

Music: [00:00:16](#) [inaudible].

Speaker 2: [00:00:17](#) Welcome to the Project Zion podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Music: [00:00:33](#) [inaudible].

Karin Peter: [00:00:34](#) That is why we are deigned for the children of Israel, that whoever takes a life and less as a punishment for murder or mischief in the land, it will be as if they killed all of humanity and whoever saves a life, it will be as if they saved all of humanity. Hello everyone and welcome to Project Zion podcast. I'm Karin Peter and today we're visiting with Dr. Gregory Jackson. Dr. Jackson is assistant director of national security studies. Wow, that sounds really important. And assistant professor of integrated studies at Utah Valley university. He's also the host of a podcast called history that doesn't suck. So hi Greg.

Greg Jackson: [00:01:20](#) Hello. And I'm just glad it sounds important. That's all. That's all we're going for. We're just trying to make people think that we do important things.

Karin Peter: [00:01:28](#) It sounds great. That's a great title. Excellent. Good work there. So the quote that I just shared is really has to do with why we invited you to come and share with us here at Project Zion. And when, when you and I first met you were teaching a course that compared Islam and Mormonism. And that's our topic for today's episode. And so that quote actually came from the Quran, I forget what was the chapter and verse?

Greg Jackson: [00:02:00](#) That's Surah five 33 I believe. If I'm recalling that from the top.

Karin Peter: [00:02:05](#) All right, well good for you and your and your memory cause I can't even remember that about Bible verses good. So let's

Greg Jackson: [00:02:15](#) at least Surah five I can, I can definitely lock that in and in the third year

Karin Peter: [00:02:20](#) That's where it is. Okay. So first I want to thank you so much for coming on the podcast. You're a Podcaster yourself and, and a very busy person and I appreciate that you are taking time out to visit with us today here at project Zion. So let's start out with what led you to develop a course that compared Islam and Mormonism because that didn't just happen.

Greg Jackson: [00:02:45](#) No, it didn't. I mean, to start off, you gotta remember that I'm in Utah Valley, right? I, as you just said, I'm a professor at Utah Valley University and one of the areas of expertise that I have is the middle East. So I, every time I teach a course, whether it's the history of Iran or modern Middle East, one of the first things I do in the course is I spend two weeks just giving my students a basic primer on Islam. So even though the course might be 20, 21st century stuff, simple fact of the matter is you don't understand the modern middle East. Just as I'd say, you don't understand Utah if you don't understand Mormonism. So you should have a basic primer on what Mormonism is. Same thing with the Middle East. You've got to understand Islam. So, you know, I'd give them this crash course basically on the absolute fundamentals of Islam.

Greg Jackson: [00:03:34](#) No one's a scholar on Islam after you know, two weeks. Right? But, but we can move on from that point. And I had a number of students that as I start talking about this individual Mohammad, who finds that society has strayed from their principles and correct teachings of how to live. And so he's retreating to a secluded area and engaging a prayer and getting an angelic visitor and suddenly has a new book of scripture. And as a prophet, you know, I, I very much is not trying to draw parallels to Mormonism, but my students who are predominantly LDS and predominantly active LDS, and even if they're not active, that's kind of a moot point. You know, that's their background and you could just, I would just see their faces kind of registering this you know, familiarity slash shock kind of going, Oh, Whoa, Whoa, Whoa.

Greg Jackson: [00:04:33](#) I, this sounds a little familiar to me. And you know, initially the first few times I taught the class, to be honest, I wasn't uncomfortable with making the comparisons, but I am keenly aware that this is a state institution. And so I tried to keep things very much a kind of dry and you know, not go down that road. Not, I mean, I have two degrees from BYU. Love BYU and all, but I know it's not BYU. So, you know, I'm trying to make sure we're not disenfranchising the the non-Mormon students in the classroom as well. But I'd have a number of these Mormon students of mine who came out to me and said, Hey, Greg, we want to talk about this more. We want to go deeper on this. So with them asking me to I spoke with the director of the religious studies program at UVU, and he encouraged me to create a course where basically we could create a space for our, our Mormon students to be able to dive deep and make the comparisons that they want to without it kind of, you know, derailing in our, or rather in my typical middle East courses.

Karin Peter: [00:05:41](#) In the other classes.

Greg Jackson: [00:05:42](#) Yeah. So now we can spend, yeah. Four months just kind of nerding out on these these points where they're in common. And you know, it is a comparison course, which I think some people misconstrue as thinking that we're going to say, Oh look how they're super, super similar all the time. Sometimes it also means pointing out the ways in which they're vastly different. But that's, that's where it grew out. It was basically my my Mormon students interest and me trying to respond to the needs of the community.

Karin Peter: [00:06:11](#) I'm thrilled with that, that that's how it came about, that people were interested in that and learning more and broadening their scope of understanding. Being a religion nerd myself, that's fun stuff.

Greg Jackson: [00:06:22](#) Well, they're a good bunch at UVU. Yeah, we have, we have good students, inquisitive minds and all that jazz.

Karin Peter: [00:06:28](#) So most of our projects I and listeners would be somewhat familiar with the narrative of how Mormonism came to be. But if you feel there are some aspects of that that might be lesser known, this is the time that we might want to review some of that. And then if you could kind of walk us through in a super abbreviated way how Islam developed in that in its time period so that we can kind of get an idea. Like I said, we're sort of familiar most of us with how Mormonism came to be, but we might need a bit of a refresher and then launch into the inception of Islam.

Greg Jackson: [00:07:09](#) Sure. So to give kind of a more academic take on how Mormonism came to be. Really we have to understand the second great awakening. I think a lot of us we forget, we don't realize that the United States really wasn't very much of a church going nation in the 1790s when, when the United States first started going. Now some people misconstrue that to think that it means it was a godless country that that people weren't really into religion. Well, not necessarily you had figures like say Thomas Jefferson, who had a deep reverence for spirituality. He had a, in fact, a copy of the Quran in his library, but he also had a copy of the Bible where he had removed the miracles of Jesus. So, you know, he's an interesting enlightenment figure. We have, say Alexander Hamilton who didn't go to church really until he's getting on in his years after his son had died.

