

The Crucifixion and Islam



by Harry Morin

Easter is a joyful time for celebration that centers on the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Good News is that Christ has risen from the dead to rule as Savior and Lord in the hearts of those who embrace Him in faith. This is the news we need to share with the people of the world, including the Muslim people who represent our neighbors, our co-workers, or our fellow citizens. But sharing this news with Muslim people is not so easy.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle that keeps Muslims from accepting the truth of the Easter holiday is the narrative of the crucifixion. Muslims adamantly refuse to accept the teaching that Jesus died on the cross, and insist that the whole story of the crucifixion is a hoax to deceive the Christian community. For them, the crucifixion speaks of

a weak God who failed to rescue one of his choice servants from execution by pagan Roman soldiers. For Muslims, this is unthinkable. Muslims claim that their own scripture, the Qur'an, refutes such a ridiculous notion in order to save the world from religious heresy.

If the story of the crucifixion is a hoax, and if the Qur'an came to correct this false doctrine, then it would only be reasonable to expect the Qur'an to have a great number of verses declaring that Jesus never died on a cross, just as there are many verses declaring the resurrection of the dead and the Day of Judgment.

The Qur'an has over 6,000 verses. Would it be too much to expect a mere 1 percent of all its verses to address the

continued on page 4



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
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He is not here

*But the angel said to the women, Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. **He is not here**, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you. So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples (Matthew 28:5-8).*

Muslims believe Jesus was a great prophet — but deny the cardinal Scriptural beliefs about his divinity, crucifixion and resurrection. When facing a similar mindset on the Day of Pentecost, Peter stood and said:

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know — this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified (Acts 2:22-24;32-33;36).

Peter was clear about the certainty of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. And it was a clear proclamation of these truths that produced the episode of conviction in the hearts of Peter's listeners: *Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and*



the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do? (Acts 2:37). Experience teaches us that it is when Muslim seekers ponder the full truth about Jesus' divinity, crucifixion and resurrection that they are "cut to the heart."

While we recognize the importance of being wise in our presentations of Jesus to Muslims, it is critical that we not compromise the essence of Scriptural truth.



Muslim World News



Turkey

REGULATIONS HOBBLE PROTESTANT CHURCHES

In the city of Samsun, the beleaguered congregation of the Agape Church Association struggles against local Islamic hostility. In the last three years Agape church members have endured false allegations and verbal abuse from Muslim and nationalist locals. The pastor has received death threats and their building has been vandalized, all in an attempt to stop the 30 or so Christians from meeting. The church was threatened with a lawsuit because members had hung verses of Scripture and a cross on the walls. The Provincial Directorate of Associations inspected the building and demanded removal of the offending articles. The Alliance of Protestant Churches of Turkey (TEK) wrote a report on the obstacles and challenges facing Christian congregations wishing to construct or reclassify church buildings. – *Compass*

Nigeria

SIX PASTORS KILLED, 40 CHURCHES RAZED IN JOS

The murderous rioting triggered by Muslim attacks on Christians and their property on Nov. 28-29, 2008, left six pastors dead, at least 500 other people killed and 40 churches destroyed. In addition, more than 25,000 persons were displaced in the two days of violence and mayhem, according to the National Emergency Management Agency. The violence began as outrage over suspected voter fraud in local elections quickly hit the religious fault line that quakes from time to time in this city located between the Islamic north and Christian south, as angry Muslims took aim at Christian sites rather than at political targets. Police and troops reportedly killed approximately 400 rampaging Muslims in an effort to quell the unrest, and Islamists shot, slashed or stabbed to death most of more than 100 Christians killed. – *Compass*

Egypt

CUSTODY BATTLES BRING ISLAMIC LAW INTO QUESTION

Egyptian human rights workers are looking to international bodies for support against Muslim judges who use *Sharia* (Islamic law) to undermine custody rights of Christian mothers. Despite provisions such as Egyptian law's Article 20, which states that minors should remain with their mother until age 15, judges consistently rule in favor of Muslim fathers in custody disputes with Christian mothers. Islamist judges often resort to Article 2 of the Egyptian Constitution, which states that "principles of Islamic law are the principal source of legislation." *Sharia*-based decisions that rule contrary to Egyptian statutory law have led the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), a human rights organization, to protest before the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR). – *Compass*

The Crucifixion

continued from

issue of Jesus' death? Surely, we could expect at least 10 verses to clearly teach that Jesus never died on a cross. That would help to resolve this controversy. And most Muslims would agree that, yes, the Qur'an most definitely has 10 references to support their claim.

