



Jesus in Islamic Tradition and Scripture

by Harry Morin

During the Crimean War in 1854, three doctors were summoned to treat a wounded military officer. His condition was utterly hopeless, but all three doctors knew that if this man died, their lives would not be spared. The setting was an Islamic country and all three doctors were Muslims. As the officer's life was quickly fading, the doctors could only hope for a miracle. In their desperation, they did something unusual. They earnestly prayed to Prophet Jesus vowing to become his followers if he answered their prayers. Miraculously, the officer survived, and all three doctors became followers of Jesus.

These doctors had never been approached by a Christian missionary, and had never attended a church. How did they know about the healing power of Jesus? You will be surprised to know that millions of Muslims already have heard about Jesus. Though Muslims

revere Muhammad as superior to all other prophets, Jesus nevertheless is a prominent figure both in Islamic tradition and the sacred scriptures of Islam, the Qur'an.

Muslims believe God revealed the verses of the Qur'an in Arabic in the seventh century and since that time, have been reluctant to translate their scriptures into other languages, fearing any risk of distortion from the original meaning. No Muslim dare mistranslate or distort what he believes to be the word of God. As a result, though Muslims have distributed Qur'ans all over the world over the centuries, the texts have been printed and read in the original Arabic. This is important to know because most Muslims live outside the Middle East — which means Arabic is not their mother tongue. Consequently, even though non-Arabic speaking Muslims learn to read the Qur'an, the emphasis is to only be able to pronounce the Arabic

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Until All Have Heard

How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? –Romans 10:14

Jim Bennett, Director
Center for
Ministry to Muslims



A few weeks ago I heard a renowned authority on Islamic matters relate how “*the hand of God has worked in the glove of five circumstances to draw thousands of Muslims to faith in Christ.*” Here is a summary of his remarks.

Political: The Islamic revolution in Iran is a prime example. Just after the revolution an increased sale of Bibles occurred — even though the new government had closed down the office of the United Bible Society. Likewise, more Muslims came to churches seeking instruction for baptism. Next door, when Pakistan’s martial law president tried to impose Islamic law, more Bibles were sold than before, more people signed up for Bible correspondence courses, and more accepted Christ as Savior.

In neighboring Afghanistan, after the mujahideen civil war and the rise of the Taliban who tried to enforce Islamic law, many Afghans became refugees and as refugees accepted Christ as Savior. When an Islamic resurgence occurred and took a militant form and/or tried to impose Islamic law and there was an attractive Christian presence, receptivity to the gospel resulted, followed by persecution.

Catastrophes: Be they of natural or human causes, catastrophes have provided occasions for the Church to provide cups of cold water in Christ’s name — especially in South Asia where cyclones and tsunamis inundated coastal lands. Christians have expressed God’s love to victims who, by experiencing that love for their physical needs, also welcome it for their spiritual needs.

Migrations: As refugees, new urbanites, or immigrants to the West, Muslims have new needs and are often open to new ideas. Many refugees from the Iranian Revolution found Christ as Savior. And a majority of Muslims who followed Christ in Syria



and Lebanon in recent years were new arrivals. Those who did not respond in that initial window of opportunity tended to become secularized, uninterested in spiritual matters, or disillusioned, in which case they often joined Islamist movements.

Desire for Blessing (*Baraka*): As evangelicals have become increasingly open to ministries of healing and power — coupled with biblical teaching on the role of suffering — the gospel has been seen to meet the heart needs of Muslim masses.

Ethnic and Cultural Resurgence: Muslim ethnic groups are often suppressed by their own coreligionists, and in many cases they become more receptive to the gospel. Additionally, Christian workers have understood that the gospel can be effectively translated into various cultural forms, and they have found greater freedom to use vocabularies and forms of worship that felt indigenous. This has resulted in significant growth in the numbers of Muslims following Christ in many regions.

This is a powerful reminder of the many ways in which our sovereign God is reaching out to Muslims. Take time during your prayer sessions to ask the Lord to work in each of the five categories listed above.