- Greg Jackson: [00:08:13](#) He started become more of a church goer. George Washington. He wasn't much of a churchgoer except that Martha liked to go. So, you know, he, he'd go for her sake.
- Karin Peter: [00:08:23](#) So like every, like every husband sitting in your ward lately.
- Greg Jackson: [00:08:28](#) Yeah, we'll, we'll just knock, will not build on that comment. And yeah, so, you know, point point being that, and you can sometimes see people kind of tug a war on trying to make the founding generation sound more church going or less churchgoing, um, per their interests. But the fact is there was, there's definitely spirituality, but only about 10% of free Americans, non enslaved Americans were attending church services on a regular basis. I mean, that's pretty low. So then we got to the second grade awakening. So it's not that the enlightenment's been lost, you know, its principles have been lost, but America kind of shed a little bit of this very scientific objective worldview that the, that the revolution was kind of born in a little bit and shifted into a kind of a new found spiritualism.
- Greg Jackson: [00:09:25](#) And y'all, not to say that these are bad things, they're just, these are different parts of the human experience objective observations of truth versus spirituality. And during this time, a number of different takes on Christianity were born. Particular there was a region known as the burned over district in upstate New York, and that's where Joseph Smith was growing up. So he's, he's coming out of this era where there's a lot of questions being asked about. And a lot of pondering and rebirth, if you will in terms of how Americans are viewing and thinking about Christianity. There's a lot of thoughts about the second coming that Jesus is going to come against soon. So a millenarianism and Joseph Smith's movement can basically be described as a restoration movement. There are a number that are trying to do this.
- Greg Jackson: [00:10:20](#) They're trying to restore ancient Christianity. So Joseph falls into that camp and he also falls into the Jesus is coming soon camp. So in many ways he fits in with the, you know, just exactly what you expect to come out of this era. And Mormonism is, you know, one of one of the few that has both of those elements that also survived. There are countless religions and faith movements that are, are founded and fizzle out, you know, before the community get to a second generation. So honestly, in any faith that makes it pass two or three generations as, as Mormonism has, uh, that's a massive, incredible success.
- Karin Peter: [00:10:59](#) So what about Islam?

Greg Jackson: [00:11:01](#) So Islam on, on the other hand, we're going all the way back to the six hundreds AD and we're going to the Arabian peninsula. So the, the, the city of Mecca at at this time had become a hub of trade.

Greg Jackson: [00:11:17](#) So there's a lot of trade going on throughout the Indian ocean and some of these sailors would head up toward mecca where they would be able to unload goods and then they could be taken via caravan, across land, up into Asia minor and in that area. And in fact, Muhammad worked within that industry as he got older. He ran caravans. Now his experience and you know, you can see some parallels for those who know a little more details about Joseph Smith's background of poverty you know, struggling to make ends meet, that sort of a thing. Well, similarly Mohammad's born into a very poor family. He's orphaned by the time he's six years old, he ends up having to move in, ultimately with a, with an uncle and as he's passed around, you know, he watched his mother be a widow for two brief years before she died.

Greg Jackson: [00:12:09](#) And then he's orphaned. Well pre Islamic Arabia, which is extremely polytheistic, is supposed to have a major value point on taking care of orphans and taking care of widows. So what he's observing though is that as all this cash is, has fluctuated into Mecca and this is a fairly newish element, a thing that that has been changing the Bedouin lifestyle. You still have the bedroom lifestyle going on around, but Mecca has become very sedentary. Crucially an important thing to note, it houses basically every idle you can imagine. So this is part of how they, they cater to the various nationalities they're passing through and conducting trade in Mecca. One of the ways that laws people lose people in it that sounds the worst. I mean, it's you, but you get my point, I kinda kind of lures them in is that, uh, whatever their mixed nationality crew is, whatever God they want to worship when they're on land, they've got that idol.

Greg Jackson: [00:13:08](#) You name it, they've got it. So, uh, basically Muhammad seen a lack of spirituality and he's known for being this extremely honest person. Everyone likes him to run their caravans because if he gets confronted out in the, in the deserts of the Arabian peninsula, he's going to put up a fight. He doesn't just roll over and let thieves hijack the caravan. And as he gets older, he starts contemplating, well, why is our society not in line with what its principles are? Which is for those who are familiar with the Joseph Smith story that is very similar Joseph asking, you know, this idea that people draw near to God with their lips, but their hearts are far from him, that sort of thing. And as he's doing so, he receives a angelic visitation on Mount Hera from

Gabriel. So tapping into Judeochristian you know, canon if you will and Gabriel starts to give him revelations.

Greg Jackson: [00:14:13](#) And these revelations will happen for over two decades. These are re citations, which is what the Quran means. And in Arabic, and this is, you know, the, the final word of God. So he becomes a prophet. He's chased out of Mecca, eventually heads up to Medina. And I'll sum this up very, very briefly. They have some battles between the two cities and eventually his underdog group wins. And when they come into Mecca rather than raping and pillaging, which is the ethic of the day, if we want to use such a word as ethic he instead spares all the inhabitants. And this is just mind blowing and for the era. So you know, he is the peace Springer and now we get into this idea that Islam is a religion of peace. He has brought peace and stability to the region. A rating ceases to happen inside of the community that is Islam. And as the whole peninsula becomes basically Islamic, you have peace. So now I'll stop there. I think that's kind of done the basics.

Karin Peter: [00:15:19](#) Well and you said that he became a prophet. Yes. Right. As he received these recitations over the a couple of two decades. Did you say lasted? Yeah. Becomes a prophet. And I'd like to explore that a little bit. So the founder of both of these traditions, Mormonism and Islam, they both bear the label prophet. But what do they mean in each, each case? What does prophet mean in Mormonism? What does prophet mean in, in Islam? And how closely is the kind of receiving of new scripture tied to what it means to be a prophet?

Greg Jackson: [00:16:00](#) Well, so both of them definitely receive new scripture that that is a part of this. Honestly prophet has a very similar, at least in my opinion there are plenty of articles that talk about the different meaning of prophet and different fades, but really prophet has a very similar meaning to the Mormon world as it does to the Islamic world. In both cases, the prophet's role is to share the word of God, to call people, to basically return to God and to warn that there will be a final judgment that you know, they need to basically be in line. I think some interesting similar similarities slash difference between the two, just follow me. You'll, you'll see what I mean. Mohammed is considered to be the seal of the prophets. So he is the last prophet and many of the preceding prophets in Islam.

