

I wish it were possible to get some of the fruit of this palm... Then ... Jesus... said to the palm: O tree, bend thy branches, and refresh my mother with thy fruit. And immediately at these words the palm bent its top down to the very feet of the blessed Mary; and they gathered from it fruit, with which they were all refreshed... Then Jesus said to it: ...open from thy roots a vein of water which has been hid in the earth, and let the waters flow... And it rose up immediately, and at its root there began to come forth a spring of water exceedingly clear...

Because this text was written centuries later than the time of the eyewitnesses of Jesus, it was obviously not written by an Apostle or close associate, and so was never accepted as divine revelation. Basically, it seen as equivalent to a fairy-tale, there being no historical evidence from the first century for it.

Something similar is true of Joseph. In the Qur'an we read this about Mary, Surah Al-i-Imran 3:44: "This is of the tidings of things hidden. We reveal it unto thee (Muhammad). Thou wast not present with them when they threw their pens (to know) which of them should be the guardian of Mary, nor wast thou present with them when they quarrelled (thereupon)." The verse states that this was to choose which Temple Priest would be Mary's guardian, and the lot fell on Zechariah.

Once again, there is nothing in the Bible about this, but we do find it in chapters 8 and 9 of the *Protoevangelium of James*: "And behold an angel of the Lord stood by him, saying unto him: Zacharias, Zacharias, go out and assemble the widowers of the people, and let them bring each his rod; and to whomsoever the Lord shall show a sign, his wife shall she be... And the priest said to Joseph, Thou hast been chosen by lot to take into thy keeping the virgin of the

Lord." The *Protoevangelium of James* was written about the end of the second century, over a hundred years after the events of Jesus on earth, and was obviously not written by an eyewitness of Jesus, let alone an Apostle (the writer even gets the geography of Bethlehem wrong, and so was probably from outside Palestine).

So which account is more accurate, the Bible or the Qur'an? Clearly, the Bible's account was written when eyewitnesses of Jesus were still around (Luke 1.2), not centuries later. Any historian will agree that the earliest sources are the most accurate. Therefore, if we want to know what the Birth of Christ means, we must go to those earliest sources – in the Bible. What the Bible tells us is that Jesus is "the Son of the Most High", Luke 1.32, "the Son of God", which is why the Magi were led by the miraculous Star to Bethlehem to worship Him, Matthew 2.11. He is the "Saviour", Luke 2.11, because "he will save his people from their sins", Matthew 1.21. The Bible is God's message, and the Biblical accounts of Jesus, being that of His eyewitnesses, tells us that we need to be saved by Jesus to get God's forgiveness of sins, and have eternal life.

To talk with someone concerning these thoughts, contact:



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If thou wert in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee....
(Surah, 10, Yunus, verse 94)

THE BIRTH OF JESUS IN THE QUR'AN AND THE BIBLE



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Every 25 December Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, but how many know that the Qur'an also speaks of this birth? Like the Bible, the Qur'an starts with the priest Zechariah. In the Bible, the Angel Gabriel appears to him to tell him that his wife, though old and barren, will give birth to John the Baptist, Luke 1.13 – 'the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John."' The Qur'an has a similar account in Surah 3.39 (*Pickthall EMQ*) - 'the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.'

In the Bible, the Angel Gabriel (known as *Jibril* in Arabic) appears to Mary to announce that she will give birth to Jesus, who is the Messiah, that is, the heir of King David, Luke 1.32-33 - "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." In the Qur'an, Surah 3.45 we read "the angels said: O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a word from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary"

Both the Bible and the Qur'an state that the angel tells Mary that this birth will be miraculous, because she will be a virgin when it happens, Luke 1.34-35: "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'" In the Qur'an, Surah

3.47, we read: "She said: My Lord! How can I have a child when no mortal hath touched me? He said: So (it will be). Allah createth what He will. if He decreeth a thing, He saith unto it only: Be! and it is."

We can see from these passages that there are some similarities and some differences between the Bible and the Qur'an. Both predict that Mary will give birth to the Messiah, but the Qur'an does not define what this means, whereas the Bible explains that Jesus will be the ultimate Son of David – the Anointed King (*Messiah* in Hebrew means "anointed"). Both the Bible and Qur'an are clear that Mary would be a virgin when she conceived Jesus, but whereas the Bible says that this will occur by the power of God the Holy Spirit (the Third Person of the Triune God), the Qur'an says it will happen because God speaks a word.

However, after this point, the differences multiply. In the Bible, Mary is betrothed to Joseph, who plays a major role in the birth accounts of Jesus. Joseph naturally disturbed that his future wife was pregnant before marriage, until an angel appeared in a dream and told him: "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:20-21).

Yet Joseph is totally absent from the Qur'an. The same is true of the shepherds outside Bethlehem to whom an angel appeared to tell them that Christ had been born, and to whom a large company of angels appeared to praise God for this, Luke 1.8-15. Likewise, in the Qur'an, there is no Star of Bethlehem which miraculously guides the Magi all the way from their land to Jerusalem, and then points out the

house where Jesus was staying, Matthew 2.1-11. There is no Massacre of the Innocents, when wicked King Herod tries to kill the Messiah by slaying all boys two and under in Bethlehem, Matthew 2:17-18. In fact, there is no reference to Bethlehem at all! There is no Flight into Egypt by Joseph, Mary and Jesus, after Joseph is warned by an angel to flee to avoid this massacre, Matthew 2:13-15. Nor is there the return from Egypt when Herod dies, and the family go to live in Nazareth.

The Qur'an never explains these omissions, even though they are part of the historical record by the eyewitnesses and close companions of Jesus from the time He was on the earth. The only reference to Magi of any sort is in Surah Al-Hajj 22.17, referring to Zoroastrians – "Lo! those who believe ... and those who are Jews, and the Sabaeans and the Christians and the Magians and the idolaters - Lo! Allah will decide between them on the Day of Resurrection."

Yet, in a roundabout way, there is an oblique reference to something associated with the Flight into Egypt, although the Qur'an locates the incident near Jerusalem: Surah Maryam 19.22-25 "And she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a place. And the pangs of childbirth drove her unto the trunk of the palm tree. She said: Oh, would that I had died ere this and had become a thing of naught, forgotten! Then (one) cried unto her from below her, saying: Grieve not! Thy Lord hath placed a rivulet beneath thee, And shake the trunk of the palm tree toward thee, thou wilt cause ripe dates to fall upon thee." There is nothing in the Bible about this, but we do find it in chapter 20 of the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, written in the fifth century: "...she looked up to the foliage of the palm, and saw it full of fruit, and said to Joseph: