

A Christian's guide to the Koran, Lesson 21, How Jesus came into the world.

(Weblog and pdf available on this website.)

Today we are covering the rest of Sura 3, called "The family of Imran." Let's start at verse 33.

"Surely Allah chose Adam and Noah and the family of Abraham and the family of Imran..."

Well, three out of four is not bad. Adam, Noah, Abraham, we recognize. But with the one *Imran* we may have run into another bump in the road. Who is Imran? Well, let's read on to see if Muhammad gives a clue.

Imran's wife is expecting a baby. She devotes what is in her womb to God. You say, this wife is Hannah and therefore Imran is Elkanah? Not so fast. Does not fit. Let me keep reading.

The child is born. It is a female. She is given the name *Mary*.

Here the head begins to swirl as so many possibilities become open to us for the choosing. Is Imran really Amram, the father of a "Mary" or Miriam, in the Old Testament? She was, you recall, the sister of Moses and Aaron.

Perfect. Except for one thing. The story goes on here to include Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, and then the birth of Jesus from this same Mary.

Somehow, then, Imran is really the father of Mary, the grandfather of Jesus. Sure enough, in Muslim thinking, Imran and Joachim are the same person. Did I say Joachim? Where did that name come from? Hang on, it gets worse before it gets better...

Long before Muhammad came along, all the New Testament books were in place. A council well over a century before his birth had ratified the 27 books we read in our Bibles today. And they had been circulating and accepted for hundreds of years before that.

Next to these God-approved books were a whole host of writings that were anywhere from fraudulent to ridiculous. These books, and the strange details therein, were still circulating when Muhammad rose to adulthood.

One such creation named one Joachim as the father of Mary. Another, that Mary lived in the Temple. And so on. It seems that our author here has inserted some of this knowledge into his own book. Many of these sources will later help him assault the Deity of Jesus Christ, while still attesting to the special character of the Prophet Isa.

The Bible gives two genealogies of Jesus. In Matthew we are given the line from Joseph stretching back to David through Solomon. But in Luke, another son of David is followed, Nathan. Scholars have assumed then, that the name "Heli" in the Lukan account is actually Mary's father, not Joseph's, as Joseph's father is identified as "Jacob" in Matthew. Luke must be following Mary's line.

Both lines are given so that Jesus could be considered the "legal" heir but also, through Mary, the flesh and blood heir to the Jewish throne through David. Solomon's line, you will recall, was later cursed.

Sorry to follow this rabbit trail so far, but the fact is that we have a father for Mary identified in Scripture. To both the Catholic tradition of "Joachim" and to Muhammad's offer of "Imran" we must say, No, thanks.

The verses before us tell the fabulous tale of how Mary is provided for by God, miraculously, while she awaits the birth of Jesus in the Temple. She is looked in on from time to time by the soon-to-be father of John the Baptist. In Muhammad's version, Zacharias actually asks God for a son, then refuses to believe when his prayer is answered.

Then, in verses 42ff, all eyes are on Mary, as she is given the announcement of Jesus' birth. He is to be exalted. Good. His name is to be Christ. Wonderful. He is to be born without a human father. The Virgin Birth! Excellent!

But I see nothing here of son-ship. I see creation. "Allah creates what he will." But is not Jesus the only *begotten* Son? Did not the creeds that followed say specifically, "Begotten, not made"? Yes, Christian, here is the heart of the heresy of Islam. A created being is formed in Mary's womb. The tender connection of father and son will not be there. This created one will be merely "a messenger to the children of Israel." Another prophet. An exalted prophet. But only a prophet.

In fact, verse 59 says that the creation of Jesus is no different than the creation of Adam from the dust. He said "Be," and Adam was. So with Jesus. The One we know of as the very Son of the Living God is in Islam a separate creation of God no different than any other human being, except that the mother was a virgin. Thus the mother can potentially have more glory than the Son, a fact that is not lost on ecumenical-minded Romanists.

How exquisitely sad. How awful.