Greg Jackson: [00:16:49](#) They're the same prophets that are accepted in Judaism as well as in Christianity and in the subset of Mormonism. So, for instance, Adam is considered to be the first prophet for Muslims. Well, I remember saying that exact same thing as an

LDS missionary years ago as setting up this, the first discussion that's used by the LDS church emphasizes this idea of recurring prophets and Joseph Smith, just one in the succession. Same thing with Mohammed. Now here is an interesting distinction though, is the last prophets. So there's no prophets out after him. Of course, that is a jarring difference from the Mormon tradition or rather the whole Joseph Smith's restoration movement where the idea of prophets succeeding is, is crucial though here. Here is the sort of, you know, different yet similar thing I would point out while you do have a of profits afterward, at least within the LDS version of, uh, of the restoration ad, I would love for you to tell me how much this carries over in the Community of Christ. Joseph Smith is, I'm not gonna say he's elevated, but he is considered to have, you know, opened this final dispensation. So there's kind of this greater reverence, I guess, in a way for, for these prophets who, who opened dispensations. Just kind of an asterisk next to the name, I guess you could say.

- Karin Peter: [00:18:21](#) Right. So we would have had a similar maybe phrased differently, but a similar kind of understanding about Justin Smith early on and even up into probably the mid 20th century, but with Community of Christ that the continuing prophets have continued to add to the body of scripture, right through the Doctrine and Covenants. And, and rather than having each piece of scripture be like an addendum to what's already there, sometimes it almost replaces earlier scripture.
- Karin Peter: [00:18:58](#) Interesting.
- Greg Jackson: [00:18:59](#) And the body of the people at times have voted to excise pieces of scripture from what Joseph Smith brought. So for example, the, the section on baptism with the dad, the Doctrine and Covenants, we voted to put that in the appendix years ago. And then finally we voted to like, you know, get rid of it completely. So I think we have a different understanding of the prophet's role with scripture then the LDS would have.
- Greg Jackson: [00:19:29](#) Yeah, we do have the similarity of the, the idea that there's still a profit, still a profit. Right, right, right. And so, so Islam of course would utterly reject that. But I do think that idea of opening a dispensation, at least within the LDS, a mind frame versus the seal of the prophet. I think that's a kind of, I know it sounds so contradictory as I say it, but can you see the parallel? I'm kind of going for?
- Karin Peter: [00:19:52](#) Well, yeah, yeah, absolutely. Because he's the last one. He's the seal on it with Joseph Smith. He was like the main head guy,

prophet he, we've had other profits since, but they don't have the same stature.

- Greg Jackson: [00:20:07](#) They're not, he's the last first. Right, right. And
- Karin Peter: [00:20:12](#) He's the last founder prophet.
- Greg Jackson: [00:20:13](#) Yeah. Yeah. Which more Mormonism holds that you have a number of those, right. These different dispensations and that, that apostasy will not happen again. So.
- Karin Peter: [00:20:25](#) Interesting. So sometimes when I talk to people who knew a lot about Mormonism and use different phrases like that one, the dispensation,
- Greg Jackson: [00:20:33](#) Sorry.
- Karin Peter: [00:20:34](#) Yeah, no, I'm thinking, Oh my God, I remember that from when I was a kid. But you know, that's just not part of our understanding and part of our life together anymore.
- Greg Jackson: [00:20:43](#) Happy to give you that throwback. Oh, thanks. Thank you.
- Karin Peter: [00:20:48](#) So for our listeners, I'm old enough to remember all of those good things from that period of time. So they each have a prophet. They each have come out of this kind of cultural and societal paradigm of, of needing kind of religious reconstruction, if you will.
- Greg Jackson: [00:21:09](#) Yes, I think that's perfectly put.
- Karin Peter: [00:21:13](#) Okay. So, and each tradition has a really unique set of scriptures that goes along with that. They each received word of God and substance. So compare a little bit the book of Mormon in the, in the Quran. How does the use of the, of the text connect them? I mean, in a way, Mormonism is connected to Islam because Islam comes out of the Abrahamic tradition and Mormonism comes out of Christianity, which comes out of the Abrahamic tradition.
- Greg Jackson: [00:21:45](#) Absolutely. So there, there are all those connections. But if you'll follow me here, I'd actually say the greater similarity isn't between the Quran and the Book of Mormon, which is what everyone jumps to.
- Greg Jackson: [00:21:58](#) It's the Quran and the Doctrine and Covenants.



Karin Peter: [00:22:01](#) Really? Say more.

Greg Jackson: [00:22:04](#) Okay, here, hear me out now. So the, the Quran is, isn't a sequential story that you kind of read like the Bible, the book of Mormon reads like the Bible. You've got a civilization, things are happening, there are life lessons, doctrines of Jesus are being taught by prophets. And you see, you know, an arc, you know, a plot basically that, that you can follow through, whether that's the children of Israel in the Bible you know, the, the life of Jesus and the in the gospels and or the Nephites over, over in the book of Mormon, the, the Quran has surahs basically just think chapters. But surahs and each of these really just lay out doctrines and teachings there. We're not following Mohammed's people as they battle with the Meccans or anything like that.

Greg Jackson: [00:22:59](#) There, there is no great plot, if you will, that goes through it. Instead, it's a series of re citations that had been given by the angel Gabriel. There's no translation story or anything like that. So for me, when you think about the Doctrine and Covenants where Joseph Smith is receiving revelations and for those who are familiar at all with how Joseph received them, at least was it all Oliver Cowdery? I think it.

Karin Peter: [00:23:31](#) Was when they were doing Bible study together?

Greg Jackson: [00:23:33](#) Yeah. And he would talk about Joseph kind of just going into this almost like glazed over almost trans. And he would just speak the revelation out a word for word. There was no stumbling. And how well, as you know, entering the podcast world, I've certainly felt this. You realize how inarticulate we all actually are without a script very quickly.

Greg Jackson: [00:23:57](#) It's so, you know, for, I believe, again, it was all over. See if I were just a Smith, I wouldn't be stumbling over whether it was Oliver. Right.

