

SALVATION HISTORY

11. Jesus is not God's son

Zamakhsharī on Sūra 4:171/169

People of the Book, do not go too far in your religion, and say nothing about God but the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the messenger of God, and His word which He committed to Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers, and say not: 'Three.' Refrain! Better is it for you. God is only One God. Glory be to Him—that He should have a son! To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth; God suffices for a guardian.

Do not go too far in your religion: The Jews went too far in that they degraded Christ in his position, since they regarded him as an illegitimate child (of Mary). And the Christians went too far in that they elevated him unduly, since they regarded him as a god.

And say nothing about God but the truth: Here is declared that God is exalted high above having a (divine) associate and a child. ... Jesus is designated as 'the word of God' and as 'a word from Him' (see Sūra 3:39/34), because he alone originated through the word and the command of God, rather than through a father and a sperm. For this reason he is (also) designated as 'the spirit of God' (see Sūra 66:12, etc.) and as 'a spirit from Him', since Jesus was a spirit-endowed man (*dhū rūḥ*) who originated without any element from a spirit-endowed man, such as the sperm that is discharged from an earthly father. He was created through a new act of creation by God whose power (*qudra*) is unlimited.

Which He committed to Mary: which he delivered to her and permitted to enter into her.

(The word) *three* is the predicate to an understood subject. If one accepts the Christian view that God exists in one nature (*jauhar*) with three divine persons, namely the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and (if one accepts) the opinion that the person of the Father represents (God's) being (*dhāt*), the person of the Son represents (his) knowledge (*'ilm*), and the person of the Holy Spirit represents (his) life (*ḥayāt*), then one must supply the subject as follows: 'God is three(fold).' Otherwise, one must supply (the subject) thus: 'The gods are three.' According to the evidence of the Qur'ān, the Christians maintain that God, Christ, and Mary are three gods, and that Christ is the child of God by Mary, as [127] God says (in the Qur'ān): 'O Jesus son of Mary, didst thou say unto men: "Take me and my mother as gods, apart from God"?' (Sūra 5:116), or: 'The Christians say: "The Messiah is the Son of God"' (Sūra 9:30). Moreover, it is well known that the Christians maintain that in Jesus are (combined) a divine nature derived from the Father and a human nature derived from his mother. God's words: The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the messenger of God are (also) explained on the basis of such an interpretation (of the Christians). These words confirm (the Christian view) that Jesus was a child of Mary, that he had with her the usual relationship between children and (their) mothers, and that his relationship to God was that he was his messenger and that he became a living being through God's command and new act of creation without a father. At the same time, these words exclude (the Christian view) that Jesus had with God the usual relationship between sons and (their) fathers. Also God's

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words: Glory be to Him—that He should have a son (are explained on the basis of such an interpretation of the Christians). However, what is reported by God must be regarded as having more validity than what is reported by others. ...

To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth: Here is set forth why God is free from what was ascribed to him (by the Christians). If everything that is in the heavens and the earth is God's creation and possession, how then can one of his possessions be a part of him when one can properly speak of a part only regarding bodies, while God is exalted above the properties (*ṣifāt*) of corporeality and inconstant attributes (*a'rād*)¹?...

12. The death of Jesus

Baiḍāwī on Sūra 4:157f./156

And because they said: 'We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the messenger of God.' But they did not slay him, nor did they crucify him; for only a likeness of him was shown to them. Those who disagree concerning it surely are in doubt regarding him. They have no knowledge of him, but only follow surmise.

And it is certain that they did not slay him! No indeed, God raised him up to Himself. God is All-mighty, All-wise. [128]

And because they said: We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the messenger of God: (that is) because the Jews asserted this. It is (however also) possible that the Jews said this (only) scornfully as is the case in a similar situation with (the words of Pharaoh concerning Moses): 'Surely your messenger who was sent to you is possessed!' (Sūra 26:27/26), and that God took up this assertion (of the Jews) again in order to praise Jesus or to replace their evil account with a good one.

But they did not slay him, nor did they crucify him; for only a likeness of him was shown to them. It is related that a group of Jews insulted Jesus and his mother, whereupon he appealed to God against them. When God turned (those who insulted Jesus and his mother) into monkeys and swine, the Jews came to an agreement to kill Jesus. Then God informed Jesus that he would raise him up to heaven; so Jesus said to his disciples: 'Who among you will agree to take a form similar to mine and die (in my place) and be crucified and then go (straight) to paradise?' A man among them offered himself, so God changed him into a form to look like Jesus, and he was killed and crucified.

Others say that a man pretended (to be a believer) before Jesus and then went away denouncing him, whereupon God changed this man into a form similar to that of Jesus, and then he was seized and crucified. (Still) others say that the Jew Titanus entered a house where Jesus was (with a treacherous intention) but could not find him. Then God changed him into a form similar to that of Jesus, and when he came outside people thought he was Jesus and so they seized and crucified him.

¹As a Mu'tazilite, Zamakhsharī refuses any anthropomorphism in statements about God (see pp. 19 and 36, etc.).

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Similar unusual things which one may not find improbable for the time of the prophets (have been reported on this subject). When God blames the Jews (here), (it is) only because their words showed that they acted impudently towards God, wishing to kill his prophet in spite of the confirmation (of the prophethood of Jesus) through overwhelming miracles (*mu'jizāt*), and (furthermore they) rejoiced in doing so. (God blames them) not because their assertion (to have Jesus killed) was (merely) an opinion.

Those who disagree concerning it: (that is) concerning the state in which Jesus was. For as soon as this event (the crucifixion of another person in Jesus' place) occurred, the people disagreed (concerning it). Some Jews said: 'Jesus was a liar (when he said God would raise him up to heaven), for we certainly killed him!' [129] Others hesitated, and some of these said: 'If this (crucified person) is Jesus, then where is our companion (who wanted to betray him)?' Others said: 'That is the face of Jesus, but the body is that of our companion.' Those, however, who had heard Jesus when he said: 'God will raise me up into heaven', said: 'He was raised up into heaven.' Certain people believed (also) that his human nature was crucified, while his divine nature rose up to heaven. ...

13. Jesus as the herald of the Day of Judgment

Baiḍāwī on Sūra 43:61

And he (hu) is the sign of the Hour. Doubt not concerning it, and follow me! This is a straight path.

And he, that is Jesus, is the sign of the Hour (of judgment), since his appearance or his coming down (from heaven) is among the signs which will announce that the Hour (of judgment) is near. Or: (Jesus is a sign of the Hour) because he showed through his resurrection from the dead that God has the power to raise the dead (on the Day of Judgment). ...

In the Tradition (*ḥadīth*) it is reported that Jesus will come down over a mountain pass in the Holy Land called Afīq, and in his hand he will carry a spear with which he will kill the Antichrist (*dajjāl*²). He will then go to Jerusalem (*bait al-muqaddas*) just when the inhabitants are performing the morning prayer. The prayer leader (*imām*) will want to step back (in view of Jesus' appearance), but Jesus will give precedence to him and perform the prayer behind him according to the rite (*sharī'a*) of Muḥammad. Then he will kill the swine, dash to pieces the crucifix, demolish the churches and synagogues, and kill the Christians who do not have (correct) belief in him.

Others say that the pronoun *hu* ('he' or 'it') refers to the Qur'ān, since signs of the Hour are given in it and it points the way to it. ...

²The *dajjāl*, who does not appear in the Qur'ān itself, is derived from Christian views. See the false Christ of Matthew 24:24 (Syriac: *mshīhē daggālē*).