

**Bible Studies based on the book "Facing the Muslim Challenge" by John Gilchrist. Compiled/Edited by N.T. Jabbour**

## **MUHAMMAD IN THE BIBLE**

Muslims believe that in the "original" Old and New Testaments there were clear prophecies about Muhammad. These prophecies, they believe, have been altered. More specifically in the Old Testament they believe that there is one prophecy which the Jews "concealed" Deut 18:18, and in the New Testament there is one prophecy that the Christians "corrupted" John 14:26. The Qur'an has a reference to these "prophecies" in Surah 7:157. "Those who follow the Apostle, the unlettered Prophet, will find him mentioned in the (books) with them, in the Tawraat and the Injil".

### **Old Testament Prophecies**

1. In Deut 18:18 God said to Moses, "**I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren**, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him." Muslims believe that this was a prophecy about Muhammad because Muhammad was more like Moses than any other prophet. Christians, on the other hand, believe that Deut 18:18 was a prophecy about Jesus. The **similarities between Moses and Muhammad according to Muslims** are as follows:--

- A) The Muslims argue that both Moses and Muhammad followed perfectly **normal lives**; Jesus, however, was unique and unusual. Moses and Muhammad both had a father and mother; Jesus was born of a virgin-woman and had no biological father. Moses and Muhammad both died normal deaths, and both were married; Jesus' died abnormally having never married.
  
- B) Both Moses and Muhammad became the **leaders of their people**. Although both were rejected initially (by the Jews and Arabs respectively), both Moses and Muhammad became the political and religious leaders of their nations. In contrast, Jesus only had a few

followers at the end of His life on earth, and the chief priests and the Jewish people rejected him.

- C) **The successors of Moses and Muhammad both conquered the land of Palestine.** Joshua conquered the land of Canaan (Palestine), and the Jews settled in what became the land of Israel. Umar, the second Caliph after Muhammad, conquered the same land for Islam and the Muslim Arabs settled in the land to this day. Jesus, however, was driven out of Jerusalem and put to death by the Romans who continued to rule the land for centuries to come.
- D) **Moses brought the law to the Jewish nation and Muhammad brought the Shari'a to the Muslim nation.**

What do you think of these arguments that Muslims present? Which are the strong and which are the weak arguments?

2. According to the Bible, Moses was a unique prophet who mediated a covenant between God and the people of Israel. Hence, Christians argue that the **similarities between Jesus and Moses are greater than the similarities between Muhammad and Moses.**

- A) Many centuries after Moses' death, God promised through the prophet Jeremiah that someday He would make a new covenant with His people. Since the nation of Israel had continually rejected the laws of the original covenant made with Moses, God declared that the covenant would become obsolete. He promised to replace the old covenant with a new covenant written, not on stone, but on the hearts (Jer 31:31-34). **Jesus is the mediator of that new covenant.**

To ratify the first covenant: "Moses took the blood and threw it on the people, and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words'" (Ex 24:8).

To ratify the new covenant Jesus said to His disciples one night before the crucifixion: "This cup - is the new covenant in my blood. -which is poured out for you." (Lk 22:20)

B) Jesus and Moses knew God face to face. Just as **Moses knew God directly and communicated with Him personally throughout his ministry, so did Jesus**. Jesus said, "I know Him, for I come from Him and He sent me" (Jn 7:29). On many occasions Jesus made it clear that He has seen God face to face. "Not that anyone has ever seen the Father except Him who is from God - He has seen the Father" (Jn 6:46). A special comparison between Moses and Jesus is seen clearly in the next two passages.

"Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him" (Ex 34:29-30).

"And He [Jesus] was transfigured before them [Peter, James and John], and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as light" (Mt 17:2).

Muslims hold that during the Mi'raj experience, Muhammad went up to heaven from Jerusalem and had a conversation with God. They believe this was the only time that Muhammad saw God face to face and spoke with Him. In contrast to this one time experience, Moses had a deep, ongoing, intimate relationship with God throughout the forty-years wilderness sojourn. Jesus had even a deeper, more intimate relationship with God than Moses.

