

ISLAM: THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION OF BROTHERHOOD AND SOLIDARITY

Dr. Zakir Naik

Islam, literally meaning peace, submission, and obedience, is first of all, the religion for the whole universe.

ISLAM AS THE RELIGION FOR THE WHOLE OF THE UNIVERSE

We see that the universe is an orderly universe, a cosmos, whose parts are linked together and are working together towards the same purpose and common goal. Everything in the universe is assigned a place in a grand scheme which is working in a magnificent and superb way. The sun, the moon, the stars and in fact all the heavenly bodies are knit together in a splendid system. They follow an unalterable law and do not make even the slightest deviation from their ordained course. Everything in the world, from the little whirling electron to the mighty nebulae, invariably follows its own laws. Even in the human world the laws of nature are quite manifest. Man's birth, growth, and the life are all regulated by a set of 'biological' laws. All the organs of his body from the small tissues to the heart and brain are governed by the laws prescribed for them.

The universe, although it seems monotonous, blindly obeying a set of laws, is neither a factory as thought of by theists of the eighteenth century, nor is it a chaos as conceived by the existentialist philosophers, which has nothing to say to man. Instead, it is a lively, dynamic organism each part of which works according to the position it occupies in the whole, and fulfills its share in the system of mutual relationships. God, on the other hand, is not a passive power which has left the universe to itself so that it should work automatically but is an

- 1 Acts concludes in AD 63, leaving the story unfinished.
- 2 GPhil 56:15-20.
- 3 Treat. Seth 55-56, Apoc Pet 81-82.
- 4 CD 10:20-21.
- 5 Deut 21:22-23, 11QT 64:6-13.
- 6 Mt 27:64. See Locations, p.401.
- 7 3Q15, S2 benepesh ben rabbah hashelishi "in the 'soul' (burial place) of the great one, the third". Milik, DJD III p. 285, assumes that the whole phrase is a proper name.

- 8 "Joseph" as the David crown prince, see Hierarchy, p. 486.
- 9 Mk 15:44 p Pilate asked: "Is he dead already?" (ei in p-sense introduces a direct question). See p. 524.
- 10 Jn 19:34. Black's Medical Dictionary (London: A. & C. Black, 1955) p. 235: "An important sign (of death) is that if a cut be made in the skin or a vessel be opened no bleeding takes place after death".
- 11 Jn 19:39. Litra, a Roman pound, 12 ounces, 327 grams.
- 12 Black's Medical Dictionary, p. 34.

ingredient, acting on mucous membrane. The purpose was to leave medicines capable of expelling the poison before it had time to act.

Once the three men were placed in the cave, a large stone was put into the opening at the top which was used for entry. To all outward appearances, they had now been left there to die. Pilate, after ensuring that the cave was sealed and the guard placed, returned to Jerusalem, believing his mission to have been achieved.

References

- 1 A, Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 1906.
p. 397.
- 2 Jn 20:15.
- 3 A 14:12.
- 4 Lk 2:44-45, Mk 6:47-50, A 7:8-10.
- 5 Jn 2:4.
- 6 A 8:18-24; A 13:6-11.
- 7 A 11:26.
- 8 Simon Magus is still treated positively, his "raising" as Lazarus being the climax of the seven signs. In AD 37, when Agrippa I was given the rule of Judea on the accession of Gaius, Simon Magus, John Mark, and Philip all lost their authority, as they were enemies of Agrippa. Leadership then passed to Peter and Paul, supporters of the Agrippas.

place at the end of the esplanade. According to a sentence in the Copper Scroll,

there was a "tomb of the son of the third Great One", in which there was a deposit of money.(15) The king, according to eastern views, was the third after priest and prophet. The cave thus had belonged to James, who was still the heir while Jesus had no son. James was the Rich Man, in both narrative and parables. He now appeared as Joseph of Arimathea, the "rich man" in whose cave Jesus was to be buried. (16)

It was thought that Jesus was dead already. He had to be put in the same cave as the other two, as it was within the permitted walking distance. He could be carried there before 6 p.m. James, as his nearest relative, was given the task of burying his brother. He spoke with Pilate, who expressed amazement that Jesus was already dead-he knew that crucifixion usually took much longer. (17)

Simon Magus and Judas were taken down from the crosses, and their legs were broken. They were carried down to the southern end of the esplanade, then down the winding path to the cave. Inside the cave, they were placed in its eastern section.

John Mark, the Beloved Disciple, had been standing near the cross of Jesus. Like all connected with the Therapeutae, he had medical knowledge. When the side of Jesus was pierced as a test for death, he saw that blood came out, and knew that this almost certainly meant that he was still alive.(18)

He passed on his information to James and to Theudas. The latter had many reasons to be grateful to Jesus. He helped James carry Jesus down to the cave, and left there, near the unconscious man, a container holding one hundred pounds of myrrh and aloe, a very large quantity. (19)

The juice of the aloe plant acts as a purgative, and when given in large quantities acts quickly.(20) Myrrh is a soothing

possible for ordinary men whose latrines were afternoon. Yet it was necessary that they should have a forbade defecation on the Sabbath (a restriction for which the Essenes were well known).

On Friday evening the cave was sealed, and, if the Jewish times were the only ones kept, it would stay sealed for a week. This was all Pilate was told, and he

agreed that the men should be put there. During the week they would die.

But he was not told of the variation of times practiced by Magians and others with western views. Following the Julian calendar, they held that Saturday did not start till Friday at midnight, or even at 1 a.m. if midnight was treated as zero. Following the regular routine of ascetics, which even prescribed times for bodily functions, they used the Sabbath latrine at 4 p.m. on Friday, then abstained, as all did, at 4 a.m. Saturday. But whereas others returned to their normal installation two thousand cubits away in Saturday at 4 p.m., the westerners were still in their Sabbath, and must again return to the cave, which was opened for them.