Karin Peter: [00:24:04](#) You would know!

Greg Jackson: [00:24:05](#) I would know. So you know the, this was one of the proofs of Joseph Smith's calling as a prophet that he was able to, no stutters, no just spit out this revelation word for word as they would just try to furiously keep up with their pens. So that's much more in line with how the Quran is said to have been given. And the Quran is believed to be, you know, word for word straight basically, you know, via Gabriel, but straight from God to Muhammad. In fact, you're not even reading the Quran

if you don't read it in Arabic. Right. It's, it's simply a translation. There's like this, you know, kind of this note, eh, sort of, you kinda got it.

Greg Jackson: [00:24:51](#) But if it's not an Arabic, not really,

Karin Peter: [00:24:54](#) Because that's how God gave it.

Karin Peter: [00:24:55](#) Exactly. You know, conversely, you know you have the LDS church, which you know, celebrates translating the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants and, and other scriptures into as many different languages as possible. That end. There's no, you know, you want to go up to someone who's Mormon and say I'm from Latin America and say, well you're kind of reading the book of Mormon because it's in Spanish. You know, there's, there's none of that that that doesn't, that mentality that, that view isn't there.

Karin Peter: [00:25:31](#) So side note, we did have a bit of that view, when we in Community of Christ talked about changing the prayers over the sacrament?

Greg Jackson: [00:25:43](#) Really?

Karin Peter: [00:25:44](#) Yes. Because we have the, the prayers that are in the Doctrine and Covenants over the bread, the wine. But then we have what we call the contemporary prayers that use no non-gender, gendered language for God and it's more inclusive. And there was a huge discussion at our World Conference about, no, no, no, we can't do that because you know, the way God gave them was just this way that there the Doctrine and Covenants and we can't change them. And a lot of people really kind of felt that like God speaks English and that's how it came out so we can't change it.

Greg Jackson: [00:26:21](#) And see there's a lot of traditional Muslims who had absolutely be nodding their head saying, we we completely get where you're coming from on that.

Karin Peter: [00:26:28](#) Yeah. Except of course it's Arabic, but yeah.

Greg Jackson: [00:26:33](#) Yeah. That same principle.

Karin Peter: [00:26:34](#) Yeah, that whole idea.

Greg Jackson: [00:26:35](#) I think it's, you know, it's important and interesting for us to be able to see that even though we might be talking about very

different doctrines and different belief systems that they're held justice fervently just as reverently and you can see these same sorts of personalities and concerns coming out to play. Whether you're debating, is this really the word of God if it's read in Persian or English or French, or is this really the word of God if you know we're changing pronouns and not saying this exactly the way that it was given to the prophet.

Karin Peter: [00:27:08](#) Yeah, yeah, absolutely. It, it, it expresses our commonality in a way that we don't often think of when we compare any branch of Christianity to Islam.

Greg Jackson: [00:27:18](#) Right.

Karin Peter: [00:27:19](#) So, okay. That's interesting for me that it would be more, the Quran would be more comparable to the Doctrine and Covenants. That's great. That's going to be new new fodder for my thinking at some point.

Greg Jackson: [00:27:29](#) Glad to provide it.

Karin Peter: [00:27:30](#) Thank you so much Greg. There's still folks who have a read up on Warbird history or have some experience with morbid history are aware that after Joseph Smith's death there were a lot of different groups with the secession crisis and different people that went different places and different groups have formed around various church leaders. We talk about the Lyman Wight going to Texas and a bunch of people go in there and people going up to Wisconsin with Strang and and all of these different groups and some like our tradition milled about and didn't know what to do until somebody came and gathered and gathered us and formed the Reorganization, but Islam had a similar pattern of division and at least according to the brief notes you gave me that phone up on before we had this conversation.

Karin Peter: [00:28:23](#) Tell us a little bit about that. I don't even want to go into to try to pronounce some of this. I want you to explain to me a little bit about how, I mean we're kind of familiar with Mormonism succession crisis of 1844, but how does that compare to what happened with Islam?

Greg Jackson: [00:28:38](#) Well so Islam like Mormonism started as, you know, one solid community and then it was the death of the founder and one case, Muhammad, in one case, Joseph Smith, that kind of sent things spiraling. So after Muhammad's death, like you said, people pretty much understand Joseph Smith and you know,

he's, he's killed. And then we had people, uh, who variously asserted that they were the right successor. So it's kind of a cleaner succession, I would actually say in Mormonism. Whereas in Islam, this is really drawn out. Mohammad dies in 632 AD. This is only two years after the war with the Meccans has come to a close. So when that happens, well they know that everyone knows that there can be no other prophet Muhammad was the last prophet. So who's going to lead the way? Well, we ended up with iman, and that's the title that's used in the Islamic world for a religious leader, a iman, we don't need to go too far down this rabbit hole, but it can, it means slightly different things, whether you're, whether you're shy and then you know, which branch you're in within those two worlds.

Greg Jackson: [00:29:47](#) But we, we have religious leaders that are set up and they are expressly not prophets. And we also have a, have a caliphate. So think of this as kind of merging the two worlds a little bit. There's, it's, it's a political, it's a political institution that's also kind of wrapped up in the religious, so as they are so as to try to figure out who should be the caliph, you know, who, who should lead us. They, the, the group kind of settles on Abu Bakar. This was the father, father-in-law of Mohammed, and he's one of the first to convert to Islam. And his daughter Aisha was one of Mohammed's favorite wives. And of course we haven't gotten to the polygamy thing yet, but you know, I'm sure we will. So,

Karin Peter: [00:30:37](#) We have that fun lurking the background.

Karin Peter: [00:30:40](#) That's right. That's right.

Greg Jackson: [00:30:41](#) So we, we got Abu Bakar, he's only around for a few years. 634, he dies of old age. In comes Uhmar he's next selected. Now as this is happening, I want to point out that there's a loud group that's been calling for Ali to be the caliph, but he gets passed over first time gets passed over the second time. Third time we ended up with Uthman and 644. And Uthman is known for his nepotism. So he starts appointing a lot of his relatives who also happened to have been Meccans. And I'm just going to remind you that we talked about this war, right? Yes. So this is the thing though, since everyone's Muslim now, that means a lot of people who were adversaries are now, you know, in the fold. So you've got some of the old school who are basically saying, Whoa, Whoa, Whoa.

