

Mohammed and the Bus Driver

Starting with this issue we are delighted to be able to bring you some testimonies of Muslims who have recently committed their lives to Jesus Christ. They have decided to follow Jesus while knowing it may cost them their friends, families, jobs, and possibly even their lives.

These testimonies represent tiny cracks in the seemingly impregnable wall of Islam. While all of these testimonies are true, names and places have been changed or deleted in order to protect the writer's identity.

"Mohammed and the Bus Driver"

The story of one Malay's trip to Mecca and the strange incidents that occurred there

Mecca! The man we will call Mohammed shivered with excitement. To think he was really here, at the heart of Islam in Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of the great Prophet whose name he bore—the dream of a lifetime!

Although Mohammed served as an *imam* (religious leader) at his local mosque on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia, he had never before made a pilgrimage to Mecca, as all devout Muslims must do at least once. This first *hajj* (pilgrimage) in May 1992 fulfilled Mohammed's commitment to the fifth and last pillar of Islam. He went full of expectation that this trip would represent the spiritual climax of his life. On his first day in Mecca, Mohammed signed up for a bus tour of some outlying holy sites. The next morning he arrived early for one of the many regularly scheduled departures, and he sat right behind the bus driver to get a good view out the front window. He was glad the coach did not fill up and seats nearby remained empty.

The bus shifted into gear and headed down the road toward the city of Medina and the shrines they would visit. In Medina the Prophet Muhammad had established his theocratic state after fleeing a murder plot in Mecca in AD 622. With Medina more than two hundred miles north of Mecca, Mohammed had plenty of time to strike up a conversation with the bus driver.

Above the drone of the engine they exchanged chitchat, using English as a common language. "Yes, this is my first hajj," Mohammed told the dark-haired driver whose face framed deep, penetrating eyes. "I'm from Sumatra, a Malay—one of

the largest Muslim people groups in Southeast Asia."

The driver swiveled his head sideways enough to see Mohammed. "You know, you really shouldn't have spent all your money coming here."

Mohammed figured he had misunderstood. He leaned forward to catch the driver's words. "Excuse me?"

"Coming here on pilgrimage is really a waste of money," the driver repeated unmistakably. "All the rituals seeking to get into Allah's good graces—when you stop to think about it, Islam is full of hypocrisies."

Stunned, Mohammed could only listen as the man went on to point out issues he had never considered. For over an hour they conversed as the bus rumbled on through the desert.

"The truth is," said the driver, turning to look straight at his passenger, "Allah wants to know you personally, as a friend, not just at a distance through rituals. Islam can't give you that kind of relationship."

With their destination approaching, the driver slowed and downshifted to park at the site. Everyone disembarked, but Mohammed's head spun with new, unthinkable thoughts. In a daze he followed the tour group,

yet now everything seemed confused.

What did the driver mean? Where did he get such a perspective? How could I possibly run into a person like that in the holy land of Islam!

After the tour Mohammed hurried back to meet the returning bus, eager to get a seat by the driver and resume their conversation. But when he boarded, he looked up to see the face of someone new. His spirits sank.

"What happened to the earlier driver?" he asked the man behind the wheel.

He got little more than a shrug in response.

Mohammed found a seat and stared out the window. During the trip back to Mecca, his heart burned with the words of the man on the morning bus. He felt he could recall the whole conversation from beginning to end.

Mohammed's hajj lasted more than a week, but the excitement and anticipation he had brought with him fizzled



like air from a leaky tire. Everything he saw and did etched fresh questions and doubts into his mind. As he continued his pilgrimage, he scanned all the buses lined up at each tour site, but never saw his driver again.

Back at home Mohammed's family wondered why he had not returned bubbling with joy from his spiritual zenith. In the solitude of his thoughts he pored over the events of his hajj. He could not forget the driver's words or his face. Yet Mohammed's spirit grappled with perplexities. *If Islam is not the true faith, what is?*

A few days later Mohammed dropped by the home of a neighbor we will call A-Ching, a Chinese Christian, to borrow something. A-Ching welcomed him inside with customary Indonesian hospitality. As they chatted, Mohammed's eyes lit on something hanging from A-Ching's wall. There within a picture frame he saw the face of his bus driver from Mecca!

Mohammed gasped, pointing to the picture. "A-Ching! Do you know this man?"

"Yes, I do," came the reply. "That's Jesus. You know Him as Isa."

Mohammed sat still as a stone. *Isa! The second-highest prophet in Islam—the Christians' Messiah! Could it be—?*

When he found his voice, he spoke up quietly. "I have a story to tell you, A-Ching."

His neighbor, just as shocked at the tale, listened in silence. When Mohammed finished, he began to choke up, suddenly overcome with conviction of his sin. A-Ching explained the truths Jesus had declared about His own identity and purpose.

"Mohammed, you can receive salvation as the free gift of God through Jesus Christ," A-Ching told him. "You can have a personal relationship with God."

Mohammed prayed and committed his life to Christ. When he returned home, he gathered his family and spilled out the whole account. Awed at his story and his transformation, they, too, confessed Jesus as Lord and Messiah.

A-Ching introduced Mohammed privately to the pastor of his local fellowship. Then, for their own protection, a network of believers spirited the new convert and his family to a safe house in another city where they could receive biblical teaching without risking retribution from angry Islamists.

Mohammed's trip to Mecca indeed proved to be the turning point of his spiritual life. But he never expected supernatural revelation to come through his bus driver.

This testimony has been adapted from *Stories from the Front Lines*, by Jane Rumph, published by Xulon Press.

