

IS MUHAMMAD MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE?

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Islamic apologists have attempted to bolster the credibility of their beliefs by claiming that the Bible makes reference to the coming of the prophet Muhammad. This claim comes even in the face of the prevailing Islamic contention that the Bible has been corrupted, and thus cannot be relied upon as an accurate record of God's Word. Nevertheless, at least four Bible verses are referenced, two of which I will address in this article. The reader is urged to weigh these claims in light of the exegetical evidence.

First, Muslims appeal to Isaiah 29:12—"Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, 'Read this, please'; and he says, 'I am not literate.'" Muslims insist that: (a) the book referred to in this verse is the Quran; (b) the one to whom the book was delivered is Muhammad; and (c) the one who ordered Muhammad to read the book is Gabriel. They suggest that Muhammad fits the description of this individual, since Muhammad was illiterate when the angel Gabriel revealed the words of Allah to him.

To understand the context of the verse, one must remember that Isaiah, who lived in the 8th century B.C., is known as the "messianic prophet" because he prophesied so many details about **Jesus**—not Muhammad. Isaiah 29 is in a context in which God pronounced woes on Judah for her sins **at that time**, i.e., 702 B.C. The context indicates that within a year, the great Assyrian king Sennacherib would lay siege to Jerusalem in 701 B.C. (vs. 3). Jerusalem (called "Ariel") would be attacked by her enemies and punished for her sins against God, and then those enemies themselves also would receive their just desserts (vss. 4-8).

God's people were in the throes of deliberate spiritual blindness, and Judah's false prophets/seers were not helping the situation (vss. 9-10). Notice that Isaiah then described the unwillingness of the people of his day to heed the truth by comparing them to a **literate** person who is told to read something, but refuses, excusing himself by saying the document is sealed (vs. 11). It then is delivered to an **illiterate** person, but he excuses himself by saying he cannot read (vs. 12). The point is that the people of Isaiah's day refused to pay attention to God's Word as spoken through His prophets. They did not want it! Verses 13-16 explain that because of their closed minds, they would suffer for their rejection of His Word when the Assyrians arrived to besiege the city. But, as usual, God revealed a better day when people would listen (vss. 17ff.). Having examined the context, it is evident that **these verses have nothing to do with Muhammad!**

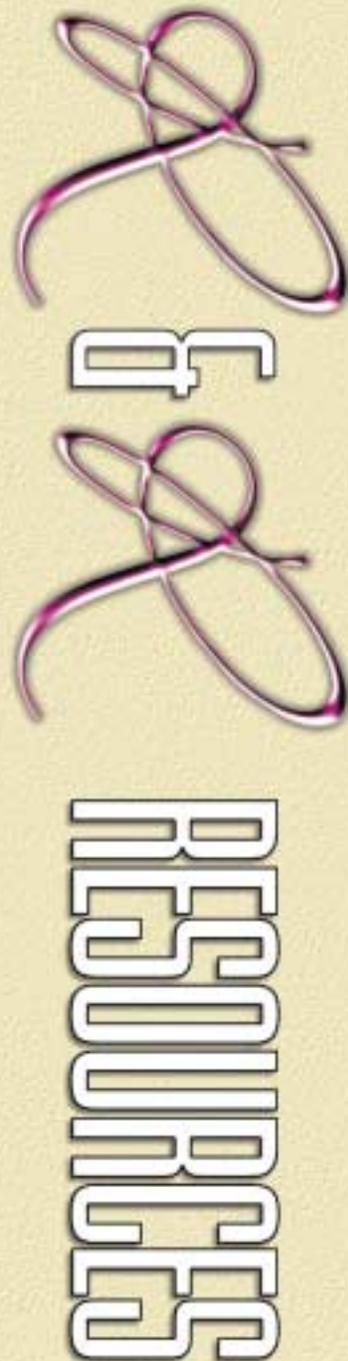
A second verse that Muslims brandish in support of their claims is the promise of a coming prophet in Deuteronomy 18:18—"I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him." Muslims believe that this prophet was Muhammad.

