

علي

Ali

*Mohammed's cousin
and adopted son*

Born in about 600 AD – died January 661 AD Ali was the cousin, adopted son and son-in-law of Mohammed. He married Mohammed's daughter Fatimah in 624 AD. His name means exalted, noble. He reigned over the Muslim empire as Caliph from 656 to 661. Shi'a Muslims regard Ali as the first true infallible Imam and consider he and his descendants (Hassan and Hussein) as the rightful successors to Mohammed. Disagreement over succession eventually split Islam into the Sunni and Shi'a branches. Ali encountered opposition and even civil war during his reign. At about age 60 Ali suffered an assassination attempt while praying in the mosque of Kufa in Iraq, he died soon afterwards. The main mosque of Najaf, Iraq is supposedly his final burial place and has become a major Shi'a shrine dedicated to his memory.

Definition: *The Caliph is the title for the leader of the Islamic Ummah, the worldwide Islamic community or nation which should ideally be ruled by the religious law, the Shari'ah. The word is derived from the Arabic word which means "successor" or "representative." The early Caliphs in particular were seen as Mohammed's successors.*

*The Shrine of Hussein at Karbala, Iraq*

حسن

Hassan

Born in March 625 AD died March 670 AD Hassan (Hasan) was the grandson of Mohammed and the son of Ali and Mohammed's daughter Fatima. His name means "handsome one." Hassan's succession to the Caliphate was contested an eventually he conceded in order to avoid bloodshed. He retired to a quiet life in Medina till he died, poisoned by his wife, many years later. He is regarded by all Muslims as a martyr.

*The Shrine of Ali at Najaf, Iraq***Prayer Requests:**

- ▶ *There are literally millions of Muslim men around the world who are named Ali, Hassan and Hussein. Pray for them to encounter the living Messiah (Acts 7:56 and 9:1-5).*
- ▶ *Millions of Iranians and Iraqis commemorate the memory of Hussein's death each year. Sometimes as many as 7-8 million pilgrims visit Karbala during that time. Many Shi'a men will cut and flail themselves, shedding blood in the memory of Hussein. A popular Shi'a saying tells us, "a single tear shed for Hussein washes away a hundred sins." Pray that Shi'as of Iraq and Iran could see the value of the blood of Jesus (1 Peter 1:18-19).*

حسين

Hussein

Born January 626 AD at Medina in Saudi Arabia, died October 680 AD at Karbala in Iraq. Hussein was the second grandson of Mohammed through Fatima. His name means little Hassan "the little handsome one." Hussein ibn Ali (Hussein son of Ali) is revered as a martyr, having died in a struggle for the Caliphate. The anniversary of his martyrdom is called "Ashura," which is a day of mourning and religious observance especially for Shi'a Muslims. Hussein's death was significant in launching the Shi'a movement which is so prominent today in Iraq and Iran; they believe that Hussein should have been Caliph.



Central Asia Update

Persecution on the rise

The vast area called Central Asia is home for more than 100 million people. A large majority of Central Asians are Muslims though there are significant numbers of Russians, Ukrainians and Chinese. Many Muslims in the region do not practice Islam with zeal, however the number of committed Muslims seems to be growing in the whole region. People are returning to their historic cultural and religious roots after many decades of atheistic communist domination.

In the 1990s hundreds of believers made their way to Central Asia in order to live there and proclaim the Gospel in the region. Thousands of people came to the Lord in the former Soviet Republics at that time. However, in recent years most governments in the region have started to persecute believers. The majority of foreign believers who sought to proclaim Christ have been expelled from one country after another.

In 2008 Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan voted laws which significantly restrain religious liberty. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan had already become very oppressive for individuals and whole communities of believers. The body of Christ in these countries will probably continue to suffer because proclaiming the Good News, changing religion, spiritual education for children, holding meetings and creating new communities have been made illegal or have been severely restricted. One believer who knows the region well says that “the young assemblies of believers which have developed in the last 20 years will suffer but they have deep roots. They will survive!” We still need to pray. The probably 90%+ of people in the region have never heard the Good News of the Kingdom.

