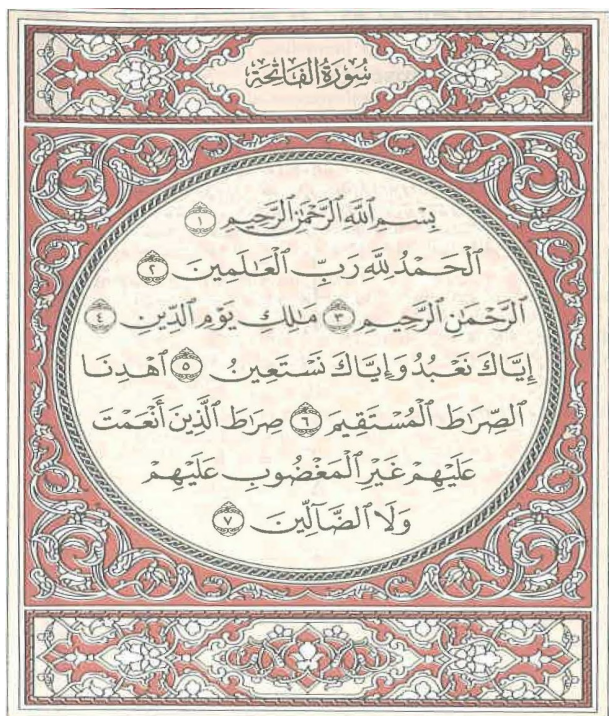


Does the Bible Speak of Muhammad?



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According to the Qur'an, Jesus announced that another messenger would come after him. This other messenger would be called Ahmad, which means "Praised One."

"And when Jesus, son of Mary, said: O Children of Israel, surely I am the messenger of Allah to you, verifying that which is before me of the Torah and giving the good news of a Messenger who will come after me, his name being Ahmad. But when he came to them with clear arguments, they said: This is clear enchantment." (Surah 61:6 – *As-Saff*)

According to the hadiths (Sahih Muslim, Vol. 4, No. 5810), Muhammad said that his name was also Ahmad.

In another passage of the Qur'an, Allah promises His mercy to those who would follow "the illiterate Prophet" (Muhammad) who had been mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel:

"But My mercy encompasses all things. I shall prescribe it for those who do their duty, pay the zakat and who believe in Our signs. Also for those who follow the

Messenger—the unlettered prophet they find described in the Torah that is with them, and in the Gospel.” (Surah 7:16,157 – *Al A’raf*)

Considering these facts, Muslims expect to find references to Muhammad in the Bible.

The Injeel

Regarding the New Testament, many Muslims think that the passages where Jesus speaks of the Comforter who was to come are predictions of their prophet, Muhammad (John 14:16,17; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-13).

The most common argument is based on the Greek word, *paraklétos*, which has been translated Comforter (but which many recent translations render Helper). Muslim teachers claim that the Bible texts have been changed and that originally they did not contain the word *parakletos*, but rather the word *periklutos*, which means, as it happens, “praised one,” just like Ahmad in Arabic. Thus, when Jesus says in John 14:6, “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper (*paraklet*), that He may abide with you forever” (NKJV), and in John

16:13, “But when he comes, he will guide you into all the truth,” he would be speaking of Muhammad, the last of the prophets.

Let us examine these passages to determine if this explanation is correct. It should be emphasized out that those who claim that the word *parakletos* is a corruption of the word *periklutos* do not point out any problems concerning the nature and the functions of the Comforter as Jesus describes them in the Gospel. Here are the texts in their entirety:

John 14:16,17: “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”

John 14:26: “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”

John 15:26,27: “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of

Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

John 16:7-15: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.”

All these passages have the same historical context. These are things Jesus said to his apostles the night before his death, af-

ter Judas had gone out to betray him. He was preparing his apostles for the ordeal which was coming (his arrest and execution) and was encouraging them in regard to the work which they would have to accomplish when he was no longer there. The promise of the Comforter's help surely gave them confidence. After his resurrection, Jesus repeated his promise concerning the Holy Spirit (the Comforter):

“He also presented Himself alive [to his apostles] after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’”
(Acts 1:3-5)

The coming of the Comforter was thus to take place within a few days. Muhammad was born in 570 A.D. and proclaimed himself to be a prophet forty years later. After nearly 600 years, all the disciples to whom

Jesus spoke and whom he commanded not to depart from Jerusalem had been dead for a long time when Muhammad came. If Muhammad were the promised Comforter, the promise was not fulfilled in the time frame that Jesus specified and the apostles were not able to benefit from any help he brought.