Simon would have to stay only for twenty-four hours. then, when Pilate was out of the way, he would be removed from the cave.

Pilate, agreeing to let the matter come under Jewish law, agreed also to let the Jews provide their own guard. He was told that the cave would be guarded at least "until the third day". But he did not understand the special language for times, which meant that it would be guarded only until next day. Saturday, at 3 p.m., the guard being a normal arrangement to prevent the place being used for twenty-four hours. (14)

The cave had another purpose also, to be the burial and excommunication cave of the prince, the son of David king. The David himself was buried in Cave 4, "Abraham's bosom" together with the Pope, but his son was given a less majestic

would be a means of keeping in membership the great numbers of Gentiles holding a hellenistic view of the immortality of the soul; it was a religious idea they could build on. Those Gentiles stayed with the Christian party, and by the time it separated were deeply influenced by the manufactured myth. Yet the Christians, standing for an ethical sensitivity in opposition to the Magus, needed to record the truth. There were other matters also that they wanted to conceal yet reveal: the whole previous history of the mission. Their answer was the peshet technique, the surface story retaining the myth for those who needed it, while the real events were told for those who "had ears to hear".

By 3 p.m. on the Friday of the crucifixion it was already the early beginning of the Sabbath, when it was no longer permitted to make a journey of more than a thousand cubits.(12) Up to 6 p.m., however, it was permitted to lift up a burden.

The tetrarch Antipas, knowing well the rules for the Sabbath, had his plans made. He went to Pilate, and asked him to change the method of execution of the men to burial alive. They had been crucified under Roman law, but, if Pilate wanted to get back to Jerusalem, he could hand them over to the Jews and to Jewish law. This would mean that they came under a rule found in the ~~Old Testament~~ and in the Temple Scroll, that hanged men ~~should~~ not stay on the stakes overnight.(13) Let the legs of the two men who were still alive be broken, he asked, and they could be buried in a nearby cave, and left there to die. Jesus, who seemed to be dead already, could be buried with them.

The cave the tetrarch showed Pilate was at the southern end of the esplanade on which the crosses stood. It had been hollowed out of the side of the cliff, some distance down from the top, and was reached by a narrow path running down from the edge of the esplanade.

Its main purpose, the tetrarch explained, was to be a Sabbath latrine. Because of the rule restricting travel of more than a thousand cubits after 3 p.m. on Friday, it was not

law, and removing the need for repeated sacrifices and the Jewish priesthood.

The minor writers of the New Testament, James and Jude, do not mention a resurrection, and in the epistles of John it is not explicit.

In the newly discovered gospel of Philip is a passage that can be seen to deny it: "Those who say that the lord died first and then rose up are in error, for he rose up first and then died". (10)

Some of the other newly discovered Gnostic books reflect the well-known docetic tradition that Jesus did not really die on the cross, but another died in his place. (11) Although this belief obviously derives its strength from the idea that Jesus was not of mortal flesh, so could not suffer, it could hardly have flourished in Gnostic circles if there had been solid and certain evidence that he had really died.

Throughout Christian history, the resurrection has not been treated as the very pivot of the faith. This is something that has developed in recent times. Since the Enlightenment, when human reason has been given greater authority, requiring evidence for beliefs, Christians have tried to find proofs for their beliefs, using the categories of science. Fundamentalism, which holds that there are certain fundamental, factually based beliefs, is a development of the twentieth century.

The foregoing observations have been widely made, by both theologians and critical thinkers outside the Church. What is new here is that we now have knowledge of a technique for reading the gospels which shows us that the evangelists themselves did not believe it, and which shows us what really happened.

The evangelists were faced with a difficult and delicate task. The story of the resurrection had been consciously propagated by a man who understood very well the religious need for myth. Simon Magus, who was at the center of the event, was a brilliant manipulator who saw advantage in the story, to save his own life and to restore his lost power. It

The evidence for a real resurrection has been seen many times to be very weak. An empty tomb does not prove a resurrection; it only proves that the tomb was empty, and there could be many explanations for that. The excitement on the Day of Pentecost, sometimes cited as a psychological argument, proves nothing more than that the disciples believed in a resurrection.

Mark's gospel, in its original version, ended at Chapter 16, verse 8, with the women running away from the empty tomb. It contained no appearances of Jesus; these were added in a later appendix. The "appearances" seem to vary in each of the gospels, not, apparently, giving unanimous testimony such as would obviously be required for proof of such an event. John's gospel says that Mary Magdalene alone went to the tomb; the other three gospels say that three women went. Jesus and Luke speak of two angels (or men, in the case of Luke); Mark and Matthew of only one, and for Mark he is a young man in the tomb while for Matthew he is an angel, apparently sitting outside. Each gospel records different appearances on subsequent days.

The rest of the New Testament does not support any assertion that the resurrection is the central event of Christianity. It certainly is there, and Paul has a long discussion about it in 1 Corinthians 15, listing appearances, which are apparently not the same as those of the gospels. His main argument is hardly a convincing one: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain". This is an argument from consequences, not from evidence: such an argument usually betrays a weak position. When factual matters are in question, then the way to prove them is to give solid evidence that will stand up to testing. There is not much to be said for the argument "If these facts are not right, then I am going to be very upset".

Moreover, Paul does not put the weight of his case on the resurrection. Rather, the central event was the crucifixion. For Paul, the suffering of Christ was the means of atoning for sin, removing the burden of striving for perfection under the