Greg Jackson: [00:31:30](#) How is it that this Uthman guy, he's out appointing a lower level leaders that we literally raised swords against. But Ali keeps getting passed over. Ali, we know was loyal and faithful. So you

know, we've got some internal strife going on. So unfortunately the way that Uthman meets his end is when one of Ali's way to zealous supporters assassinates them.

Karin Peter: [00:31:58](#) Okay.

Greg Jackson: [00:31:59](#) Yeah. So Ali is made the next Calif. There's no one else that they look to and go, Oh yeah, that would be a good person. So Ali goes in, but you can imagine the bad blood with that. Right? Yeah. I mean, and you know, this can't happen in our political setup because the vice president and the president are from the same party. If I can make a comparison to 21st century America real quick, but imagine if somehow, I'm not trying to say anything about present politics, but just imagine if a president of the United States were assassinated and somehow the opposition leader of the other party then became the successor.

Karin Peter: [00:32:34](#) Right.

Greg Jackson: [00:32:35](#) You can see how that president's party would, I mean, you would have civil on your hands. It'd be my guess, right? Because that's exactly what happened. And it didn't take long for the first fitna. Fitna basically means struggle in Arabic. And so it is used with war. We have a civil war that lasts for a few years and in the end we have a split and about 80%. Basically ditch Ali and Ali's group. The Shiites, literally a Shia means a partisan of Ali at, you know, basically a follower of Ali. They end up farther out East. And that's why within the Muslim world, if you are by and large, if you're in North Africa and, and then getting into the middle East, you're gonna meet more Sunni. And then we start to shift from a Sunni majority to a Shia majority. And then, you know, you keep going East to get into Iran and now you've got you know, a complete Shia majority.

Greg Jackson: [00:33:39](#) So you can even see the the geographical divide to this day because of the way the civil war wrapped up and 661. Okay. Which is very similar to what happened in the United States from the civil war wrapped up. You would have a similar code, but geographically, so, yeah, I mean, you know, I, I think it's interesting to point out, again, there's, there's lots of differences here as well. But within the, uh, Mormon Mormonism succession crisis, you know, about 90% or so ultimately end up following Brigham young, you have a large majority, and that's kind of, you know, at least in, in the eyes of those who go to Utah, they certainly would consider themselves the Orthodox, right? The, and likewise within the Muslim world, we have, you know, 80%, 80 to 85%. That ended up being one larger group. And then you've got you know the smaller

branches, uh, that are, that are connected under the kind of Shiite umbrella, if you will.

Greg Jackson: [00:34:41](#) And there's a bunch of different groups. We get into this concept of a hidden Imam. I don't know if we want to go too deep into Shiite specific doctrines, but kind of in, you know, the, the three Nephite will come, or the, you know, John the beloved will show up again, sort of a, there's a hidden Imam who's going to come back in the, in the last days according to, uh, to the Shiites. And they differ on which Imam is the hidden Imam. So some of them, it was the seventh Imam after the four rightly guided Caliph Ali being the last have, have passed on. A lot of them that the largest group are the Twelvers because they believe the 12th hidden Imam, the 12th Imam from Ali is the hidden Imam that will come forward. And that's the predominant faith in Iran today.

Greg Jackson: [00:35:31](#) They're are mostly Twelvers. And so similarly, right to, to Joseph Smith's large movement, you've got this large LDS branch, but then you've got a lot of smaller branches that kind of kind of in a way maybe have some cluster to it, maybe don't, depending on whether you're an insider outsider, you might look at it and see them together or not because you have, you have a absolute fights within the Shiite world as to whether or not some of them are or aren't Muslim. The Alawites, and forgive me if I'm going too deep into the woods, the Alawites in Syria, which if you've been following the Syrian civil war, president Assad, Assad he is an Alawite. Well, they're considered heretics considered not Muslim and the eyes of, of some Muslims. So you get into that same sort of breakdown that you see, whether it's within, you know, the Joseph Smith restoration movement where mainstream LDS tend to look at, say, a fundamentalist Mormon and say, well, they're not really Mormon.

Greg Jackson: [00:36:32](#) Or, you know, those that didn't come to Utah aren't really Mormon or, or even larger Christianity where you have Protestants who look at everyone within the Mormon faith and just say carb launch. No, no, no, no. You know, not, not Mormon. Uh, the concept of the Trinity isn't a robust enough, they don't believe in grace enough, so not, not sufficiently Christian. You, we have all these, you know, so again, we see, we see the humanity of people, I guess is what I'm trying to say. Right. Trying to decide who's in the club, who's out of the club.

Karin Peter: [00:37:08](#) Well, we haven't really done that, I think in the United States when we talk about Islam, when we talk about the different branches and are very surface understanding of Islam is we have not made that correlation that, Oh yeah, it's like all this

splinter denominationalism it's like the 500 varieties of Baptists that you have and how did that all happen?

Greg Jackson:

[00:37:31](#)

Yeah.

Karin Peter:

[00:37:32](#)

Instead, we've just said, Oh, there it's tribal, that they've been worried forever and it kind of, we're not willing to look at the similarities I guess is what I've tried to say.

Greg Jackson:

[00:37:43](#)

Well, and I think that's very human though. And I don't say that to excuse us, but it's something that every individual, every society has to be very conscious of to think too. I mean, you know, one of the things that I have found I really connect with when I, when I've spoken to Muslims, is this idea of, you know, I'm, I'm not trying to, you know, ring the poor me bell by any means, but I know what it is to say go to a conference they don't get, get outside of the Western United States where Mormons are pretty well known, even if within the minority and majority in Utah. And as soon as someone hears on from Utah or there's any connection made to the fact that I studied at BYU, I get this look. You know, I, I, it's like I can see the distrust setting into their eyes. You know, they know nothing about me, but suddenly I have, I've become out an outsider and outcomes that phrase with this very specific pronunciation. Are you Mormon? You know that intonation. And you know, it's, um, I, I've, I've just found that a lot of Muslims with whom I've spoken, they get that, you know, they understand, they know that feeling. They've heard that same question. The only difference is it was Muslim rather than Mormon.

