

Pluralism Tested: Jesus vs. Mohammed

Intro: In our morning lesson we looked the cultural challenge of religious pluralism and the idea that all religious belief systems and philosophies are of equal validity. We showed that one of the problems with pluralism is that it denies the claims of Jesus as the unique Son of God and makes him equivalent to merely human religious founders.

Today consider the fact about 31% of the world's population professes to be Christians; but a very large and ever-growing number of people (22%) are followers of the prophet Mohammed and practice the religion of Islam.

Pluralists would tell us that both religions are equally valid and true; but when we make the comparison we can see stark differences between the two. I'm calling my lesson tonight "Pluralism Tested: Jesus vs. Mohammed."

What Mohammed and Islam said about Jesus

Mohammed denied that Jesus could be in any way called God. He simply referred to him as a great prophet in the tradition of many other prophets sent by "Allah." Thus Islam teaches that Jesus was only a prophet and certainly not the Son of God.

Consider these quotes which especially challenge the idea that there was a "son of God."

Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah (Surah 3:64).

Praise be to Allah Who hath revealed the Scripture unto His slave...to give warning of stern punishment from Him...and to warn those who say: Allah hath chosen a son, (A thing) whereof they have no knowledge, nor (had) their fathers. Dreadful is the word that cometh out of their mouths. They speak naught but a lie (Surah 18:1-5).

And they say: The Beneficent hath taken unto Himself a son. Assuredly ye utter a disastrous thing, whereby almost the heavens are torn, and the earth is split asunder and the mountains fall in ruins, that ye ascribe unto the Beneficent a son, when it is not meet for (the Majesty of) the Beneficent that He should choose a son. There is none in the heavens and the earth but cometh unto the Beneficent as a slave (Surah 19:88-93).

Allah hath not chosen any son, nor is there any God along with Him; else would each God have assuredly championed that which he created, and some of them would assuredly have overcome others.

Glorified be Allah above all that they allege (Surah 23:91).

He unto Whom belongeth the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth, He hath chosen no son nor hath He any partner in the sovereignty. He

hath created everything and hath meted out for it a measure (Surah 25:2).

Thus, a cardinal tenet of Islam is the deity of Allah alone and none associated with him who could be called God or the Son of God.

But consider also what Mohammed and Islam say about Mohammed

Mohammed claimed to be a prophet of God who received the revelations of the Quran from the angel Gabriel.

Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets; and Allah is ever Aware of all things. (Sura 33:40)

Thus, Islam affirms that Mohammed was the seal of the prophets, the last and greatest prophet of God. Wherever the Quran and the Bible disagree (and there are many disagreements on many points), the

Quran is right, because Jews and Christians changed the word of God.

Mohammed did in the Quran attribute miracles to Jesus; however Mohammed himself claimed to have performed no signs to confirm his role as prophet. Perhaps under the influence of those who challenged Moslems on this point, later writers attributed many miracles to Mohammed; but these stories originate over 200 years after Mohammed's death. Norman Geisler in his excellent work "Baker's Encyclopedia of Christians Apologetics" reviews both the claims of Mohammed as well as traditions of miracles arising centuries later reaches this well-reasoned out conclusion:

Muhammad's unwillingness (and apparent inability) to perform miraculous feats of nature, when he knew that the prophets before him could and did perform them, sounds like a cop-out to thinking non-Muslims. They will ask, "If God confirmed other prophets by such things, then why did he not do the same for Muhammad and remove all doubt?" In Muhammad's own words (from the *Qur'an*), "They [will] say: 'Why is not A Sign sent down To him from his Lord?' " since even Muhammad admitted that "God hath certainly Power to send down a Sign" (sura 6:37).

Muhammad simply offered his own sign (the *Qur'an*) and said their reason for rejecting him was unbelief, not his inability to do miracles. In the few instances where alleged supernatural events are connected to Muhammad's life, they can be explained by natural means. For example, Muslims take Muhammad's outstanding victory at the battle of Badr in 624 as a supernatural indication of divine approval on his behalf. But exactly one year later, Muhammad's forces suffered a humiliating defeat. Yet this is not taken as a sign of divine disapproval. Unlike the *Qur'an*, Islamic tradition (the *Hadith*) is filled with miracle claims, but they lack authenticity: They contradict the claim of Muhammad in the *Qur'an*. They were recorded a century or more after Muhammad. Most are rejected by Muslim scholars. They show evidence of embellishment. They lack criteria laid down by Muslim

scholars for a supernatural confirmation of Muhammad's claims to be a prophet of God.¹

Now let's contrast what did Jesus said about himself

He claimed to be the unique Son of God.

He claimed to have been in heaven!

Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world. They said therefore to Him, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. (John 6:32-35; cf. also 8:23)

He claimed that He alone had seen God, not in theophany as some OT characters, but in reality!

Not that any man has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. (John 6:46)

He claimed that He alone really knew God!

I know Him; because I am from Him, and He sent Me. (John 7:29)

Jesus uses the Greek verb from "oida" indicating "absolute knowledge, the knowledge of intuition and satisfied conviction."

He claimed that he was equal with God!

But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.

The Jews understood this to be a claim to have a unique relationship with God as His Son.

For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. (John 5:17-18)

Jesus claimed that He was sent to earth by the Father!

Jesus therefore cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. "I know Him; because I am from Him, and He sent Me." (John 7:28-29)

Jesus claimed that He revealed the heavenly Father to mankind!

To Phillip: He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'? "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to

¹ Geisler, N. L. (1999). In *Baker encyclopedia of Christian apologetics* (pp. 513–514). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. (John 14:7-10)

In these startling truth claims Jesus affirms that he was the unique son of the Father, sharing His divine nature.

He claimed to be the Christ of OT Scripture.

Christ is not a name, but rather it is a title. Throughout the OT, God had used anointing to designate leaders of His choice. Those chosen could be called "God's anointed ones." But throughout God's OT revelation, we see the ongoing development of the concept of a single great "anointed one" who the Jews referred to by the Hebrew word for anointed one--Messiah.

Not only did Jesus claim to fulfill all of the roles of the Christ, He explicitly declared himself to be the Christ.

Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." (Mark 14:61-62)

That confession was to seal his death!

If Jesus really said these things, then one of three things is true!

Jesus was one of the most evil men who ever lived, seeking to persuade ignorant and naive Jews that He was God for his own personal exaltation and advantage.

Jesus was clearly a candidate for the insane asylum! He had lost touch with reality and made the kind of claims you commonly hear in a psycho ward!

Jesus really was who He said He was—God enrobed in flesh, the very Son of God who came down to this earth!

How did Jesus demonstrate or prove these claims?

Jesus believed that the works he was performing would substantiate the claims he was making.

But the witness which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. (John 5:36)

So then John records seven signs that authenticate Jesus' claims to be both the Son of God and the Messiah.

Turning water to wine (Jn. 2:1-11)

Healing the nobleman's son (Jn. 4:46-54)

Healing the lame man... (Jn. 5:1-9)

Feeding the five thousand...(Jn. 6:1-14)

Walking on the water...(Jn. 6:16-21)

Healing the blind man... (Jn. 9:1-12)

Raising Lazarus from the dead...(Jn. 11:39-44)

Each of these alone would be a mighty display of divine power unlike anything any ordinary person can do. But why did Jesus perform the signs that He performed?

The signs that Jesus performed pointed to the truth claims implied by them.

It is interesting that, in at least five of the signs, John also records an explicit discourse by Jesus explaining the significance of the miracle He had just performed. In other words, Jesus did not perform miracles for miracles sake, but miracles in order to teach something about Himself. Each of Jesus' miracles attests to not only his physical power but His spiritual power to accomplish the work of redemption!

The water to wine pointed to Jesus' power to inaugurate a "new creation"! (2 Cor. 5:17)

The healing of the nobleman's son pointed to Jesus' power to make atonement for sin! (Mt. 8:17; 1 Pet. 2:24)

The healing of the lame man pointed to Jesus' power to regenerate (Jn. 5:24)

The walking of Jesus on the water pointed to Jesus' power to deliver us from spiritual danger (Rom. 5:9)

The feeding of the 5000 pointed to Jesus' power to satisfy our needs (Jn. 6:35).

The healing of the blind man pointed to Jesus' power to illumine those in darkness (Jn. 9:5, 39)

The raising of Lazarus pointed to Jesus' power to "give eternal life" (Jn. 11:25-26)

And so the miracles that Jesus performed substantiate the spiritual truth claims He had made to be both God and Christ.

And then there was the ultimate miracle--the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

The apostle John had been privileged to be an eyewitness of all these things.

What conclusion did John reach?

In the prologue he introduces Jesus to his readers:

He was the eternal Word and God who created all things.

He entered our world of darkness in order to illuminate it.

He was rejected by the world He had made, and even by His own people.

But to those who see His glory and believe in Him, He gives His grace!

In the conclusion he writes:

"Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:30-31)

What conclusion should we make about Mohammed?

Mohammed denied what Jesus said about himself and what his apostles said about him.

Mohammed claimed to be a prophet; but performed no miracles.

Conclusion: What is abundantly clear is that Christianity and Islam exist in hopeless contradiction. They cannot both be true. We must decide: will we believe in Mohammed? Or will we believe in Jesus?