

A Christian's guide to the Koran, Lesson 20, No friendship with infidels!

Weblog and pdf of the following lesson are available at this website.

Today we are covering the end of Sura 2, "the cow" , and the beginning of Sura 3, called "The family of Imran." We'll go through verse 31.

You may recall that a story of Abraham and some animals and a dream is recorded in Genesis 15. The Koran has its own special version of that story, preceded by some extra "revelation" about an unknown king with whom Abraham dialogued. The patriarch is able to convince the monarch of Allah's great power by causing him to die for 100 years, then resurrecting him. The monarch, back from the dead, believes that only a day or two has passed, and his waiting donkey is proof of that to him. The only proof of the much longer absence is that Abraham says it happened. And of course the only proof that this dialogue ever took place is that Muhammad says it did.

There seems to be no connection here to the reality of the man Abraham that we have come to know in Scripture. Abraham was not a miracle worker. He actually struggled with the promises of God, but eventually believed God and received Isaac, who is the true miracle in the Abraham story.

This unusual incident is used to introduce the idea of resurrection, which Muhammad turns into a question in Abraham's mind. "My lord, show me how you give life to the dead." He directs the question to Allah, and Allah answers with a story that looks a little like the carcass incident in Genesis. But in Genesis, Abraham is not questioning resurrection. He is asking about his inheritance in the land of Canaan. And God makes it clear to His man that certainly this land will be his.

There follows a lengthy - by Koranic standards - discussion of the wisdom of proper use of material things. The sentiments are largely in keeping with Christian thought, until verse 27, when Allah purportedly links almsgiving with atonement for sin.

The Muslim, alas! is not permitted to know of Christ's full atonement for the sins of mankind, for in the Koran, Jesus does not die for our sins. Therefore a human-generated atonement must be engineered, as in Rome and all the great religions of the world. Here is one step in that atonement, secretly and generously giving to the poor. While we must applaud the action, the motivation is not of God.

Verse 275ff now demands that Muslims not charge interest on loans, on pain of eternal hell-fire. Mixed in with the serious judgment over this sin is a statement that once more makes Allah stand out as very different from the God of the Bible, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father. "Allah does not love every sinful infidel."

Au contraire, Muslim believer. The true God loves this world passionately. He saw the trouble we were in, the sin we had committed, and He wanted to do something about it. That's why Jesus had to come into the world, to give His life a ransom for sin. While it is true that believing in a god who does not love sinners coupled to a belief that robs us of the blood of Jesus is consistent, it is consistently false.

God does love sinners. Jesus, Who is God, came into the world to save sinners. Jesus ate and drank with sinners. And while mankind was still in its sin, the God-Man died for their sins. To think that we must muddle through on our own, doing our best to be good little Muslims or good little Christians, is a dark thought, and is what makes the traveling through this Volume a very difficult journey. Nevertheless, armed with Jesus' Light, let's move on.

Next Muhammad enjoins on his people to be sure that they make records of all financial transactions regarding debt. That's good. Preferably, two male witnesses of the proceedings are called for, but "if there were not two men, so one man and two women..." I'll let you think about that one awhile.

In verse 285, heavenly messengers are lumped together into one basket. Messengers come from God, whether they be angels, the books, prophets, they all cause the people to believe. "We do not differentiate between any of his messengers." Since we know that Isa (Jesus) is one of the messengers of which he speaks here, this is a serious misstatement of one who is claiming to be God's voice.

Just for the record, Christians do differentiate. We say that "God spoke to us in times past by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son." Two baskets for us. Jesus alone in one, and everybody else in the other.

This longest of all the suras ends with a prayer for victory over the infidels. One thing that unites Muslims is the fight against the whole non-Muslim world, the infidel. This outward look keeps many of them from looking inward and hearing those voices that tell them something is missing on the inside, where it really counts. Victory over self and sin is not a theme of the Koran.

Though we Christians too have a common enemy, and ours is not on the earth but in the heavenlies, we must here be reminded that the true battle is to fight off every thought, every distraction, that would keep us from the supremacy of Jesus in our own personal life, and then in the lives of those around us.

Sura 2, the "cow", is ended. Let's move quickly to the somewhat shorter Sura 3, entitled "The family of Imran".

This chapter opens with a declaration that the books of Moses, and the Gospel of Jesus, and the present stream of revelation in the Koran, are all of equal value, and are to be heeded by the people of God. But, as we covered in the introductory materials, Muslims teach that the books we call the Bible, which would include the words of Jesus and Moses, have all been corrupted through the years, and only the Koran comes down to us pure. The documentation points elsewhere, but I refer you to the intros for that study.

Verses 7ff let us know that while some of the Koran is quite clear, much of it is ambiguous. With this I must concur. But Muhammad seems to be making the point that Jesus made when He spoke about why He communicated with parables. There are those who will hear but do not hear. They are without excuse. They had a chance to hear, but refused to follow through in seeking the Lord, and therefore either ignored the Lord altogether or came up with interpretations that excused them from responsibility.

"But none will remember except those who have understanding," says the author. And these infidels (there is that word again!) will be the "fuel of the fire" of hell. Remember, he says, Pharaoh did not believe our verses either, and look what happened to him. More serious curses

follow. Then to lighten things up a bit, the promise of multiple ever-virgin wives for the faithful is repeated soon afterward (verse 15).

Verse 19 declares, "Surely the religion with Allah is Islam." Pretty clear. He then adds that Bible-believers are in agreement with that, except some who heard the knowledge of Islam and began to envy. Envy what is not clear in the text.

Now those who fall away from Allah's verses and actually kill Muslim prophets are to be given the good news of a painful torment. Not clear what is good about that news. But nothing but eternal judgment for such as these.

Because of the holy separateness of the Muslim people, they are told in no uncertain terms, "Do not take infidels for friends (verse 28)." We must not condemn this concept. It is actually one of ours. Friendship with the world, by which we mean all the non-Christian system created by Satan, filled as it is with the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, is all forbidden to us. Unfortunately Western preachers have all but stopped talking about this separation, but God's Word is eternal, and speaks still whether we hear it or not.

How then shall the world become Muslim, or Christian as the case may be, if we are never to mingle with the world's peoples? Well, mingling is allowed, and necessary. It is close friendship that is forbidden. Beyond this, both religions have mandates to go into the rest of the world and conquer.

It is in this conquest that we differ, although Christianity has a seriously un-Christian history in this regard. Islam, like the Church, goes everywhere preaching its message. Like us also, Islam tries to spread its influence by every form of giftedness possible, infiltrating all the kingdoms of men with example and word.

For the church, when it has preached the Gospel and lived the life, and some have come out as Kingdom people, the task is complete until Jesus comes, takes all the Kingdom people of all time and sets up His Kingdom. But Islam looks for a Kingdom now. When verbal and exemplary and infiltrative devices fail, it has one more tactic, namely, the sword. Think Romanism. In country after country Muslims have slaughtered and pillaged their way to power when their ideas were refused. As long as the Koran is the Koran, this practice will continue.

No, definitely no friendship with unbelievers!

Those who do not go astray are promised in verse 31 the forgiveness of their sins, because, he says, he is forgiving and merciful. But in the very next verse he reminds us that he does not love the infidel. We have covered above this crying difference between Allah and Jehovah. Though our God must judge the sinner, oh how He loves him!

By now, certainly someone has to be asking, why is chapter 3 named after one "Imran"? Who is Imran? The answer will at once be totally recognizable to all Christians as well as totally confusing. Next time we shall meet him, and his daughter, as Muhammad tries to tell us his version of the coming of Jesus into the world. Don't miss it.

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