Karin Peter:

[00:39:03](#)

Right. Right. So I noticed when, when we were first talking about doing this episode and you sent some information over it, I noticed that in your class when you teach this, you include a discussion on the role of women. And I have recorded a Project Zion podcast with Lindsay Hansen Park about her Year of Polygamy Podcast. And so there's quite a discussion of the role of women and even the modern role of women in Mormonism. So let's talk a little bit about that, about women in Mormonism and women Islam. Are there similarities in the teachings and culture? Are there quite different what, from your perspective?

Greg Jackson:

[00:39:52](#)

Vastly, vastly different and extremely the same. It's, uh, you know, we've got a lot of surface level things. So there's of course polygamy. Well let's go ahead and just hit, hit that one out of the park cause that's what everybody wants to see. You know when you've talked about this two faiths, they first of all Islam, the way that they practice polygamy, there's supposed to be a limit of four wives at a maximum. That hasn't always been

abided by. There was one Sultan in Morocco who had eye space on his name, but he had 1500 wives and concubines taken together.

Karin Peter: [00:40:39](#)

Alrighty.

Greg Jackson: [00:40:39](#)

Yeah, just, just a few. I mean it makes anything to happen in Utah just looked like rookie numbers. That two real reverend of a joke. I apologize.

Karin Peter: [00:40:52](#)

Oh no. It's just all of a sudden they had those shows, you know, on discovery channel about the hoarders. Like really seriously, you need that. How do you even have a relationship, right?

Greg Jackson: [00:40:57](#)

I, yeah, but, but that, that said, you know, those are, we can always find whatever rule, you know, there is, are law within a culture. You know, there's someone who's broken it, someone who's rank and file isn't supposed to have more than four wives. It's also stated very specifically and Sharia law that they're supposed to all be treated equally to whatever extent. I used to, let me be little clear here. As I say this, I want to convey some information. I see that as my role as an academic. So I'm just going to kind of state what, what the rules are. I realize some listeners might bristle and say, well, there's no way that's actually happening that way, whether we're talking about Mormonism, a history of polygamy or Islams practices of polygamy, but these are how these groups understand it.

Karin Peter: [00:41:53](#)

Right.

Greg Jackson: [00:41:54](#)

So the idea is no more than four and uh, should be equitable and must in fact be equitable in their treatment, otherwise do not take another wife. So the, the number, the limitation is kind of an interesting factor. Both of them have a fascinating history as to, you know what, when I look at a religion, I think it's always interesting to think to myself, you kind of take my, my faith hat, set it aside for a minute and put on my, my social scientist hat and think what's going on in society. That makes it interesting to someone to say, yeah, this is a good way for me. You know? So basically what I'm saying when it comes to polygamy is what historically is going on that has a woman in mid 19th century America say, you know, Mormonism and polygamy makes sense for me. Or what is it that has women saying that in a six hundreds Arabia?

Greg Jackson: [00:42:48](#)

So when we, when we do that, I'm going to lean on a buddy of mine who's finishing up his PhD at Stanford in religious studies.



He made an interesting point to me. He, he studies not Mormon, but loves to study. Mormons pointed out how the American civil war would make polygamy and the idea of eternal families attractive to mid 19th century Americans where you have so many men that have died, it's created not necessarily this lopsided thing to all of the United States is, you know, incapable of overcoming. But you, you've got a lot of people longing for their deceased relatives, people who are gone. There is some lopsidedness to the demographics. And so he at least, I think it's a very interesting thesis. He was just telling me about these thoughts the other day and I think they're worth exploring, thinking harder on. So he saw a situation where, you know, people would really be attracted to a faith that was saying, Hey, we will seal together the family and you will, you will have them with you in the hereafter as you think about all these union and Confederate soldiers that are, that are gone.

Greg Jackson:

[00:44:02](#)

So then to jump over to Islam, there isn't anything that you can point to that brings in the polygamy side so much. But Sharia law did, you know, we can debate what it does in 21st century, but it absolutely elevated women in a 16 or 16, excuse me. And just fast forward a thousand years, six hundreds, Arabia where they had no inheritance rights previously. And as we established Muhammad saw society that was overlooking women overlooking widows. Sharia law is not equitable by our understanding today, but it did guarantee women 50% of the inheritance that their brothers would get. And it also stipulated the husbands had to take care of their wives. They kind of basically blow them off, that they had to take care of their, uh, of their children. So these are things that, you know, if you're living in polytheistic Arabia and you're a woman, you know, it would make the new laws that are in Islam sound rather attractive compared to what you've got. Right? So, sorry, I've, I've gone down a rabbit hole I think, but

Karin Peter:

[00:45:13](#)

no, no, no. I mean, I'm, I'm following what you're saying because we're, we're talking about a culture where women had nothing. And so to have these kinds of provisions made for them, even though we look at them and say they are not equitable by any means, from our more feminist perspective, from if we put ourselves in that or try to put ourselves in understanding that culture, it was much better than what they had provided for them before. And I get that.

Greg Jackson:

[00:45:40](#)

Okay. Yeah. And I mean, Rodney stark makes this exact same point when talking about a women in the development of early Christianity. So we shouldn't be surprised to see, by the way,

Rodney Stark, if people aren't familiar with him, he's a sociologist who studied the origins of Christianity. So all I'm trying to say is, you know, we, we can see where I think that's, it's a very important thing. If you're gonna understand a faith, you're going to stand as history. I think we often scratch our heads and look, look at the past and go, what, who would ever sign up for A, B or C? Well, if we look at the historical situation, we can see where rational people would go. Yeah. This, this is a step up given, you know what I have. Yeah. And so in both both traditions at least if we focus in on, you know, the LDS church as opposed to talking about what the larger Joseph Smith restoration movement both of them are known to be more conservative in terms of women's roles, gender roles.