C) **Like Moses, Jesus also performed great miracles.**

Both Moses and Jesus had power to control the sea. Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind" (Ex 14:21). During a rough storm, Jesus calmed the Sea of Galilee with just few words, "Peace - be still" (Mk 4:39). His disciples were in awe after that miracle and said, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him" (Mt 8:27).

After Jesus fed the five thousand, the people said, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world'" (Jn 6:14). When they saw the sign, the people declared that Jesus was the Prophet, the one foretold by Moses in Deut 18:18.

How would a Muslim respond to these arguments? Which do you think are the strongest arguments?

3. One of the favorite arguments that Muslims have regarding the promise for a prophet according to Deut 18:18 is **a prophet from among their brethren**. Muslims argue that the descendants of Ishmael are the brethren of the Israelites.

What do you think of this argument that the descendants of Ishmael are the brethren of the Israelites?

A) Throughout the Old Testament the expression, "their brethren" often occurs, and in every case, it refers to **one of the tribes of Israel as distinct from the one actually mentioned**. An example of this is Judges 20:13: "But the children of Benjamin would not harkens to the voice of their brethren, the children of Israel." "The brethren" always means one of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, and not the sons of Abraham. Similarly, in Deut 17:5 God said, "One from among your brethren you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother" (Deut 17:15). The "one from among your brethren" was Saul from the tribe of Benjamin.

In Deut 18:18 Moses spoke about the future conduct required of the Israelites once they reach the Promised Land. The first two verses in Deuteronomy 18 reveal clearly who God was speaking of when He said He would raise up for them a prophet from among "their brethren." "The Levitical priests, that is, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion of inheritance with Israel... They shall have no inheritance among their brethren." Moses said that "the Prophet" would come from among the tribe of Levi.

B) **Does Jesus fit the prophecy in Deut 18:18?** Jesus was not a descendent of Levi but a descendent of Judah. Judah was one of the sons of Jacob so the tribe of Judah could be considered as one of the "brethren". On the other hand, Jesus was not only a **prophet** and a **king**, but he was also a **priest**. Jesus was not from the order of Levi but from a **superior priesthood** according to Melchizedek (Gen 14:18; Heb 7:17).

- C) Muslims also argue that the phrase "I will put my words in his mouth" (Deut 18:18) refers to Muhammad and the uniqueness of the revelation of the Qur'an.

What do you think of this argument?

The phrase **"I will put my words in his mouth"** is a phrase that **described the nature of inspiration of the prophets** in the Old Testament and applied to the prophets in general. God said about the prophet Jeremiah "Behold I have put my words in your mouth" (Jer 1:9). Jesus said: "For I have not spoken on my own authority, the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment of what to say and what to speak" (Jn 12:49).

- D) Another argument that Muslims use centers on the question the Jews put to John the Baptist after he denied that he was the Christ: "Are you Elijah ..the Prophet?" (Jn 1:21). Muslims argue that the Jews distinguished between Elijah, the Christ and the Prophet, and that they were John the Baptist, Jesus and Muhammad respectively.

**Nothing conclusive can be drawn from the speculations of the Jews.** Once they said of Jesus "this is indeed the prophet" (Jn 7:40). On another occasion they concluded he was "one of the prophets," (Mt 16:40) and on another "a prophet" (Mk 6:15). At another time, they thought of Him as both Elijah (Mk 6:15) and as possibly John the Baptist himself (Mt 16:14).

How do you think, a Muslim with an open mind, would respond to these arguments from the Scriptures?

Next, we will turn our focus to the New Testament verses that Muslims claim that they are prophecies about Muhammad.