Now for an amazing discovery: Out of a total of over 6,000 verses in the Qur'an, there is only a single passage that speaks on the issue of the crucifixion. It reads as follows:

That they (the Jews) said (in boast) "We killed Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, the Apostle of God" — But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not. Nay, God raised him up unto Himself; and God is exalted in Power, Wise.

Surat-un Nisaa (4):157

Look carefully at the passage. The subject of the passage is not even Jesus, but the Jews; and what it clearly says is that the Jews did not kill or crucify Jesus. But nowhere does the passage declare that Jesus never died on a cross. And this is the only verse about the crucifixion.



The phrase "but so it was made to appear to them" is not clear. As a result, Muslim commentators have proposed several theories regarding the supposed rescue of Jesus from the cross. One favorite tradition is that God changed the appearance of Judas the traitor to look like Jesus so that it was really Judas who was nailed to the cross, not Jesus. "After all," reasons the Muslim, "why would a just God punish Jesus when Judas was the guilty one?" But no such story about Judas is found in the pages of the Qur'an.

The phrase in question could just as well be explained in this way. The Jews plotted against Jesus and boasted they had put an end to Him. It certainly appeared that their scheme had succeeded and that the ministry of Jesus was silenced for good. But God was also planning. Though Jesus died, God raised Him to life to prove to the Jews that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. He was the one who God anointed to be

on and Islam

from page 1



Savior and Ruler of the world.

According to the Bible, it was God's good plan that Jesus suffer the agonizing death of the cross. This death of Jesus was to reveal the suffering of God over the continual sin and rebellion of the human race whom God lovingly created to worship and adore Him. In relation to God's plan, the death of Jesus was to be the fulfillment of all animal sacrifice. This is why Jesus is called "the Lamb of God." His sacrificial and atoning death was to provide redemption and forgiveness of sin, and more importantly, entry into the presence of God. It was Jesus who was to lead man into the presence of God, and not some four-footed beast. The animal sacrifice was only a symbol of the far purer sacrifice that God would provide in His appointed time.

And so all of this was the plan of God, not the plan

of the Jews. The Jews did not place Jesus on the cross; but rather God did, in order to reveal His plan of salvation for all humankind. To prove to the world that the cross was God's plan to foil the scheme of Satan, God raised Jesus from the dead, exalted Him into heaven, and seated Him at the right side of His throne.

It is especially important to note that the Qur'an does mention the death of Jesus as follows:

So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again).

Surat-u Maryam (19):33

Most Muslims accept the birth of Jesus and the raising of Jesus into heaven. It should not be so difficult then for them to believe that somewhere in between, Jesus died, as clearly indicated by the above Qur'anic verse. This verse certainly agrees with the teaching of the Bible that Jesus was born, died, and was raised to life. Unfortunately the Qur'an does not tell us how Jesus died. This, of course, poses a question and the Qur'an itself gives clear instruction for those in doubt:

If thou wert in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading

continued on page 6



The Crucifixion and Islam

continued from page 5



the Book from before thee (ask the People of the Book).

Surat-u Yunus (10):94

The People of the Book (in this case, the followers of Jesus) know how Jesus died because the Bible very clearly gives the answer. The following verses should remove any further doubt from the mind of the Muslim inquirer:

*Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took twelve disciples aside and said to them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man (the Messiah) will be betrayed to the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles (non-Jews) **to be mocked and flogged and crucified**. On the third day he will be raised to life.*