Muslim World News



Iran

PERSECUTION OF UNDERGROUND CHURCH

A Christian couple was flogged in Iran for participating in an "underground Church", an Iranian Christian group said in a report on its website earlier this week. The unnamed couple were arrested on September 21, 2005, the report said, adding that a Revolutionary Court reviewed their case in July 2007. Even though the couple had decided to marry seven years ago, the country's marriage laws — which prohibit the union of ex-Muslims and members of other religious minorities — prevented them from obtaining a certificate of marriage. The report said that the woman was born a Christian in an Assyrian-Iranian family and the man was a convert to Christianity prior to getting married. The court ruled that both the man and the woman were *Mortad*, a description of someone who has committed apostasy by leaving Islam. — *AINA*

Indonesia

CHRISTIANS GUILTY OF QUR'ANIC BLASPHEMY

An Indonesian court has sentenced 41 Christian leaders to five years imprisonment on charges of blasphemy because they openly prayed that Muslims "come to know Christ," local Christians and a well-informed human rights group told *BosNewsLife*. Voice Of the Martyrs (VOM) Australia said the Christians, who are linked to the international mission group Campus Crusade for Christ, participated in a 2006 prayer gathering in the Indonesian province of East Java. "They prayed for their nation, asking that all Muslim leaders come to know Christ. Video footage of the prayer meeting was leaked to a Muslim organization," VOM said. The organization quoted local sources as saying that the 41 believers "have been found guilty of abusing the Qur'an." "The judge sentenced them to five years in prison." — *BosNewsLife*

Eritrea

GOSPEL SINGER GRANTED ASYLUM IN DENMARK

An Eritrean Christian gospel singer who was tortured and detained without charge for two years has been granted asylum in Denmark. Helen Berhane was imprisoned inside a metal shipping container and beaten in an effort to make her recant her faith. She took refuge in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, before being granted asylum. Ms Berhane uses a wheelchair because of severe injuries to her legs and feet sustained in prison beatings. Berhane's account of the treatment she suffered is echoed by the testimony of hundreds of others persecuted for their faith. Prisoners say they are routinely subjected to extremes of heat and cold, denied water and sanitation, according to testimony collected from exiles by Release Eritrea, an organization that campaigns for the rights of religious minorities.— *BBC*

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correctly, not understand its meaning. The Muslim priests are the ones responsible for revealing the teachings of the texts. This means that most Muslims really don't know for themselves what is in the Qur'an. All they know is what the Muslim scholars choose to tell them. But that's beginning to change. There is a growing trend in modern times to translate the Qur'an into local languages.

The traditions are a different matter. They are mostly viewed as a collection of sayings and deeds of Islam's prophet. Thus, for centuries, Muslims have felt free to translate this material into local languages. As a result, Muslims worldwide can read their traditions with understanding, and in most cases, are more familiar with the content of the traditions than with the content of the Qur'an. And so, let's first examine some of the more common traditions that shape a Muslim's belief about Jesus.

Muslims believe God first sent Jesus to be a messenger only to the community of Israelites, not to the whole world. Muslims reserve the honor of "universal messenger" for Muhammad only. Furthermore, most Muslims believe God rescued Jesus from the humiliation of the cross by lifting him into the second level of heaven. But someday, he will return.

Thus, much of what Islamic tradition says about Jesus pertains to the Last Days. Muslims also believe in a resurrection and a judgment, and that the end time will be signaled by universal signs. One of them will be the

reappearance on earth of Jesus who will engage in several important activities. First of all, he will descend from heaven upon a mosque in Damascus, wearing two red garments, and supported by the wings of angels. He will lead Muslims in their prayer in the mosque. Then he will pursue the "False Messiah" (Ad-Dajjal Al-Masih). This false messiah will be a hideous monster of a man who will lead people astray from God by performing miracles, such as raising people from the dead. He will have the power to entice people with the miracles of rain and crops, and punish them with the scourge of drought and famine.

Jesus will ultimately overtake this false messiah and slay him with his spear. Then he will justly rule the world according to the law of the Qur'an. He will destroy all the crosses, to prove that the story of the crucifixion was a hoax and that God really saved Jesus from death. He will kill all the pigs so that people can no longer violate God's command to abstain from pork. He will defeat the forces of Gog and Magog, barbarians from the steppes of Central Asia. He will marry and have children, live for forty-five years, die a natural death, and be buried next to Islam's prophet, whose grave is in Medina, Saudi Arabia. Then Jesus will be raised with everyone else on the Day of Judgment, and will join all the other prophets lined up behind Islam's prophet, Muhammad, who alone will have the privilege of interceding on behalf of his followers for God's mercy.

This is the picture that Islamic tradition paints of Jesus the Messiah. Unfortunately, it is a false and terribly distorted picture. But this is what most Muslims know about Jesus. Furthermore, many Muslims think this is the Qur'anic version of Jesus. But unbeknown to most Muslims, the Qur'an conveys an entirely different picture. Although the Qur'an likewise fails to identify Jesus as Savior of the world in whose name alone there is forgiveness of sins, it does point to a far more prominent figure. Let us look at the following examples which are preceded by their Qur'anic references.

3:45; 4:172 and 39:75: Jesus is held in honor in the



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hereafter as he was in the world, and is in the company of those nearest to God. According to the Qur'an, those nearest to God are the angels who encircle God's throne.