- Greg Jackson: [00:46:38](#) Uh, but at the same time, I think it's interesting to look at what's going on in both traditions pushing against that. So within the Mormon world, for instance, there's Ordain Women, there are, uh, which is a group that's advocating for a women to be ordained to the priesthood within the LDS church. And on the other foot, there are women advocating within the Islamic world for some pretty significant changes. Just last month, in fact, uh, two, uh, women Imans led a mixed prayer group. And I mean, that is a absolute heresy in the eyes of Islamic extremists. Uh, I mean, to the extent that the prayer was carried out in secret. The location was not disclosed because they were afraid violence would happen. So, yeah, I mean, that's, yeah that, so that's a little more, you know, significant, I guess you could say not trying to down any, any sort of movements within you know, Mormonism, but you don't have that same,
- Karin Peter: [00:47:39](#) You're not going to be killed for it
- Greg Jackson: [00:47:40](#) it precisely, but it's interesting to see that, you know, how the present, how the 21st century world and things, you know, ideas that we're thinking through about gender roles, equality, how, how those things are playing out within both faiths.
- Karin Peter: [00:47:55](#) So, on the subject, I have a question. In Mormonism, there's such a thing as eternal polygamy. There's this idea that even though polygamy is not something that's practiced in Mormonism at this juncture, that it, it is still in existence in the afterlife. Does Islam have the same kind of a thing?
- Greg Jackson: [00:48:14](#) Yes and no. I guess yes. In that, you know, the, the idea that you're going to be with your loved ones carries on. Polygamy isn't built in to Islamic theology in the same way that it's built into Mormon theology within, you know, before going back to 19th century Mormon theology. You do have, you know, did

discussions . about polygamy being necessary in order to be in, in the celestial kingdom. You know, things of that nature. I am not aware of Islam ever teaching that a man must have multiple wives in order to, you know, ascend to the greatest, you know, I mean, the degrees of glory is a very Mormon teaching in and of itself. So that's, that's not there. I mean, frankly the discussion of polygamy within within Islam, it just, it just doesn't go down that road at all.

Karin Peter: [00:49:16](#)

Thanks. And I was just really curious as we begin to talk a little bit about that. So with the role of women in modern culture, besides the kind of striving for equality, whether it's Ordain Women or whether it's a female Imans, there is in Mormonism simply a culture where women acquiesce to men. And it's hard for us to understand that about modern day culture, but, but it's just part of the air that you breathe and you, and I feel it as a female when I visit Utah, I feel, I feel like people look at me because I don't look like a Mormon woman and, and it's at times I feel very uncomfortable with how, with how I'm received. And so I'm wondering in Islam, is that a similar kind of thing? Is there just kind of in the air that you breathe that, that women acquiesce to men?

Greg Jackson: [00:50:15](#)

So, you know, I forgive me being the academic guy, I'm always mr mr nuance and we need to talk about all these exceptions as well. I get which what you're referring and that kind of I guess for lack of a better way to put it, the idea that there are traditional roles that men and women should should fall into. I that is that you're describing feeling in Utah, you will definitely find that in a lot of the Muslim world as well. At the same time, your, your question reminds me of a moment where I was actually just scrolling through social media as one does and me having the academic interests and pursuits that I do at, you know, I can't remember which pages were right next to each other, but I couldn't help but think to myself how, how jarring this was.

Greg Jackson: [00:51:08](#)

I had on my screen at the same time an image of protestors and I think it was Iran. It was a, you know, a predominantly Muslim country where women were protesting being forced to wear the hijab, the you know, meanwhile, then the next image up was one from a different news source, uh, describing the intolerant European governments. I don't remember which country it was. I think it might've been Belgium. It was somewhere Western Europe where women were protesting for the right to wear the hijab. Yeah, I remember seeing some of that. Yeah. And so I guess what I'm trying to do, I'm sorry, I'm not trying to dance away from an answer, but I think you know,

it's, it's fascinating to see how, what is basically how, depending on what part of the world you're in and what your experience is with the faith, it can very much color whether or not, you know, what, whether it's, it feels oppressive or oppressive to wear the veil, oppressive, to not wear the veil.

Greg Jackson: [00:52:17](#) Are, you know, are you being well, and I guess what really, what it comes down to you, if I can put, you know, a Mormon word on it for a minute. It's, it's agency, right? Are you, are you free to have your relationship with God on your own terms? Are you free to you know, pursue the relationship with your family and with society that you want? And I, I think what you're describing feeling and you try to kind of get more to the heart of, of your point and what you, you will certainly find it than a lot of the Islamic world is a pressure for women to have a more conservative kind of old school, uh, relationship with their families, with God. But at the same time, and this is where the academic committee comes out, I think it's, it's important for us to note, you know, these, these other moments where it's, it's, it's the other way around where you also have women that, you know, they, they want to wear the job. They, they, they're looking for these, they want it to be in that space, I guess is what I'm trying to say.

Karin Peter: [00:53:17](#) Right. Well, I appreciate your analogies and the word agency, that's a, that's a word Community of Christ resonates with as well. And I hadn't really thought about that way. It's, do you have the agency to decide for yourself?

Greg Jackson: [00:53:31](#) You know, it's yeah, I think you get what I mean here. I, because there's no way to say this without feeling like, you know, Karin, we've, we've been friends for a while. I trust you to understand what I'm trying to articulate. You know, I think that's the real, the real key, isn't it? We all just want it to be free to pursue our relationship with God. And so that to me is the crucial thing and I just find it very fascinating to see it's far more stark within the Islamic world where you have women literally fighting for the opposite thing depending on which country they're in.

Karin Peter: [00:54:04](#) Right. Or what their circumstances. Yeah, absolutely. In Community of Christ, one of the things that we say is that if people are happy where they are to religions or for example, if people are happy being Mormon, then we're happy for them. Right?

Greg Jackson: [00:54:20](#) Exactly. Yes. Exactly. That's what I'm not articulating well, please, you go ahead.

Karin Peter: [00:54:26](#) So, and, and so I can understand that if people are happy where the traditional Islamic dress, then we're happy for them. But we also, and part of this is just I think my Western feminist perspective, people are not happy with that then then I, I, I want to advocate for their freedom to not have to do that. Right?

