

MARY IN ISLAM (PART 2 OF 3)

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Description: The second of a three-part article discussing the Islamic concept of Mary: Part 2: Her annunciation.

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Her Annunciation

God informs us of the instance the angels gave Mary the glad tidings of a child, his soon to be status on earth, and some of the miracles he will perform:

“When the angels said: ‘O Mary! Indeed God gives you glad tidings of a word (His saying, ‘Be’) from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, held in honor in this world and in the Hereafter, and of those nearest to God. He shall speak to people while still in the cradle, and in manhood, and he shall be from the righteous.’ She said, ‘My Lord, how can I have a son when no man has touched me?’ He said, ‘Even so, God creates what He pleases. When He decrees, He merely says to it, ‘Be,’ and it is. And He will teach him the Book and the Wisdom, and the Torah and the Gospel.” (Quran 3:45-48)

This sounds much like the words mentioned in the Bible:

“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus.”

Astonished, she replied:

“How can this be, since I do not know a man?” (Luke 1:26-38)

This instance was a great trial for her, for her great piety and devotion was known to everyone. She foresaw that people would accuse her of being unchaste.

In other verses of the Quran, God relates more details of the annunciation by Gabriel that she would give birth to a Prophet.

“And mention in the Book, Mary, when she withdrew from her people to a place. And she placed a veil to screen herself from them; then we sent to her Our Spirit (Gabriel), and he appeared to her in the form of a human in all respects. She said, ‘I seek refuge in the Most Gracious (God) from you, if you fear Him.’ He said, ‘I am only a messenger from your Lord, to announce to you the gift of a son most pure.’” (Quran 19:17-19)

Once, when Mary left the mosque to see to her needs, the angel Gabriel came to her in the form of a man. She was frightened due to the close proximity of the man, and sought refuge from God. Gabriel then told her that he was no ordinary man, but an angel sent by God to announce to her that she would bear a child most pure. Out of astonishment, she exclaimed

“She said, ‘How shall I have a son, when no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?!’” (Quran 19:19-20)

The angel explained that it was a Divine Decree which already has been ordained, and that it is indeed something easy for God the Almighty. God said that the birth of Jesus, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, will be a sign of His Omnipotence, and that, just as He created Adam without father or mother, He created Jesus without father.

“He said, ‘So it will be,’ your Lord said: ‘That is easy for Me, and We shall make him a sign to the people, and a Mercy from Us, and it is a matter which has been decreed.’” (Quran 19:21)

God blew the spirit of Jesus through the angel Gabriel into Mary, and Jesus was conceived in her womb, as God said in a different chapter:

“And Mary the daughter of Heli, who guarded her chastity, so we breathed into her through Our Spirit (Gabriel).” (Quran 66:12)

When the signs of pregnancy became apparent, Mary became even more worried about what people would say about her. Her news spread far and wide and, as was inevitable, some began to accuse her of being unchaste. Unlike the Christian belief that Mary was espoused to Joseph, Islam upholds that she was neither betrothed, nor espoused nor married, and it was this that caused her such anguish. She knew that people would hold the only logical conclusion to her state of pregnancy, that she was so out of wedlock. Mary isolated herself from people and left to a different land. God says:

“So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place. The pain of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree.” (Quran 19:22-23)

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