In addition, Jesus said to his apostles concerning the Comforter, “But you know Him” (John 14:17). The apostles of Jesus could not know Muhammad. Plus, it is clear from the words of Jesus that the Comforter would not be a man. Not only does he call him “Spirit,” but he says that the world cannot see him. He says to the apostles, “He dwells with you and will be in you.”

Muhammad, as a mortal man, could not “abide with [the apostles, or even with men in general] forever” (John 14:16). Someone might answer that the words of the Comforter remain with us as they are contained in the Qur’an. But Jesus did not say that the words of the Comforter would abide—he referred to the Comforter himself. Besides, the words of the Qur’an are not presented as being those of Muhammad, but rather

those of Allah. The words of Muhammad are found in the hadiths.

The Comforter was to “teach all things” (John 14:26); he was to “guide into all the truth”; obviously, the Comforter is the one who has knowledge of all things. The Qur’an presents Muhammad, however, as being a messenger whose knowledge was limited. For example, Allah says to Muhammad in Surah 17:86 – *Al-Isra*, “And they ask you (O Muhammad) concerning the Rooh (The Spirit); Say: ‘The Rooh: it is one of the things, the knowledge of which is only with my Lord. And of knowledge, you have been given only a little.’” Some of those who listened to Muhammad wanted to know their destiny in the hereafter, and they questioned him about it. In Surah 46:9 – *Al-Ahqaf*, Allah tells Muhammad to answer them in this way: “Say: I am not an innovation among the Messengers, and I know not what shall be done with me or with you. I only follow what is revealed to me; I am only a clear warner.” His knowledge concerning the things to come was thus limited. In another passage (10:94 – *Yunus*) Allah says to him, “If you are in any doubt concerning what We have sent down

to you, then question those who have read the Book before you: the Truth has come to you from your Lord, so do not be one of the doubters.” So Allah told Muhammad to question the Jews and the Christians concerning the points on which he might have doubts, because they had read the Book (the Bible) and could instruct him. It would be very surprising if “the Comforter” needed to be taught instead of teaching us all things, but that would have been the case if Muhammad were the Comforter of which Jesus had spoken.

Jesus said more than once that the Comforter would come in his name (the name of Jesus), that he would come as an answer to the prayer of Jesus, that he would take what belonged to Jesus and declare it to men, and that his role would be to glorify Jesus. Although Muhammad may have said some good things about Jesus as a prophet, Muhammad never said that he came in Jesus’ name or that he had been sent by Jesus or at the request of Jesus. Muhammad did not glorify Jesus—he did not elevate him above himself or the other prophets. The description that Jesus gives of what the

Comforter would do does not correspond to what Muhammad did in his ministry.

According to the Gospel, the Holy Spirit is the Comforter promised by Jesus to his apostles. In the hadiths Muhammad never identifies himself as being Spirit. Nor does he use the title “Comforter” to speak of himself. The Qur’an does, however, recognize the existence of the Holy Spirit. Allah says in Surah 2:253 – *Al-Baqarah*, “And We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear signs, and confirmed him with the Holy Spirit.” The Spirit which had, according to Allah, confirmed Jesus would come to help the apostles of Jesus.

It is important to point out that thousands of manuscripts (handwritten copies) of the texts of the New Testament are available, manuscripts which date from before the lifetime of Muhammad. None of these manuscripts contain the word *periklutos* in any verse at all.

Muhammad himself did not say that this word in the Bible had been changed. To the contrary, the Qur’an affirms several times that the word of Allah cannot be altered:

Surah 6:34 – *Al-Anam*: “And there is none to change the words of Allah.”

Surah 10:64 – Yunus: “There is no changing the words of Allah.”

Surah 18:27 – *Al-Kahf*: “And recite that which has been revealed to thee of the Book of thy Lord. There is none who can alter His words.”

