

## A Christian's guide to the Koran, Lesson 30, Jesus born by a palm tree, Samaritans in the wilderness

(Audio and pdf available on this website.)

Today we cover suras 18, 19, and 20

Sura 18 is "the cave," named after a story that, according to the translator, was copied from the fifth-century myth *The Glory of the Martyrs* by Gergerous. It is a story that sounds a little like a Rip Van Winkle tale, of men in a cave who are put to sleep and resurrected later. The point of the story is a bit vague, though.

This sura begins by announcing "good news," but in the next breath we find that that news is only for those who "do good deeds." Since there is "none righteous, no not one," according to Christian teaching, a salvation dependent on good deeds is not good news.

Better news is this, that while we were still in our sins, Christ died for the ungodly!

Muhammad agrees with Brother James of the Christian faith that we should never say we are going to do something unless we say, "if the Lord wills." That's verses 23-24. We agree.

A total reversal of Islamic theology is found in verse 29. I've been sharing with you how Muhammad says over and over that Allah is totally in charge, and he wills people to be saved and lost. Pure predetermination. But in the spirit of Arminius, or rather the apostle John in Revelation, I quote Muhammad in verse 29: "So whosoever wills, so let him believe, and whoever wills, so let him be an infidel."

So which is it? It's not a bad question for Christians to discuss, also.

Another switch in sura 18 is in regards to the "jinn." I discussed much earlier how Islam considers jinns to be antagonists of the faithful, but not demonic/angelic by nature. But in verse 50, the devil is said to be of the jinn. And a jinn that had "offspring." The Muslim idea of the supernatural world becomes very difficult to trace.

Also in this most interesting chapter is what appears to be another made-up story. It's not a bad story at all, rather clever in fact. There's this man. He is taught by a servant of Allah to have patience. The servant leads the man into situations that are very negative, and the man immediately jumps to conclusions. The servant patiently shows him the intended outcome of the situation, and the man is very sorry for being so rash. This happens several times until the servant can't take it any longer and loses his patience teaching the man patience.

Only one real problem with the story. Muhammad insists that the "man" is Moses.

Next up, "Zu Alqarnain", the one with the two horns, known historically as Alexander the Great. He is mentioned in verses 83ff. Mentioned and praised, as his purposes of judging evil men seem to be in keeping with Allah's. By the way, Alexander's march takes him to the setting of the sun. "He found it set in a muddy spring..." Let us hope that Muhammad is here only being poetic.

Sura 19 is "Mary", and we are once more confronted with some very unusual twists to the Bible story. Mary is again called *Miriam* here, for reasons that are not as easy to understand as one might think. Miriam, impregnated by the Holy Spirit, as the Bible says, withdraws to a

remote place, and gives birth near the trunk of a palm tree, which is not as the Bible says. Here the entire manger scene is re-written for reasons known only to Muhammad.

Now, Miriam will need this tree, you understand, because ripe dates will be shaken from it for her sustenance.

Another need she has as the unwed mother of Jesus, is moral support. This is supplied, not by an angel, not by her loving husband Joseph, but by Jesus Himself, suddenly a grown man in his tree-side cradle. He cries out in an adult voice to still the questioning crowd that has gathered to challenge Miriam's integrity, "Surely I am the servant of Allah; he gave me the book and made me a prophet..." There is much more, but you get the picture. We're sure the crowd got it too.

Interestingly enough, "Jesus" makes reference in this quote to the day that he dies. Usually we are told that Jesus did not die on the cross, but was caught up to Allah, and another, perhaps Judas, was made to look like Jesus, and died on the cross.

You know, the miracles of the Bible have always been easier to believe than the stories made up to refute the Bible.

But about Miriam. In the course of the charges made against her before her son spoke up on her behalf, one addresses her as the "sister of Aaron."

I actually tried to overlook this when we covered this story before, in the chapter about the family of Imran. But it wasn't a misprint after all. Muhammad has actually confused the Miriam of the Old Testament, the daughter of Amram and the sister of Aaron and Moses, with the Mary of the New Testament who was Jesus' mother.

Absolutely, totally incredible.

Allah picks up on his ongoing rage against the very idea of him having a son, in the following verses. At the end of the chapter he kicks it up a notch. "Indeed you have made a wicked assertion. The very heavens might almost be torn apart from it, and the earth splits, and the mountains fall to pieces because they ascribe a son to the merciful..."

If there is a statement anywhere in the Koran that separates the god of Islam from the God of the Bible, it is this one. My God had a Son. Now, if I were to have a son - and that would be a miracle for sure - he would be human, because I am human. But when God has a Son, that Son is Divine, because God is Divine.

Islam falls forever on this one fact alone. God, the true God, had a Son, and that Son is God.

In our rush to the end of the sura, we passed over Abraham's supposed confrontation with his father about his desire to follow the one true god. And the making of Ishmael into a prophet. And the fact that all the rebellious must go to hell, but those who fear the most will be delivered from it. And the accompanying fact that certain of the hell-bound will have their time extended in that place. In other words, Muhammad's hell here is more like the Catholic purgatory, a place he knew well from the Romanist culture of that day.

But all these details seem as nothing compared to the more serious charges above. Nevertheless, I have promised to bring to your attention all those things in which the Koran is clearly different from the Christian faith.

Sura number 20. "Taha." It is the first word of the chapter. Four Arabic letters. But not even the translator, who was brought up speaking Arabic in Egypt, knows what these letters mean. It's not the only untranslatable word in the book. So we move on.

Allah insists, "We did not send down on you the Qur'an that you become miserable." I shall leave that statement without comment.

Back to Bible stories. Remember when Moses was out walking by Horeb/Sinai and the Lord appeared to him in a burning bush? That was not a mountain. It was "the holy valley of Tuwa." In this same passage, verses 9ff, Allah asserts that he has made the earth flat. Enough said.

The truly remarkable mistake of chapter 20 finally leads us to say in frustration, hoping we will not be considered disrespectful, only observant of the truth: Muhammad did not know the Bible. At least, not very well.

Here in verses 85ff is the story of the golden calf in the wilderness. Cast of characters: God, Moses, Aaron, and the Samaritans. The Samaritans? What are the Samaritans doing in the wilderness? Those were the citizens of a city that became the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. Hundreds of years after this incident. Who dragged them out of history and down to the base of the holy mountain of God?

Muhammad. Muhammad knew vaguely of the calf worship that would be going on in that city, the sin which Hosea decried in his prophecy, long after Israel had reached its heyday and was about to be destroyed. This was the 700's B.C. For him, one calf was as good as another, and suddenly the two stories have become one. Both Aaron and the Samaritan are blamed for the problem of the Israelites. This incident was in the 1400's B.C.

It just won't do for the Muslim to say that the Bible has been corrupted. All the evidence points the other way. Please pray for our Muslim friends. And today, thank God for your Bible.

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