Matthew 20:17-19

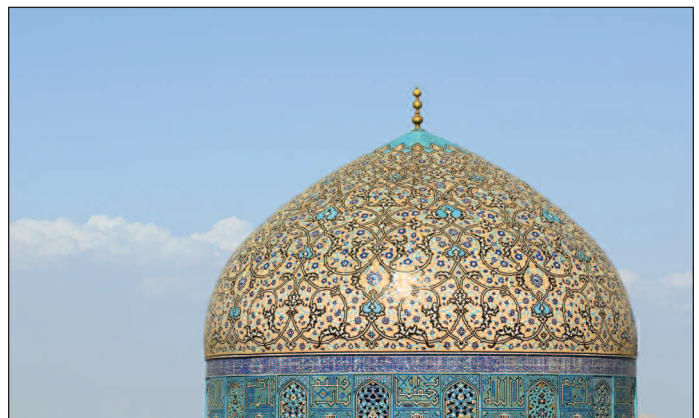
Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man

*(Jesus) was handed over to you **by God's set purpose and foreknowledge**; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.*

Acts 2:22-24

God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God.

Acts 2:32-33





JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

*PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!*



Friday, March 6, 2009. Please pray

...for missionaries and Christian workers ministering to North African Muslims in France and Spain.
...for Muslims in Germany. Islamic influence in the country continues to increase: The largest mosque in Germany is now open in Cologne. Pray that German Christians will reach out with Christ's love.
...for the people of Kyrgyzstan. Their parliament recently passed a restrictive religion law, and if the president signs it, a church will need a minimum of 200 members to register. Pray for freedom of worship.

Friday, March 13, 2009. Please pray

...for Christians in Iraq. Pray for the many Iraqis following Jesus, even as they often face a threat of violence or death.
...that the gospel will be heard and read by Turkish Muslims. Turkey now has over 12 million Internet users. Pray that this medium will provide greater opportunities for Turkish Muslims to be touched by the gospel.
...that God will continue to raise up expatriate Christian workers to reach Muslims across the Islamic world.

Friday, March 20, 2009. Please pray

...for MBBs (Muslim Background Believers) in Iran. The Iranian parliament is reviewing a bill that would make apostasy punishable by death.
...for Indonesian elections scheduled for April of 2009. Pray that the results would help blunt the growth of radical Islam.
...for MBBs in Libya. The government continues to deal harshly with MBBs, and many languish in prison.

Friday, March 27, 2009. Please pray

...for political rulers across the Muslim world. Pray that through divine intervention, windows of opportunity would open, allowing millions of Muslims to truly have an opportunity to learn about Jesus Christ.
...for Muslims of the Fulani tribe in Burkina Faso. Pray for Christian workers currently engaged in witness to the Fulani.
...for protection of the Church in Chad. Violence between government and rebel forces continues.

***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, April 3, 2009. Please pray

...against Sharia banking in Europe and the United States. Muslim influence through Islamic banking is on the steady increase in the West.

...for the gospel of Jesus Christ to be heard by Muslims in Syria.

...for MBBs across the Muslim world. Pray they would receive encouragement and protection from the Lord. Also, pray they would have access to Christian literature and fellowship.

Friday, April 10, 2009. Please pray

...for the Muslims of Somalia. Fighting continues to destabilize the region, and daily life is a struggle for millions of Somalians. Approximately one-third of the population is dependent on foreign food aid.

...for the Muslims of Gaza to hear witness of Jesus Christ. Pray that despite political turmoil, the gospel would be heard in this troubled spot.

...for radio and satellite broadcasts reaching Saudi Arabia. Pray for a genuine move of the Lord in this closed country.

April 17, 2009. Please pray

...for indigenous Christian pastors across the Muslim world. Many toil under a heavy burden of danger, meager pay, and neglect. Pray that God would embolden these invaluable laborers.

...for MBBs in Yemen. They face death and threats of violence as they testify about Jesus.

...for Christian workers in the Netherlands and Belgium. Pray they would seize opportunities to witness to Muslims that might not otherwise hear about the love of Jesus.

April 24, 2009. Please pray

...for an untold number of MBBs being persecuted across the Muslim world.

...for the millions of Muslims attending mosques today. Pray the Lord would reveal his love to them in miraculous ways.

...for the government in Turkey. Saudi Arabia maintains a heavy Islamist influence on Turkey's power structure by pumping in billions of dollars in aid money each year.