In the Gospel, Jesus makes a similar declaration: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

Allah told Muhammad to strongly recommend to Christians and to Jews that they trust the Book which had been given to them and that they obey it:

“Say: O People of the Book, you follow no good till you observe the Torah and the Gospel and that which is revealed to you from your Lord.” (Surah 5:68 – *Al-Ma'idah*)

Or again:

“Say: We believe in Allah and (in) that which has been revealed to us, and (in) that which was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and (in) that which was given to the prophets from their Lord, we

do not make any distinction between any of them and to Him do we submit.” (Surah 2:136 – *Al-Baqarah*)

It seems clear that Allah would not have allowed men to change the words which he had given to Jesus. Muhammad never suggested that such a thing had taken place. The real reason we find so many problems in the idea that Muhammad is the person of whom Jesus was speaking in John 14:16 is simply that Jesus was not talking about Muhammad, and the New Testament texts have not been changed, after all.

The Torah

As for the Law of Moses, Muslims think that Deuteronomy 18:15,17-19 clearly speaks of Muhammad.

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear...” (Most translations read, “from among your brethren.”) Moses reminded the people that when they were at the foot of Mount Sinai, where the Torah, i.e. the Law, was given, they had asked not to hear the voice of God himself anymore, lest they die. “And the Lord said to me, ‘What they have spoken is

good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.’”

Muslims see several similarities between Moses and Muhammad and draw the conclusion that Muhammad is the very prophet whose coming is predicted in this passage. For example, both Moses and Muhammad were married men with children, both emigrated after becoming targets for assassination, both led their followers to war and victory, and both gave a Law and a detailed code of conduct. On the other hand, one can easily see a number of similarities between Moses and Jesus, also. For instance, shortly after his birth, Jesus was saved by God from certain death, as was Moses. Jesus and Moses were both transfigured on a mountain in such a way that their faces shone (Exodus 34:29,30 et Matthew 17:1-5). Each of them interceded before God on behalf of guilty men. Each of them inaugurated, through sacrificial blood, a covenant between God and men.

But instead of trying to see if Muslims or Christians can come up with the longest list of similarities, let us look more closely at the criteria mentioned in the prophecy concerning the prophet who was to come. Here are the two criteria to be examined:

1. Moses told the people of Israel that the Lord would raise up a prophet “from your midst, from your brethren;”
2. God said that this prophet would be “like” Moses.

“From Your Brethren”

Muslim commentators like to emphasize the expression “raise up from your brethren” and suggest that the Israelites are not their own brethren, that God was surely speaking of one of Israel’s “brother peoples.” According to them, one should seek this prophet among the nations which were related to the Israelites and not among the Israelites themselves. To identify the nations that were “related” to Israel, one would go back in history to find out which nations originated with the brothers of Israel’s ancestors. For example, the father of the Israelite nation was called Israel, or Jacob, and he had a brother named

Esau. The descendants of Esau were the Edomites. There is a Bible passage, Deuteronomy 2:4,8, in which the Edomites are called the “brothers” of the Israelites. If one goes back a little farther, one finds that Jacob’s father, who was named Isaac, had some half-brothers: Ishmael, Midian, Zimran, Medan, and others. According to the idea advanced by some Muslims, one could consider that the Ishmaelites (Arabs are descendants of Ishmael), the Midianites and the others would be “brothers” of the nation of Israel. Muhammad, being an Arab, would be among the brothers of the Israelites. It should be noted, however, that the Bible never uses the term “brothers” in speaking of the Ishmaelites (or Arabs), the Midianites, or the other peoples descended from Abraham.

Even if we wanted to consider these other peoples as “brother-nations” to Israel, however, that would not establish that the prophet predicted by Moses could come from one of them. First, it would be necessary to take out the first part of what Moses said: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren” (Deuteronomy 18:15).

Since Moses was speaking to Israel, the words “from your midst” must necessarily refer to Israel; so the prophet would be an Israelite. But secondly, we would have to interpret the words “from your brethren” in an unusual not to say totally bizarre manner. Who among us, if we were told to call one of our “brothers” to be given an important job or position of authority, would draw the conclusion that the members of our own family were excluded and that we had to find a man whose ancestors had been, hundreds of years earlier, related to our ancestors?

As for the expression “from your brethren,” we have a parallel in the preceding chapter. In Deuteronomy 17:14,15, Moses says to Israel, “You shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.” Throughout their history the Israelites never set over themselves a non-Israelite king. God chose neither an Ishmaelite, nor an Edomite, nor a Midianite, nor someone from any other nation to reign over his people. He first designated Saul, who was an Is-

raelite from the tribe of Benjamin, and then the family of David, who was an Israelite of the tribe of Judah.

It is clear that the prophet whose coming was predicted by Moses would be an Israelite, which disqualifies Muhammad as the fulfillment of this prophecy.