4:158: God raised Jesus up to Himself where He (God) is exalted in power and wisdom. Muslims believe heaven has seven levels and that God's throne sits above these levels. Remember, the traditions place Jesus in the second level, but the Qur'an places Jesus where God is, exalted above the heavens (Phil. 2:9).

19:19: Jesus is a gift and a holy son (Lu. 1:35 and Acts 3:14).

19:20: Jesus is born of a virgin (Lu. 1:34).

19:21: He is a universal sign from God (there is no mention here of "for the Israelite community only").

19:21: He is a mercy from God for humankind (Lu. 24:47).

19:30: He is the Servant of God (Isa. 42:1).

23:50: Mary's miracle birth of Jesus is a sign to all of humankind.

43:61: Jesus is the sign of the Last Days (Ma. 24:30).

4:171: He is the Word of God (Rev. 19:13).

4:171: He is a Spirit from God (1 Cor. 15:45).

3:49 and 5:110: He has the power of miracles to open blind eyes, cure lepers, and raise the dead. These are the only references where the Qur'an mentions the ministry of healing and they are associated with Jesus (Mt. 4:23-24).

3:49 and 5:110: Jesus even has the power to create. These verses describe Jesus taking clay, fashioning it into the shape of a bird, and breathing into it whereby the bird of clay comes to life. Though this peculiar story can be traced to the traditions of the early Church, what is of major importance is not the origin of the story, but the fact that the Qur'an attributes to Jesus' creation power, something which Muslims ascribe only to deity. But that's not all. Elsewhere in the Qur'an is a passage describing God's creation of man (15:28-29). In that description, God takes clay, fashions it into shape, and breathes into it the breath of life. Notice the three elements of this creation miracle of Almighty God: the clay, the fashioning of the clay, and the breathing into the clay the breath of life.

These are the same three elements the Qur'an uses to describe the creation miracle of Jesus.

As you can see, the Qur'an has many significant things to say about Jesus. In fact, it even points to Jesus' divine nature by referring to him as God's Word and a Spirit from God. Of course, Islam's religious system is careful to keep these things hidden from the Muslim masses, and attempts to dilute Jesus' exalted status by injecting its own interpretations. Nevertheless, perhaps the most helpful passage among these selections is the one that speaks about the healing power of Jesus. Now you know how the three Muslim doctors knew about Jesus' ability to perform miracles. It was their recollection of this Qur'anic description that prompted them to invoke Jesus' name. And it was the miracle that led them to faith in Christ.

Remember the sermon of Peter on the Day of Pentecost: "Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him ..." (Acts 2:27). Still today, God uses miracles to convince Muslims of Jesus' uniqueness and power. In many cases, when Muslims see a demonstration of power in the name of Jesus that heals the disease of the body, their faith expands to believe that Jesus also has the power to heal the disease of the heart — the disease of sin.

We do not know how this material about Jesus found its way into the Qur'an, the sacred scriptures of Islam. We do know, however, that in regard to all people of all nations, God "has not left himself without testimony" (Acts 14:17). As increasing numbers of Muslim people become literate, and as more Qur'ans are translated into local languages, more and more Muslims will become attracted to him whom the Qur'an refers to as *Al-Masih Isa ibnu Maryam* (The Messiah Jesus, son of Mary). And who knows? Perhaps someday, through faith and prayer, you will be the one to personally lead a Muslim friend or neighbor from the Qur'anic picture of Jesus the healer to the biblical revelation of "Jesus the Savior" in whose name there is forgiveness of sins and eternal life!



MANGA KANURI

The Manga Kanuri form a sub-group of the Kanuri people, who number about 4.5 million and live in the Lake Chad and Sahel desert region of Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon. The Kanuri tribes have practiced Islam for more than 1,000 years.

Today about 700,000 Manga Kanuri live in the region — 500,000 in Niger and 200,000 in Nigeria. Most of them are subsistence farmers. During the region's three months of rain, these proud people struggle to raise enough food — mostly millet, sorghum, and peanuts — to feed their family and animals for the entire year. Flocks of sheep and goats supplement the Manga's meager existence. Some Manga Kanuri also raise cattle and camels.

Observers say the Kanuri are closed to outside influences, especially the gospel. However, Christians trying to reach the Manga Kanuri report they are friendly, helpful and open.

Portions of the Old Testament have been translated. The New Testament is available in the Yerwa Kanuri dialect, which is understood by some Mangas. Christian workers also are beginning to translate Bible stories into Manga for use in chronological storying of the Bible. The Manga Kanuri, former guardians of an empire, strongly guard their Muslim faith. In fact, the Manga are considered “0 percent evangelized,” according to evangelical missions researchers.

