

Mary in Islam (part 3 of 3)

Description: The finale of a three-part article discussing the Islamic concept of Mary: Part 3: The birth of Jesus, and the importance and respect Islam pays to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

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The Birth of Jesus

On the onset of her labor, she was in extreme pain, both mentally and physically. How could a woman of such piety and nobility bear a child out of wedlock? We should mention here that Mary had a normal pregnancy which was no different than other women, and delivered her child as others do. In Christian belief, Mary did not suffer the pains of childbirth, for Christianity and Judaism regard menstruation and labor to be a curse upon women for the sin of Eve^[1]. Islam neither upholds this belief, nor the theory of 'Original Sin', but rather strongly emphasizes that none shall burden the sin of others:

"...No person earns any (sin) except against himself (only), and no bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another..." (Quran 6:164)

Not only that, but neither the Quran nor the Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, ever mention that it was Eve who ate from the tree and enticed Adam. Rather, the Quran places the blame on either Adam alone, or on them both:

"Then Satan whispered suggestions to *them both*...So he misled *them* with deception. Then when *they* tasted of the tree, that which was hidden from them of their shame (private parts) became manifest to them" (Quran 7:20-22)

Mary, due to her anguish and pain wished that she had never been created, and exclaimed:

"Would that I had died before this, and become something forgotten." (Quran 19:23)

After delivering the child, and when her distress could not be any more severe, the newborn babe, Jesus, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, cried out miraculously from beneath her, appeasing her and reassuring her that God will protect her:

"And he called to her from beneath her, 'Do not grieve; your Lord has provided beneath you a stream. And shake toward you the trunk of the palm tree; it will drop upon you ripe, fresh dates. So eat and drink and be contented. And if you see from among humanity

anyone, say, 'Indeed, I have vowed to the Most Merciful abstention, so I will not speak today to (any) person.'" (Quran 19:24-26)

Mary felt reassured. This was the first miracle performed at the hands of Jesus. He spoke reassuringly to his mother upon his birth, and once again when people saw her carrying her newborn baby. When they saw her, they accused her saying:

"O Mary, truly a strange thing you have brought!..." (Quran 19:27)

She merely pointed to Jesus, and he miraculously spoke, just as God had promised her upon annunciation.

"He shall speak to people while still in the cradle, and in manhood, and he shall be from the righteous." (Quran 3:46)

Jesus said to the people:

"I am indeed a slave of God. He has given me the Book and made me a Prophet, and He has made me blessed wherever I may be. And He has enjoined upon me prayers, and to pay the alms, as long as I live and (He has made me) kind to my mother, and He has not made me insolent, unblessed. And may Peace be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and on the Day I shall be raised to life." (Quran 19:30-33)

From here starts the episode of Jesus, his lifelong struggle to call people to the worship of God, evading the plots and plans of those Jews who would strive to kill him.

Mary in Islam

We have already discussed the great status which Islam gives to Mary. Islam gives her the status of being the most perfect of women created. In the Quran, no woman is given more attention than Mary even though all the prophets, with the exception of Adam, had mothers. Of the Quran's 114 chapters, she is among the eight people who have a chapter named after them, the nineteenth chapter "Maryam", which is Mary in Arabic. The third chapter in the Quran is named after her father, Imran (Heli). Chapters Maryam and Imran are among the most beautiful chapters in the Quran. In addition, Mary is the only woman specifically named in the Quran. The Prophet Muhammad said:

"The best women of the world are four: Mary the daughter of Heli, Aasiyah the wife of Pharaoh, Khadeejah bint Khuwaylid (The wife of the Prophet Muhammad), and Fatimah, the daughter of the Muhammad, the Messenger of God." (Al-Tirmidhi)

Despite all these merits which we have mentioned, Mary and her son Jesus were only human, and they had no characteristics which were beyond the realm of humanity. They were both created beings and both 'born' into this world. Although they were under the special care of God from committing grave sins (total protection - as other prophets - in the case of Jesus, and partial protection as other righteous persons in case of Mary, if we take the position that she was not a prophetess), they still were prone to make mistakes.

Unlike Christianity, which holds Mary to be faultless[2], none are given this quality of perfection except God Alone.

Islam commands the belief and implementation of strict monotheism; that none have any supernatural powers other than God, and that He alone deserves worship, devotion and adoration. Even though miracles may have occurred at the hands of the prophets and righteous people during their lives, they have no power to help themselves, let alone others, after their death. All humans are slaves of God and are in need of His help and mercy.

The same holds true for Mary. Although many miracles occurred in her presence, all this ceased after her death. Any claims people have made that they saw apparitions of the Virgin, or that people were saved from harm after invoking her, like those mentioned in apocryphal literature such as "Transitus Mariae", are mere apparitions made by Satan to steer people away from the worship and devotion to the One True God. Devotions such as 'the Hail Mary' praised upon the rosary and other acts of magnification, such as the devotion of churches and specification of feasts to Mary, all lead people to magnify and glorify others besides God. Due to these reasons, Islam has strictly forbidden innovations of any kind, as well as building places of worship over graves, all to preserve the essence of all religions sent by God, the pristine message to worship Him alone and to leave the false worship of all other besides Him.

Mary was a maidservant of God, and she was the purest of all women, specially chosen to bear the miraculous birth of Jesus, one of the greatest of all prophets. She was known for her piety and chastity, and she will continue to be held in this great regard throughout the ages to come. Her story has been related in the Glorious Quran since the advent of the Prophet Muhammad, and will continue to be so, unchanged in its pristine form, until the Day of Judgment.

Endnotes:

[1] See Genesis (3:16)

[2] St. Augustine: "De nat. et gratis", 36.

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