

## Examples of Cruciformity

### **9. Mark A. Gabriel, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>**

— Former lecturer of Islamic history at Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt and author of *Islam and the Jews: The Unfinished Battle*

Mark Gabriel was born into a Muslim family in Cairo, Egypt. At ten, he experienced the terrifying and humiliating 1967 Six-Day War in which Israel destroyed the Egyptian military. This war was the final brick that completed the wall of hatred in his heart against the Jews, a wall whose foundation was laid through the Quran, much of which he had memorized by that time. His family and friends felt that they had to defend their land and faith from the Jews—just as Muhammad did. He believed that every problem in the world was caused by the Jews. He hated anything that was in any way remotely connected to something Jewish.

His entire childhood education was spent in Muslim schools; he earned a doctorate degree in Islamic history and culture from Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, the school that is the source of spiritual authority for the Islamic world. As a student, he worked as a traveling lecturer for the university and served as an imam in a mosque; he loved to read texts from the Quran which insulted the Jews and to exalt in Muhammad's harsh dealings with them.

Though he understood Islam deeply, he began to question it. When the university found out about this, they fired him immediately. The Egyptian secret police arrested him and interrogated and tortured him for a week. Because of this treatment as punishment for questioning Islam, he decided to turn his back on his religion.

A year later, a Christian lady gave him a Bible. As he read about Jesus, he decided to follow Him; Mark lived secretly as a Christian in Egypt for a year. His father's reaction to Mark's disclosure made him realize he had to escape from Egypt immediately. In Cape Town, South Africa, he joined a Youth with a Mission training program.

His hatred of Jews did not change automatically or immediately. In South Africa, he was convicted of this hatred and realized that he needed a power greater than himself to change him on the inside. However, he had difficulty in experiencing the Lord's power. Finally, he was told by the YWAM leader that he had to change his ways or leave. In a dream at a beach, the Lord came to him wearing a Jewish prayer shawl and speaking to him in kind encouraging words. He returned a changed person and asked forgiveness from those he had offended.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark A. Gabriel, Ph.D., *Islam and the Jews: The Unfinished Battle* (Lake Mary, FL, FrontLine, 2003). This story is taken from Section 1, chapters 1 to 5 and from "Author's Testimony", pages 217-218.

When the YWAM course was finished, he joined a missionary couple working in the Muslim community in Cape Town. One day this couple invited him to a Bible study for Jews led by a Jewish lady. He expected the Jewish people to hate him because of his Muslim background, but was shaken by their kindness to him. At the end of the meeting, he said to the leader:

"Jesus' most recent miracle happened here tonight. By this miracle, He united you and me to be brother and sister through His blood. No other power in the world can do this type of reconciliation between the Jews and Muslims."<sup>2</sup>

Mark wrote his testimony and had it printed in English as a small book. When the Muslim community discovered it, they "went crazy"; they started hunting for Mark and attempted to murder him.

Mark escaped to Johannesburg, where he reached out to Muslims. He had also a great desire to see Muslim converts and Messianic Jews work together.

"Jesus is all about reconciliation. He came to show how we can be reconciled to God and also with each other."<sup>3</sup>

In 2000, because of persecution and threats from Muslims, he was persuaded by Christian friends to come to the United States under religious asylum. He changed his name to reflect his new Christian life.

By choosing the Lord Jesus Christ, I had to sacrifice my country, Egypt. I had to sacrifice my family, who wanted to kill me. I had to sacrifice my culture by moving from country to country. I had to sacrifice my job as a professor of Islam. It wasn't easy at all, but the decision was clear: If I have Jesus in my life, I have everything, but if I lose Jesus, I lose everything.<sup>4</sup>

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. Matt. 19:29 NKJV

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2 Mark Gabriel, 27.

3 Mark Gabriel, 29.

4 Mark Gabriel, 218.