Greg Jackson: [00:54:51](#) Yes. And see, that's where I, I guess I feel a little tongue tied at times because of course, I mean I share that same Western value with you and so, you know, it's, it, it feels a little counter intuitive I guess. Ah, not counterintuitive. It just, it's, it's hard to step outside of your own skin for a minute and pause and realize, okay, I would pro there is no way on earth I ever want option a. But do I believe in self-determination? Do I believe in agency so much that I can respect someone who says, you might not want that, but I actually really do. And I understand these other options are out there and I am rejecting what you think is so much better and can you respect that

Karin Peter: [00:55:36](#) Boy, and that's where it gets complicated as it, it, especially in traditions where, uh, where gender plays such a big part. Yeah. Okay. Well, I didn't expect Greg the professor to show up and give me so much to think about or there was a why that surprise me. But there it is. So and Mormonism in general has a complicated relationship in the Christian world. And you kind of touched on that earlier that for some, some varieties of Christians if you will. Some denominations it's seen as something other than Christian, but it probably is received a lot better than Islam is in some aspects, especially in the United States, there are conservative traditions that are very uncomfortable with being present in the US so from your perspective, how are Mormonism and Islam perceived in the USA to the world in ways that are similar and in ways that are different?

Greg Jackson: [00:56:35](#) Right. We, we did touch on this a little bit, but I think the great similarity is that both of them are, when you get outside of regions where it's predominant, right? Cause of, of course this question basically is just not applicable to Utah and the, the quote unquote Mormon belt or you know, most of the, the middle East. But these are two faiths that have great diversity within them that have a lot of different perspectives and both of them are viewed very, in a very vanilla way. As though if you adhere to one of these traditions, then the outsider can instantly make all the assumptions they want about your, your views on everything from what you do with your downtime to what your politics are, to maybe even your, your tastes in music for crying out loud. And that to me is absolutely incorrect.

- Greg Jackson: [00:57:40](#) I think it's fascinating. I sometimes think about this, you know, the, there are well over 15 million members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day saints. And of course at the same time, anyone who's looked at that number, who's, who's a part of the LDS church is aware that only about half of that number is considered active. Yeah. If I say that someone's Mormon than there are all these assumptions that it means that person, you know, maybe they wear white shirts on Sunday and they parked their hair on the side, right? Like all these very, very culturally, there's no way that person could ever have a tattoo. You know, and I see the same thing within the Muslim world, how these assumptions that are made as though no one is an individual who, who has their own, you know, path that, that they trod within it. But, you know, it's just my experiences. It's absolutely the opposite of that
- Karin Peter: [00:58:44](#) When I'm thinking about this and you're calling me to accountability here because I do have those thoughts about Mormons, right? So when I think about when someone tells me they're more of an, I do have a set of beliefs about morbid that I, I make assumptions about right there. Even though I reject when people make assumptions about me being Community of Christ simply because we have a 14 year shared history with morbid, right? And so I really reject it when people make those similar kinds of assumptions about me, yet I'm totally comfortable making them about others. And so, yeah, we have to work through that.
- Greg Jackson: [00:59:22](#) But Karin, I mean that, yeah, that's, it kind of gets back to some of the things we talked a lot about a little bit earlier. There's, I don't say this to excuse the behavior. You and I both do it, right? We all have these, right? We've all sinned and fall short of the glory of God, if I may. Right?
- Karin Peter: [00:59:36](#) Yeah. You're going to quote that the whole time, aren't you? Excellent! So pleased.
- Greg Jackson: [00:59:42](#) We, it's, it's so human. We want to categorize, right? We want people to fit into boxes. We want organizations and groups to fit into boxes. It helps us justify our attitudes and behaviors and, you know, really I guess if, you know, if we can get just a little bit into my own personal spirituality, we will step away from my academicness for a second. I mean, to me that, that's the most important thing I get from my interpretation of and my relationship with Christ is trying to look at people as people, looking past labels. Even though I'm, I'm so prone to do it, I, that's, there's nothing more human. But nine times out of 10, it's, you're just going to be wrong.

Karin Peter: [01:00:31](#) Yeah. Well I appreciate you being willing to spend some time with us talking about this. I think it gives all of us a lot of material to think about. It's a different perspective. And I know I learned a great deal just from our short conversation, Greg, when we started the quote that we started our conversation with came out of the Quran. So to be fair in our comparison of Islam and where it is, uh, or wanted to end with a quote from the Book of Mormon that you had told me was one of your favorites. But before we do that, I'm just wondering if there's anything else that you think is important for us to hear in this kind of comparison that would kind of complete our conversation or is there any last thoughts that you'd like to share?

Greg Jackson: [01:01:21](#) Oh goodness. I think I've yakked at you enough, Karin. I think that last note was probably a pretty decent one. So I'll leave it.

Karin Peter: [01:01:28](#) Okay. Well I want to, I want to thank you definitely for chatting with us. It was just terrific. And I want to tell our listeners that if you want to hear more about professor Jackson, you can subscribe to the podcast History That Doesn't Suck, which is what of my favorite podcast titles ever. And uh, you could hear he up there, those episodes. And so if you don't mind, Greg, if you could pull up the quote that you gave, uh, that you had selected out of the Book of Mormon because it was one of your favorites and I'm just gonna let you read it and we'll end with that. And, uh, and I'll remind people that this is Project Zion podcast and I'm Karin Peter, I've been chatting with Greg Jackson and let's hear where that takes us. Restoration scripture.

Greg Jackson: [01:02:16](#) Absolutely. My pleasure. So this is Mosiah chapter four, verses 16 through 19. The King Benjamin is speaking, And also you yourselves will sucker those that stand in need of your sucker. You will administer of your substance unto him that stand at the need and you will not suffer that the beggar put up his petition to you in vain and turn him out to perish. Perhaps thou shalt say, the man has brought upon himself his misery. Therefore I will stay my hand and will not give unto him of my food nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer for his punishments or just, but I say unto you, Oh man, whosoever do with this the same hath great cause to repent and accept. He repent of that which he has done, he perish it forever and had no interest in the kingdom of God. For behold are we not all beggars do we not all depend upon the same being even God for all the substance which we have for both food and Raymond and for gold and for silver and for all the riches which we have of every kind.

Karin Peter: [01:03:20](#) I think that's the perfect quote. If I'm having a conversation with you as someone who champions the worth of all persons, then I appreciate you sharing that with us, Greg. Thanks again.

Greg Jackson: [01:03:33](#) My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

Music: [01:03:42](#) [inaudible]

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Music: [01:04:40](#) [inaudible]

Speaker 5: [01:04:51](#) [inaudible].