Uzbekistan 27.35 million
Turkmenistan 5.2 million
Kyrgyzstan 5.36 million
Tajikistan 7.2 million
Kazakhstan 15.35 million
Afghanistan 32.75 million
Xinjiang Province, China 19.6 million
(See the Uyghur article on page 23)

Look up the following names of Central Asian cities on the web. You might be surprised by what you see: Urumqi, Tashkent, Dushabe, Bishkek, Ashgabat, Astana

Languages spoken in Central Asia:

Turkic languages:

Kazakh · Kyrgyz · Tatar · Turkmen · Uyghur · Uzbek

Iranian languages:

Baluchi · Bukhori · Dari · Kurdish · Pamiri · Pashto · Persian · Tajik

Other major languages:

Chinese · Mongolian · Russian · Tibetan

Prayer Points:

▶ *Lord you have said, “For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea.” (Hab 2:14)*

Lord, may you be proclaimed to all in the region (Mt 24:14).

▶ *Lord, strengthen your people (2 Cor 12:9).*

▶ *Many are in prison or will be in prison for their faith in the coming years (Heb 13:3; Acts 16:23–25).*

▶ *You might pray for all the language groups and cities represented in the lists on this page. May God guide you.*

Badakshan

In the remote Pamir mountains

The soaring Pamir mountains dominate the landscape of greater Badakshan, which spills over North Eastern Afghanistan, Eastern Tajikistan and Northern Pakistan. The peoples who live in these isolated mountain communities generally feel distinct from the majority of the populations in their nations. Badakshanis speak Eastern Persian mountain languages. They are often fairer skinned than others in their countries, with Caucasian features. However, the most distinctive aspect of Badakshani identity is their religion.

Badakshan is the one part of the world where the Muslim Ismaili sect makes up the majority of the population. The Agha Khan, their spiritual leader, has become like a god to them. To quote a Badakshani: "The Agha Khan is like a living Koran for us. He shows us the way and how to live. Our religion is not stuck in history. We have a modern Imam to show us how to live in the 21st Century. We see the light of Mohammed on him." Most other Muslims consider the Ismailis to be heretics.

There are few believers in Badakshan and no known believing communities. However, many Badakshanis are coming to faith elsewhere. There are believers in Dushanbe - the capital of Tajikistan - and in Moscow, where many Tajik Badakshanis become migrant labourers. Pray for believers living in other places that they might wisely proclaim Jesus in their communities.



Prayer Requests:

- ▶ Meditate on Jeremiah 16:19-21 and use it in prayer.
- ▶ Pray for those who worship the Agha Khan as a god, and that they may come to a realisation that he is just a man.
- ▶ Spiritual blindness and the spirit of deception seem to be two major strongholds in Badakshan. Pray for these barriers to the Gospel to be removed.

PRAYER FOR THE PEOPLES China

The Uyghur people

The following information came from Western China as we were preparing the "30 Days" for 2009. We have asked for prayer for the Uyghurs in the past. It seems urgent to pray now. Some Uyghurs live within 400 kilometers of Badakshan (see article on this page).

In Northwest China among the Uyghur people (pronounced 'oo-y-goor'), numbering about 11 million in population, there are only 100-200 believers. The Uyghurs are largely preoccupied with making a living and the strife between their Muslim / Uyghur cultural heritage and the controlling Chinese Communist system. This area was a significant point on the Silk Road from Europe and the Middle East to China and now it seems to be one of the last regions to be reached by the Body of Christ. In the past fifteen years, thousands of Muslims all along the Silk Road in Central Asia have become believers in Jesus and millions of Han Chinese in China, however, there is still no resilient Uyghur church. There are many stories of unfair treatment, as well as, house fellowships being broken up just as soon as they start. Three key men are now in jail, the little community of believers is floundering. Fear keeps them from moving beyond private belief to a deeply shared life in Christ.

May God guide you to pray for the Uyghurs as only he can.

Women in Difficult Situations

Married to a Muslim in Canada

See: 1 Peter 3:1-2

Everyday I wake up next to the man that I married. He is a Muslim and I am a follower of Jesus. When we decided to get married, neither of us was practising our faith, so it was an easy decision. In fact, our faiths looked quite similar in many ways and he had convinced me that they were indeed very similar. Even though I knew I had married a Muslim, his decision to start practising (just one year after getting married) came as a huge surprise to me. It totally upset the balance that we had living out our faiths in a very

nominal way. Along with anger at him for changing, I also felt a growing resentment towards his religion that was apparently stealing my loving, caring husband and replacing him with someone who was so focused on rules, regulations and merciless rituals. Our romantic relationship definitely suffered.

