

A Christian's guide to the Koran, Lesson 35, How to treat Muhammad, and "Satanic" verses

(Audio and pdf available on this website.)

Today, suras 49-60

Beginning with this lesson, I will dispense with giving you the name of each sura, unless it is truly remarkable. Be assured that every sura is named for a particular reason, even if obscure to us.

Sura 49 commences with directions for the treatment of the prophet. "Do not raise your voice above the voice of the prophet. And do not speak loud to him as you speak loud to one another..." One must imagine the dynamic of standing in a crowd and hearing the prophet himself say these words.

In the next section there is a bit of information that reminds one of the final chapters of the epistles of Paul to Thessalonians, Ephesians, Colossians. Practical, even uplifting rules of conduct. Don't scoff at others. Don't defame anyone. Don't backbite, for "does any one of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother." Well put.

But for those of us who have trekked this weary journey, this may not be enough to make us forget the vengeful cruelty we have heard for so many miles.

Then we are reminded that true believers perform holy war with their money and their lives. Yes, these are the preferred ways of jihad. Spend. Live. Infiltrate. Teach. And when all else fails, slaughter.

At the end of sura 50, another way to torment the lost. The "garden" will be somehow brought near to hell-sufferers to let them know how it might have been.

And now a word about creation. It was six days after all. Not sure which version Muslims are to believe. This sura was in Mecca, but so was the eight-day version.

Sura 51 takes us once more to Abraham and Lot. In this episode, God is visiting Abraham and giving him a report of what he did to Sodom, including the saving of his nephew. Backwards from the Bible story, and from Muhammad's last accounting.

So over and over the corruption is repeated. Islam accuses Christians and Jews of corrupting their own texts to such a degree that Muhammad had to come and clarify all. But the obvious truth is that the Scriptures were in fine shape, thank you, and this book hacks away constantly at the truths revealed so many centuries before. We pass back the charge. No returns, please.

52. Allah is so insistent that the torment of all infidels is imminent that he swears five times in succession to start this chapter. By the mountain, by the book, by the "inhabited house", by the thrown sea, and by the raised ceiling, that is, by all of his creation.

Our God has sworn too, but never by something that was created. He can only swear by Himself, His Name, His Word.

We come then to the famous "Satanic verses", or what used to be such, in sura 53. I imagine there are several explanations for it all. This is what I have found:

Muhammad was stressed by the pressure of paganism in Mecca. He wanted somehow to compromise with them. So he mentions the names of three of their goddesses, calls them "intermediaries", and states in one of his recitations clearly that their intercession can be very helpful.

Later he changed his mind about all this, and simply stated that the Devil tempted him and he fell. Sorry. The verses were replaced, the explanation recorded, and the Koran moves on.

Which of course brings up the whole question we have asked from the beginning. Where did [the rest of] the Koran come from? Did he listen to the enemy more than once?

Muslims are told later in this sura that, regarding sexual sin, the idea is to avoid the "big" ones. Actual, full blown intimacy. The rest, "your lord is broad in his forgiveness." Once more the Koran fails to set a clear standard. Jesus did it so much better, because He knows the self-righteous games we play in justifying our behavior. So for Jesus, fornication starts with the mind, the desire. Not the temptation, but the entertaining of the temptation. That is sin. That needs repentance and forgiveness.

And our Lord too is broad in His mercy. For a truly repentant man, full-fledged adultery with murder as a cover-up can also be forgiven. Immediately.

Two more principles come to light in 53. "No bearer of a burden bears the burden of another." In Christ, we bear one another's burdens gladly.

And, "the human will have nothing except what he strives for." True enough about worldly progress. Absolutely false about salvation. "By grace you are saved through faith, and even that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God."

Come to think of it, our religion must sound pretty strange to outsiders, too!

Sura 54 begins with a direct quote from a poet. "The hour has approached and the moon has been split." Muslims here want to believe that it was Muhammad that split the moon. It was just poetry, folks. Nobody split the moon. Deeper meaning here...

I like Muhammad's description of the ark in which the waters carried Noah. He calls it "planks and nails."

Remember the Psalm that has repetition all the way through, "His mercy endures forever"? Sura 55 seems to replicate it. "So which of the bounties of your lord will you consider a lie?" Over and over and over. A long list of the bounties, or blessings is enumerated.

More details to heaven in sura 56: Beds made with inlaid gold. Immortal young boys serving as waiters? Wine that does not give headaches poured into goblets and jugs. Fruits and meats. The life of luxury. A continual feast. But the man who knows God here and especially there has that feast within his spirit. Joy unspeakable. Peace like a river. Rivers of living water. I'll go with Jesus' Heaven. There are folks alive today that have already inherited Muhammad's version, right on the earth. Have they nothing better to look for?

In 57, Allah is called the first and the last, a clear theft of Jesus' rank.

Muslims that do not spend for the sake of Allah are criticized, and an invitation is given to lend to Allah. He will receive double his investment, and that is considered generous.

Tongue cannot tell the reward promised for the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, the adopted sons of God. For what? Suffering a little? Dying? Sacrificing "stuff" to gain eternity? The interest rate on our "loan" cannot be calculated by human bankers.

Muhammad attempts in this same sura to tell the story of the wise and foolish virgins. The bad girls are accused of "sedition", doubt, deception, and pride. I suppose so. But it has a curious ring to it, this story.

Then Jesus is mentioned. Allah gave Him the Gospel, and compassion and mercy was in His followers. Well and good. But then, they invented the monastic life. Now most of them are transgressors. So much for Christianity.

I understand the monastic thing, don't you? But there were some good monks. Augustine. Luther. Those who seek the Lord will find Him, no matter where they begin.

A strange injunction in sura 58. A man who wants to take a divorced wife back again must free a slave. Failing that, he can fast for two months, and if that doesn't work out, he can feed sixty poor men.

Muhammad rushes to his own protection again later in this chapter. "When you talk privately, so do not talk privately in sin and transgression and disobedience toward the messenger...when you go to confer in private with the messenger, so give alms before your private talk..."

Don't talk about me behind my back. Don't talk to me face to face without an offering. He has become a king.

Remember Jesus' response to doubting Thomas, who "behind Jesus' back" said He would not believe unless he saw? Not a fair example I guess. You can't really talk behind Jesus' back. And did Nicodemus or the woman at the well have to pay a fee for a private conversation with the Lord of all the universe?

Sura 59 speaks of temporal judgment of unbelief, and of course contradicts all we know about our God, who sends the rain on the just and the unjust. The Psalmist (Psalm 73) was so discouraged to see the wicked flourishing but then remembered their end. With Muhammad it is judgment now and daily. He talks of all who have been made homeless, banished for their infidelity. This "merciful" Allah... Our God is patient, waiting for any possible movement toward Him before He calls it quitting time.

The same theme is picked up in sura 60, "Do not take my enemy and your enemy as friends." In Christ, they are still enemies, but they are loved, and often cease being God's enemies because of that love.

Sura 60 and today's work concludes with immigrant non-Muslim women that show up among the faithful. They are to be tested for their faith and never returned to the infidels. Yes, you may marry them if you pay them their wages. Translator Dakdok indicates that this sort of marriage is of the temporary contractual sort, not long term commitment. Hopefully this sort of arrangement was for another time and place. But it was still seriously immoral as a practice.

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