### **New Testament Prophecies**

4. Four times in the Gospel of John, Christ said that He would be followed by yet another person sent from God whom he called **the Comforter**, one who would guide

them into all the truth. Muslims claim that not only the Tawraat (O.T.) but also the Injil (N.T.) prophesied about Muhammad (Surah 4:157).

The texts where Jesus spoke about the coming Comforter come from the Upper Room Discourse one night before His crucifixion. (Jn 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).

"But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (Jn 14:26). "

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you, but if I go, I will send Him to you" (Jn 16:7).

**Muslims claim that Jesus was speaking of Muhammad for the following reasons.**

**Muhammad led the world into all the truth.** Muslims argue that when Jesus said the Comforter will "teach you all things," He was speaking of Muhammad. Muhammad delivered the Qur'an and taught the world all it needs to know about God, His laws, and the way to live for Him. Similarly, when Jesus said, "He will declare to you the things that are to come" (Jn 16:13), He was speaking of Muhammad. Muhammad is claimed to have done exactly that, as the Qur'an discusses at length the Last Day, the Resurrection, and the Final Judgment.

**A) The use of the masculine gender.** Muslims argue that when Jesus spoke of the Comforter, He used the masculine gender more than eight times. "He will glorify me. He will not speak on His own authority. He will guide you into all truth" etc... He was obviously speaking of a man, the Prophet and not the Holy Spirit. Muslims say that a spirit is a neutral gender, neither male nor female.

**B) The Comforter was to come after Jesus.** Muslims argue that the Holy Spirit has always been present. David prayed to God that He would not take His spirit from him (Ps 51:11). John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Lk 1:15). Muslims argue that since Jesus was speaking about one who is coming after Him then it must be Muhammad.

What do you think of these arguments that Muslims present? Which would be the hardest to respond to and why?

There are simple answers to these three arguments. A careful study of the context shows clearly that Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit who indeed came within ten days after Jesus' ascension as He had promised (Acts 2:1-21).

- A) **The Holy Spirit brought to the remembrance of Jesus' disciples all that He had said to them.** The texts of the four Gospels along with the rest of the New Testament are a demonstration of the Holy Spirit being the Author of it all. Those that wrote the New Testament were mere writers, while the Holy Spirit was the Author (2 Pet 1:21).
- B) **Throughout the Bible, both God and the Holy Spirit are spoken of in the masculine gender.** "He is your praise, He is your God" (Deut 10:21) is a typical example of how God, although He is not man but Spirit, yet He is spoken of in the masculine gender. We find the same - in the Qur'an: "He is God and there is no god besides whom He is" (Surah 59:22-24).
- C) Jesus not only said he had to go away before the Comforter would come, but also **promised that He would personally send Him to His own disciples - to Peter, James, John and the rest.** "I will send Him to you" He said (Jn 16:7). Jesus did not promise to send Him to the Arabs in Mecca and Medina six centuries later. When He was about to ascend to heaven Jesus expressly told them to wait a short while in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). The Holy Spirit was indeed present in the world before this time, but now He was to be poured out in a new way right into the hearts of all who believe in Jesus Christ. The disciples were **with** Jesus for three years. Now the Holy Spirit will be living **within** them, which is to their advantage as Jesus told them.

Which of these arguments do you think will be most convincing to an open minded Muslim?

5. Muslims say that according to the Qur'an Jesus specifically predicted the coming of Muhammad with reference to him as the "Praised One = Ahmad". Ahmad was another name for Muhammad and comes from the same root word. Muslims

refer to Jn 14:26 where Jesus says: "But the **Comforter**, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you". Muslims believe that this was the actual prophecy, but we Christians have edited the Bible and replaced the Greek word "**Periklutos = Praised**" with "**Paracletos = Comforter**". They base this interpretation on Surah 61:6. "And remember Jesus son of Mary, said 'O Children of Israel! I am a messenger of God to you, confirming what is before me from the Tawraat, and announcing tidings of a messenger to follow whose name shall be Ahmad'".

