

## 4 QUESTIONS ABOUT MUHAMMAD

By Dr. Norman Geisler (from his book *When Cultists Ask*, Baker, 1997)

I. Deuteronomy 18:15-18—Is this a prophecy about the prophet Muhammad?

### Misinterpretation

God promised Moses here, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren[Israel], like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (v.18 KJV). Muslims believe this prophecy is fulfilled in Muhammad, as the Qur'an claims when it refers to "the unlettered Prophet [Muhammad], whom they find mentioned in their own (Scriptures), in the Law and the Gospels" (Sura 7:157).

### Correcting the Misinterpretation

This prophecy could not be a reference to Muhammad. The term brethren refers to Israel, not to their Arabian antagonists. Why would God raise up for Israel a prophet from among their enemies. In the surrounding text, the term brethren means fellow Israelites. The Levites were told "they shall have no inheritance among their brethren" (v.2). Elsewhere in Deuteronomy the term brethren also means fellow Israelites, not a foreigner. God told them to choose a king "from among your brethren," not a "foreigner." Israel has never chosen a non-Jewish king. Further, Muhammad came from Ishmael, as even Muslims admit, and heirs to the Jewish throne came from Isaac. When Abraham prayed "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!" God answered emphatically: "My covenant I will establish with Isaac" (Gen. 17:21). Later God repeated: "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned" (Gen. 21:12 NIV). The Qur'an itself states that the prophetic line came through Isaac, not Ishmael: "And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob, and We established the Prophethood and the Scripture among his seed" (Sura 29:27). The Muslim scholar Yusuf Ali adds the word Abraham and changes the meaning as follows, "We gave (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob, and ordained among his progeny Prophethood and Revelation." By adding Abraham, the father of Ishmael, he can include Muhammad, a descendent of Ishmael, in the prophetic line. But Abraham's name is not found in the original text. Jesus perfectly fulfilled this verse, since he was from among his Jewish brethren (cf. Gal. 4:4). He fulfilled Deuteronomy 18:18 perfectly: "He shall speak to them all that I [God] command Him." Jesus said, "I do nothing of myself; but as my Father taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:28 KJV). And, "I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and

what I should speak" (John 12:49). He called himself a "prophet" (Luke 13:33), and the people considered him a prophet (Matt. 21:11; Luke 7:16; 24:19; John 4:19; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17). As the Son of God, Jesus was prophet (speaking to men for God), priest (Hebrews 7-10, speaking to God for men), and king (reigning over men for God, Revelation 19-20). Other characteristics of the "Prophet" fit only Jesus, not Muhammad. For example, Jesus spoke with God "face to face" and he performed "signs and wonders."

II. Deuteronomy 33:2—Is this a prediction of the Prophet Muhammad?

#### Misinterpretation

Many Islamic scholars believe this verse predicts three separate visitations of God—one on Sinai to Moses, another to Seir (a region near the Dead Sea and the Arabian Desert) through Jesus, and a third in "Paran" (Arabia) through Muhammad who came to Mecca with an army of "ten thousand."

#### Correcting the Misinterpretation

This contention can be easily answered by looking at a Bible map. Paran is near Egypt in the Sinai peninsula and Seir is in Old Testament Edom (cf. Gen. 14:6; Num. 10:12; 12:16-13:3; Deut. 1:1). Neither are in Palestine where Jesus ministered. Nor was Paran near Mecca, but hundreds of miles away in near southern Palestine in the northeastern Sinai. Further, this verse is speaking of the "Lord" (Yahweh, not Muhammad) coming. And he is coming with "ten thousand saints," not ten thousand soldiers, as Muhammad did. There is absolutely no basis in this text for the Muslim contention. Finally, this prophecy is said to be one "with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death" (v.1). If it were a prediction about Islam, which has been a constant enemy of Israel, it could scarcely have been a blessing to Israel. In fact, the chapter goes on to pronounce a blessing on each of the tribes of Israel by God, who "will thrust out the enemy" (v. 27).

III. Deuteronomy 34:10—Does this verse support the Muslim claim that Jesus could not be the predicted prophet of Deuteronomy 18:18?

#### Misinterpretation

This verse claims "there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses" (KJV). Muslims argue that this proves that the predicted prophet could not be an Israelite but was Muhammad instead.

### Correcting the Misinterpretation

The “since” means since Moses’ death to the time this last chapter was written, probably by Joshua. Even if Deuteronomy or this section of Deuteronomy was written much later, as some critics believe, it still was composed centuries before the time of Christ and, therefore, would not eliminate him. Note that Jesus was the perfect fulfillment of this prediction of the prophet to come, not Muhammad. This could not refer to Muhammad, since the prophet to come was like Moses who did “all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent” (Deut. 34:11). Muhammad by his own confession did not perform signs and wonders like Moses and Jesus did (see Sura 17: 90-93). The prophet to come was like Moses who spoke to God “face to face” (Deut. 34:10). Muhammad never even claimed to speak to God directly but got his revelations through angels (cf. Sura 2:97). Jesus, on the other hand, like Moses, was a direct Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15) who communicated directly with God (cf. John 1:18; 12:49; 17).

IV. John 14:16—Are Muslims right in referring this promise of the coming “Helper” to Muhammad?

### Misinterpretation

Muslim scholars see in this reference of the promised “Helper” (Greek, paraclete) a prediction of Muhammad, because the Qur’an (Sura 61:6) refers to Muhammad as “Ahmad” (periclytos), which Muslims take to be the correct rendering of “paraclete.”

### Correcting the Misinterpretation

There are absolutely no grounds for concluding the “Helper” (paraclete) Jesus mentioned here is Muhammad. Of the 5,366 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, not a single manuscript contains the word periclytos (“praised one”), as the Muslims claim it should read. Jesus clearly identifies the Helper as being the Holy Spirit, not Muhammad. Jesus refers to “the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send” (John 14:26). The Helper was given to Christ’s disciples (“you,” v. 16), but Muhammad was not. And the Helper was to abide with them “forever” (v. 16), but Muhammad has been dead for thirteen centuries. Jesus said to the disciples, “You know him [the Helper]” (v. 17), but they did not know Muhammad. He wasn’t even born for six more centuries. Jesus told his apostles, the Helper will be in you (v. 17). In no sense was Muhammad “in” Jesus’ apostles. The Helper would be sent “in my [Jesus’] name” (John 14:26). But no Muslim believes Muhammad was sent by Jesus in his name. The Helper Jesus would send would not “speak on his own authority” (John

16:13), whereas Muhammad constantly testifies to himself in the Qur'an (cf. Sura 33:40). The Helper would "glorify" Jesus (John 16:14), but Muhammad claims to supersede Jesus as later prophet. Finally, Jesus asserted that the Helper would come in "not many days" (Acts 1:5), whereas Muhammad did not come for 600 years.