kentville, Nova Scotia, with his wife Ginny; they have two grown daughters and a grandson.

Dr. Jeremiah J. Johnston is a New Testament scholar, teacher, apologist, and sought-after speaker on university campuses, churches and popular venues. His passion is equipping Christians to give intellectually informed accounts of what they believe in the public sphere for the betterment of society. Dr. Johnston completed his doctoral residency in Oxford, in partnership with Oxford Centre for Christian Studies, and received his Ph.D. from Middlesex University (United Kingdom) with commendation. Jeremiah also earned advanced degrees in Theology (awarded with ‘Highest Distinction’) from Acadia University (Canada) and his M.Div. (awarded with ‘Highest Honors’) at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (USA).
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