What do you think of this argument? How would you respond to a question of that nature?

- A) **There is no manuscript evidence whatsoever that the original word may have been "periklutos."** In fact, the word does not appear in the Greek New Testament and is accordingly not a Biblical Word. The Muslim claim is not built on concrete evidence; it is only a supposition.
- B) **The word "periklutos" does not fit the context.** The original word in John's Gospel translated as "Comforter" is "paracletos," meaning one who clings closely as a counselor, consoler, mentor, or advisor. That is exactly what the Holy Spirit does.
- C) **The Holy Spirit "paracletos" will not draw attention to Himself but to Jesus.** The "praised one = Ahmad" implies being at center stage. We see in the New Testament that Jesus is on the center stage, and the Holy Spirit - the "paracletos the Comforter" - shines the spotlight on Jesus through the witness of His followers. Speaking of the "paracletos," Jesus said, "He will glorify me" (Jn 16:14).
- D) **The name Ahmad is very common today, but there is no evidence in Arabian records from the time of Muhammad that Ahmad was ever used as a personal name in the early centuries of Islam.** It almost certainly came into popular use because of Surah 61:6 in the Qur'an.
- E) **Centuries before Muhammad, a counterfeit messiah named Mani also tried to apply the prophecy to himself.** It seems Mani and his cult were



well known near Arabia. Muhammad, believing that He was the last of the messengers of God, might have seen himself as the fulfillment of the promise rather than Mani. It appears that Muhammad had no understanding of the person and role of the Holy Spirit.

Stand in the shoes of a Muslim and put the word "Ahmad = Praised one" in the place the Holy spirit wherever it is mentioned in the chapters of John 13-16. Which will make sense the Paracletos or the Periklutos?

6. In talking with a Muslim it will be sufficient to **focus on one text** rather than the four texts where Jesus talked to His disciples about the promised Holy Spirit. The best text to focus on is **John 14:16-17**. "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another comforter, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you, and will be in you."

- A) He will give **you** another comforter. In Jn 16:7 Jesus says "I will send Him to you." To whom was the promise of the Holy Spirit given? Who does "**you**" refer to? One must agree that it is a stretch to claim that the context supports anyone other than the disciples.
- B) He will give you **another** comforter. Jesus is saying, "I have been your comforter and adviser. I have yet many things to teach you, but I will send you another counselor and guide like me". According to the Qur'an (Surah 4:171) Jesus is a "spirit from Him", a title given to no other human being. Furthermore, the Qur'an speaks of only one other "spirit whom God sends into the hearts of true believers to strengthen them" (Surah 58:22). So the Qur'an agrees with the Bible that there are only two spirits that He sends to be comforters and mentors to His followers, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

If the other comforter was Muhammad then the word "other" would not have been necessary. Muhammad never claimed to be a "spirit."

- C) To be with you **forever**. How can Muhammad be with God's followers forever although he is dead and buried in Medina since 632 AD? The Holy Spirit is eternal, lasting forever.

D) The Spirit of Truth whom the world **cannot** receive. The Qur'an says that Muhammad came as a universal messenger to all mankind (Surah 34:28). Muslims believe that one day the whole world will submit to Islam and become followers of Muhammad. This contradiction disqualifies Muhammad.

E) You **know** Him. None of the disciples knew Muhammad.

F) He dwells **with you**. After the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist (Jn 1:32-33), the Spirit of Truth was in the person of Jesus at all times. In a sense, the disciples of Jesus had already come to know Him. Certainly, Muhammad was not "with" the disciples of Jesus.

G) He will be **in you**. As the Spirit was already in Jesus, so it would also enter into and forever present in the hearts of Jesus' disciples once He had returned to heaven. This happened on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all who heard the Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the first time. The Greek word here is "en" which means "right inside you". Again, it is unreasonable to speak of Muhammad as "right inside" of God's followers.

Which of the seven arguments cited are the strongest arguments? Why?