The handful of Manga Kanuri Christians are praying that entire households and villages of Manga people will become Christians at the same time in order to provide safety and support in the face of possible religious persecution. They're praying, too, that West African Christians from other ethnic groups will evangelize their Kanuri friends.

Pray that...

- ...God will open the hearts of the Manga Kanuri.
- ...God will save key Kanuri leaders who will share the love of Christ with their own people.
- ...that missions organizations will make an inspired effort to evangelize the Manga Kanuri.





JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

**PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!**



Friday, January 4, 2008. Please pray

...for Christian gospel singer Helen Berhane of Eritrea. After prolonged incarceration and torture, Berhane has been given asylum in Denmark. Pray that her testimony will be heard across the world.

...for the country of Turkmenistan. Pray for religious liberty in the wake of President Niyazov's death, despite ominous signs of repression from the new regime.

...for a married couple flogged in Iran for attending an underground church. The husband is an MBB (Muslim Background Believer). Pray for underground churches across Iran.

Friday, January 11, 2008. Please pray

...for 41 Indonesian Christians sentenced to five years in prison. They were convicted of Qur'anic blasphemy after praying that Indonesian government leaders would find Christ.

...for MBBs secretly following Christ in Libya. Their stories seldom filter across Libyan borders, but they endure, worshipping Jesus in secret. Pray for their well-being and spiritual strength.

...for Christian witness to the Kurds in Northern Iraq. The region continues in turmoil. Pray that the gospel would reach these often forgotten people.

Friday, January 18, 2008. Please pray

...for Allabe Kaku Chibok of Nigeria. Because of his conversion to Christianity, an Islamic court has awarded custody of his three daughters (ages 11, 12, and 14) to Muslim relatives. Pray for divine intervention so he might regain his children.

...for freedom of worship in Syria. President Assad, an Alawite Muslim, maintains a close watch on the Syrian Church.

...for churches and the clergy in Iraq. In Baghdad alone, seven orthodox priests have been kidnapped and tortured so far in 2007.

Friday, January 25, 2008. Please pray

...for a woman in Iran, sentenced to stoning after an adultery conviction. She is the mother of three children. There are currently eight women in Iranian prisons waiting to be executed by stoning.

...for God to fill the hearts of Malaysian Muslims with a strong desire for progress and liberty, so that the present trend towards Islamization might be reversed.

...for innocents caught up in Sudan's Darfur crisis. Darfur is often a victim of "news fatigue", but the troubles continue and earnest prayer is needed for so many unfortunates affected by the conflict.

**I URGE, THEN, FIRST OF ALL THAT REQUESTS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND
THANKSGIVING BE MADE FOR EVERYONE. —1 TIMOTHY 2:1, NIV**



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

***PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!***



Friday, February 1, 2008. Please pray

...for the repeal of the grossly unjust and widely abused Blasphemy Laws in Pakistan. The laws make it extremely difficult for the gospel to be preached.

...that God will give wisdom to Christians in Saudi Arabia – virtually all expatriate workers – to know how to share the gospel and worship without unnecessarily endangering lives.

...for Turks to resist the government's leanings toward a return to a more fundamental Islam.

Friday, February 8, 2008. Please pray

...that despite persecution, God may give the Christians of southern Nigeria a deep burden for their Muslim countrymen in the north.

...for thousands of Muslims to make a decision for Jesus Christ as they receive witness through satellite television.

...for Muslims in the Arabian Gulf. Pray that through expatriate workers, the gospel of Jesus Christ will be heard by many.

Friday, February 15, 2008. Please pray

...for MBB believers in Chittagong, Bangladesh. They are a tiny minority in one of the poorest areas of the one poorest countries on earth.

...for Egypt's growing number of converts from Islam. Pray for courage and that they will soon have religious liberty.

...for persecuted believers in Iraq to find strength and support in solidarity across ethnic and denominational lines — may the body of Christ in Iraq grow in love, faith and unity.

Friday, February 22, 2008. Please pray

...for God to bless Afghanistan's secret believers and keep them safe so the Afghan Church may live and grow to be an instrument of blessing (salt), transformation (yeast), and truth-giving (light) for the nation.

...for Muslim teenagers and youths across the globe. Pray that they would have unprecedented opportunity to hear the truth and love of Jesus Christ.

...that God would continue to undergird the underground Church in Iran.

Friday, February 29, 2008. Please pray

...for God to protect and sustain the persecuted Church in Bangladesh.

...that Sudan will stop applying Islamic law in cases involving non-Muslims.

...for Muslims living in the West. Pray that through their conversions and testimonies, the gospel of Jesus Christ will be spread into the Islamic world.