Again, a simple examination of additional biblical evidence reveals that the statement made to Moses was divinely intended to refer to **Jesus Christ**—not Muhammad. Shortly after the establishment of the church of Christ and the Christian religion (in A.D. 30 in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after the death and resurrection of Jesus—Acts 2), two of the twelve apostles (Peter and John) went to the Jewish temple and healed a lame man (Acts 3:1-11). When people—out of amazement at what had happened—began to gather in large numbers, Peter used the opportunity to preach the Gospel to them (Acts 3:12-26). He made several crucial points pertaining to the person of the Christ: (1) the recently crucified Jesus was, in fact, the One Whom the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had glorified (vs. 13); (2) God had raised Him from the dead (vs. 15); (3) it was the "name" (i.e., authority/power) of Jesus, and faith in Him, that procured the miraculous healing of the lame man (vs. 16); (4) the suffering of Christ was predicted previously by God through the prophets (vs. 18); (5) at the conclusion of human history, God will send Jesus back (not any of the prophets, let alone Muhammad)—an unmistakable reference to the Second Coming of Christ that will occur immediately preceding the Judgment (vss. 20-21; cf. Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.). It was at this point that Peter quoted from the passage in Deuteronomy and applied it to **Jesus**—not Muhammad (vss. 22ff.). Peter's inspired application is unmistakable; he clearly identified Christ as the fulfillment: "God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (vs. 26).

Both of these verses (and the others to which Muslims appeal) may be understood with a little study and consideration of context. Those who apply these passages to Muhammad demonstrate that they possess a superficial understanding of the Bible. The truth is available for anyone who cares to examine it. But searching for the truth requires effort. Yet it can be done. As Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

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RESOURCES

Q Why is the book of Esther in the Bible, since it does not mention God?

A God operates in many different ways. In the book of Exodus, for example, we read about God working through Moses to part the Red Sea, and to turn a shepherd's rod into a serpent. During New Testament times, God gave Jesus power to heal all manner of sickness, cure blindness, and even raise the dead.

But miracles were only one way in which God worked. He also worked (and continues to work) through providence, which means that He uses natural laws to accomplish His varied purposes. For instance, in Acts 14:17, the apostle Paul explained to his listeners that God gave them "rain from heaven and fruitful seasons," thereby filling their hearts "with food and gladness." How had God given them such blessings? Did He miraculously drop apples out of the sky or turn stones to bread? No, He used the natural forces of this world to accomplish His purposes. God always is at work "behind the scenes" to make sure that His ultimate will is accomplished.

When we study the book of Esther, it is true that we never read God's name. But many of the things that occurred in the book could not have been "just luck." Take, for instance, the time that King Ahasuerus could not sleep, and his servant "just happened" to read the records of the time that Mordecai had saved the king's life (Esther 6:1-3). In fact, the entire book of Esther shows that God's guiding hand was working behind the scenes to save the Jewish nation. Esther's guardian, Mordecai, once said to her: "Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14). His statement shows that he was seeing God's possible plan for Esther.

Today, no person has been given the power to raise the dead or turn sticks into snakes, but God still is at work through His guiding hand of providence. The book of Esther serves to remind us that we do not need to see God (or even read His name) to know that He is "not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27).

Kyle Butt

IN THE NEWS

The argument is almost as old as the creation/evolution controversy itself. Creationists have long charged that evolutionists date the fossils using circular reasoning in their dating methods. That is to say, on one hand, they date the layers of geological strata by the so-called "index fossils" found within them. (Of course index fossils are not always reliable standards, as is evident from such creatures as coelacanths, trilobites, and even frogs—a point made by Blair Hedges in an article in the October 16, 2003 issue of *Nature* titled "The Coelacanth of Frogs.") Then, on the other hand, evolutionists date fossils according to the strata in which they are found.

Evolutionists routinely deny the charge that they use circular reasoning. As one article titled "Radiometric Dating and the Geological Time Scale" on the evolutionary site, www.TalkOrigins.com, commented:

The unfortunate part of the natural process of refinement of time scales is the **appearance** of circularity if people do not look at the source of the data carefully enough. Most commonly, this is characterized by oversimplified statements like: "The fossils date the rock, and the rock dates the fossils" (MacRae, 1998, emp. in orig.).

In what must be a somewhat embarrassing article for evolutionists, Tom Clarke authored an article in *Nature*, titled "Geologists Seek to

Put an End to Blind Dates" (2003, 425:550). In the article Clarke commented, "Earth scientists have decided it is time to talk time." He further lamented: "At a meeting in Washington D.C. last week, experts in mass extinctions, ancient climate and the art of dating rocks got together to work out plans for a **more accurate** and complete geological timescale" (p. 550, emp. added).

In addressing the incompleteness and inaccuracies in the fossil record Clarke admits: "That is partly because the most accurate techniques for dating are work-intensive and require more skill and money than most labs can spare" (425:550). So what do researchers often do? He continued: "**So researchers often simply estimate rock ages by comparing the fossils found in one stripe of rock to another of known age**" (425:550, emp. added).

Sounds an awful lot like "guesstimation" using circular reasoning, doesn't it?

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