That Which Set Moses Apart

Let us return to the second criterion: the prophet would be “like” Moses. We have already recognized that in many ways Muhammad was indeed like Moses; in the same way, Jesus was, in various respects, like Moses. But according to the Bible itself, what set Moses apart from the other Israelites or even from the other prophets? What would allow the people of Israel to recognize one day that were listening to the one who was “the prophet like Moses”?

The last chapter of Deuteronomy contains these words of praise concerning Moses: “But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that

mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel” (Deuteronomy 34:10-12). These words are generally attributed to the pen of Joshua, the inspired author of the following book in the Jewish scriptures. The author does not say that such a prophet could never again appear among the people of Israel, but that at the time of his writing they had not yet seen anyone like Moses.

What we want to notice especially is this passage are the distinguishing traits of Moses:

1. the fact that God knew Moses face to face; and
2. the great miracles and signs performed by Moses.

In regard to the first trait, God himself drew attention to it in Numbers 12. He used to speak to other prophets through visions or dreams, or he sent angels to communicate his messages to them. In Numbers 12.7,8, however, God says, “Not so with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the Lord.” In this respect we cannot say that Muhammad was like Mo-

ses. Muhammad never made such a claim. Muslims generally say that it was the angel Gabriel who gave Muhammad the words of the Qur'an, on behalf of God, of course. We would say that he played the role of an intermediary, or go-between. In Surah 53:2-9 – *Al-Najm*), for example, Allah says, “Your companion has neither strayed nor is he misguided, nor does he speak out of his own desire. It [the Qur'an] is nothing but revelation sent down to him. He was taught by [an angel] who is mighty in power, and endowed with wisdom; who in time manifested himself; standing poised at the highest point on the horizon, then came down close until he was two bow-lengths away or even closer and revealed to God's servant what he revealed.” As for Jesus, his way of speaking recalls much more the description of Moses that we read. Jesus told the Jews in John 8:40, “But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God.” Later, in John 12:49, he said, “For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak... What I say,

therefore, I say as the Father has told me” (ESV).

The second trait which distinguished Moses from the other prophets was the number and the power of the miracles that he did by God’s will and which clearly attested to the fact that it was the Lord who had sent him to deliver Israel and who was the author of the laws and commandments that Moses was passing on to the people. In regard to Muhammad, a reading of the Qur’an reveals that he was not doing miracles as Moses had done. At least seven times one reads that the adversaries of Muhammad asked him, “Why has no sign been sent down to him from his Lord?” In these passages various responses are given: “Say, ‘Signs are granted only by God.’ How can you tell that if a sign be given to them, they will indeed believe in it?” (Surah 6:109 – *Al-An’am*). “Say: ‘I but follow what is revealed to me from my Lord. This (the Qur’an) is nothing but evidences from your Lord, and a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe’” (Surah 7:203 – *Al-A’araf*). “Tell them, ‘God alone has knowledge of the unseen. So wait; I too will wait with you’” (Surah 10:20 – *Yunus*). “Say, ‘The signs

are in the hands of God. I am but a plain warner’” (Surah 29:50 – *Al-Ankabut*). In no case does Allah give Muhammad the miraculous power to perform a sign resembling the miracles for which Moses was well known and which might have silenced his adversaries.

The contemporaries of Jesus, on the other hand, all recognized the great power that he had from God. In their preaching the apostles appealed to these signs when they called on the multitudes to believe in Jesus. In Acts 2:22 the apostle Peter described him as “Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know.” Even his enemies were unable to deny the miracles: “Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, ‘What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him’” (John 11:47,48). In this respect, as well, we see that it is Jesus who was a prophet like Moses.

That is just the conclusion that people drew back then. In John 1:45 we see that very early in the ministry of Jesus “Philip

found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’” Jesus himself recognized that Moses had spoken of him: “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me” (John 5:46). Finally, in their preaching the apostles clearly linked the prophecy in Deuteronomy to the person of Jesus Christ. Peter told the Jewish crowd, “For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you...’ All the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days... To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities” (Acts 3:22,24,26).

As we have seen, Muhammad was not the Comforter of whom Jesus spoke. Nor was he the prophet of whom Moses spoke. According to the Injeel, we do not need to guess of whom Moses was speaking when he referred to a prophet like himself. That prophet was Jesus of Nazareth. So let us

not forget to do what Moses recommended doing in regard to this prophet whenever he came: let us listen to him.

Ibn DAOUDA

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