This passage goes on to tell the story of how Jesus made a bird from clay and then breathed life into it. Hardly original. This fable had been circulating in one of those aforementioned forgeries. Whether Muhammad knew and understood the New Testament canon or not I will leave to the scholars.

In an earlier lesson we saw how Muhammad made Muslims out of Old Testament characters. In verses 52ff he now puts this seventh-century concept into the mouths of Jesus' disciples. "We are Allah's helpers...We believed in Allah and bear witness that we are Muslims... write us among the witnesses."

Little by little, the author includes all under his banner.

In verse 64, Jesus, along with all other humans, is not ever to be considered "Lord."

An equally fantastic claim comes 3 verses later: "Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian," he says to those who are arguing about their ancestor. All Jews point to Abraham as their father, and Christians see him as the father of faithfulness. Muhammad's point may refer to the fact that the actual term "Jew" comes from the name "Judah", who was Abraham's great grandson.

Of one thing we all are certain. He most certainly was not a Muslim.

There follows a lengthy discussion of how Jews mislead Muslims, which we will pass over as no clear proof is given.

Then another jab at those who make their prophets their lords, meaning of course the prophet Jesus, whom Christians do indeed call Lord.

A more direct punch in verse 85. "Whoever desires any other religion except Islam... the curse of Allah and the angels and the people together is on them... their torment will not be lessened and they will not be delayed... except those who repent...Allah is forgiving, merciful."

But wait. The next verse says that those who leave Islam, "their repentance will never be accepted..." Which is it? I want to be careful to continue our honesty about the Christian

faith here. Hebrews says to us a similar message. It is impossible to renew to repentance those who have tasted all that is in Christ and then fall away. I cannot soften that blow any more than Islam will clean up this verse. The question here is, can Muslims repent from their apostasy or not? Just how merciful is Allah? What does it take to "fall away" from Islam. A wrong marriage? A moment's carelessness?

Works theology, Roman style, is taught in the Koran here in verse 92. "You will never receive the righteousness until you spend from what you love." We know that righteousness comes from believing in Jesus the Son of God, and then good works flow from our new relatedness to Him.

96-109. We have now entered into some repetitions in the Koran. The house. The pilgrimage. Die Muslims. Torment for infidels.

Next we find that the Arab nation is superior to all. And, that there are some decent Jews and Christians, namely those that follow the Koranic verses.

After much more repetition, we hear Allah praising those who have performed jihad, and "desiring death before you met it." The martyrs of Islam. Muslim warriors will "cast terror into the hearts of those who became infidels..." Indeed, the terrorism of this religion is known around the world. Allah chides those who, in the midst of battle for the faith, "desired this world, and some desired the hereafter." Indeed, it is not normal to want killing all the time. But Allah pushes them on.

The Christian cause is the same and vastly different. True, soldiers are needed. True, battles are waged. True, many of our people grow weary and want to leave the battle for softer things. But the battle we fight is to give life, not death, to our enemies. How many Christian missionaries and national believers are now engaged in saving the souls of Muslim people? Oh, many! We don't love our enemies only because we are told to, but because... well, we really love them. It's in our new DNA!

In our warfare, only the Devil and his angels are defeated. Sicknesses flee. Sins are conquered. Broken hearts are mended. Our struggle produces joy, not terror.

But Muslims toil on selflessly, because, says verse 157, "...if you are killed for the sake of Allah or die, then forgiveness from Allah and mercy..." Indeed, if they refuse to engage in war, they are called hypocrites who are "closer on that day to infidelity than to faith." And for those who continue, great bounty in that other world.

In verses 178ff another word to non-Muslims. Don't think you are getting off the hook because of your long life. "We only gave them length of days so that they may increase in sin... they will have a disgraceful torment."

I thank God, don't you, for our loving Father, who wants no one to perish, but all to come to Him; Who weeps from His heart over cities that refuse to repent; Who does not at all enjoy the death of the wicked; Whose very name is love.

More repetition, more curses and judgment, and Sura 3 is ended. In Sura 4, much more about marriage and women. In fact, that's the name of the Chapter, "The Women." Join me soon.

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