My husband's rule keeping deeply affects my life. For example, During Ramadan it is especially challenging because he will basically not touch me all day. This is hard for me, because I see marriage as an open, living, breathing expression of love and commitment to each other. Sometimes, physical expression is needed to say what words cannot.

Malika in Central Asia

Malika's husband who was involved in criminal activities was killed. Malika remained alone with her four children for some time. Then she met several believers and came to Christ herself. Since her entire family were Muslims Malika and her children were forced out of their home when her family learned about her choice for Jesus. She lost everything she had. She no longer had a place to live or means to earn money. Two of her children were sick, one who was 12 even needed regular heart medicine. Malika kept her faith and a new family helped her work things out.



Asha in the USA

I asked a Somali friend to tell me about the market in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia. She began to tell me of the sounds and sights she remembers from her happy days in Somalia, and of the people she would have run into at the market. I looked her in the eyes and said, "Asha, I'd love to visit your homeland with you someday." She took my hand in hers and her eyes welled up with tears, she wasn't crying because I had said something sentimental. She was full of grief as she told me, "My friend, the Somalia of my memories no longer exists." (See the article on Day 18).

Jesus, the Word of God and the Messiah

The following texts are from the Qur'an:

The angels said: "Mary! surely Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the world. Mary! remain obedient to your Lord and humble yourself, and bow down with those who bow in worship. The angels said: Mary, surely Allah gives you good news of a Word from Him, whose name is the 'Messiah, Isa son of Mary,' held in honour in this world and the hereafter and of those who are near to Allah. (Al Imran 3:42-43 and 45)

The Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, is but the apostle of God and His word, which He cast into Mary and a spirit from Him (The Women, 4:169).

In these two passages Jesus Christ is clearly referred to as the Word of God and as a Word from God (in Arabic: Kalimat Allah). One would think that the Qur'an is actually echoing the text of John 1:1 in these passages: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." However Islamic scholars have mounted extensive arguments to say that the Qur'anic title given to Jesus and the biblical idea that Jesus is divine are not at all in agreement. While some Mus-

lims know that Jesus is referred to as the Word of God in the Qur'an, the vast majority do not know what it means and even fewer realize that the same title is given to Jesus in the Bible. Some believers have used the "Word of God" texts in the Qur'an as a starting point for proclaiming the Good News of the Messiah to Muslims.

In addition the Qur'an speaks of Jesus as the Messiah (see 3:45 and 4:169 above, as well as 4:157 and 4:171). Here again the vast majority of Muslims have no idea what it means for Jesus to be the Messiah, because, in the words of one author "the meaning of the title is almost completely glossed over in Islam." The word "Messiah" is the same as the word Christ in Greek. It refers to the one who is anointed as king. The term carries with it not just the concept of a good king but also one who is a saviour, a deliverer, who will correct all wrongs and reign in righteousness.

► *Pray that Muslims all over the world would be inclined to ask questions and try to understand Jesus' titles: "the Word of God and the Messiah." Meditate on the following texts and use them in prayer: John 1:1-4,14 and Mt 16:13-17.*



PRAYER FOR THE PEOPLES

Pakistan

The Burig people

Language: Purik, Trade Language: Urdu,

Population: 474,000

The Burig and the Baltistani Bhotia (or Balti) are two ethnic groups of Tibetan origin who live in the Karakoram Mountains of northern Pakistan. The only two known Tibetan groups that have converted to Islam, their Tibetan roots can still be seen in their clothing, food, folklore, and language. The Burig depend on glacial runoff to irrigate their crops, and where water is sufficient, they grow barley, wheat, millet, and a wide variety of fruits. Because many Burig live in the northern section of the disputed Kashmir territories of India and Pakistan, their region was closed to foreign travellers for 14 years. Recently, there has been increasing tension between their pre-Islamic traditions and Islam, leaving many torn between the two major elements of their ethnic identity.

Pray that as the Burig would reconnect with their Tibetan heritage that God would open their eyes clearly revealing Himself to them. He desires for them to be before his throne (Rev. 7:9-12).