

TRINITY BUT TRANSFIGURED

About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, “Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters-- one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what he was saying.) While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.” When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen [Luke 9:28-36].

The incident is of the most fascinating episodes in Jesus'[p] brief ministerial tenure, and bears stark resemblance to al-Mi'raaj (the night ascension of Muhammad[p]) in Muslim tradition [Q.53]. Presence of choosiest disciples, appearance of Moses[p] and Elias[p], and Jesus'[p] transfiguration to glory, all point to marvel of the situation at hand. Its purpose might well be summed up in one word, assurance; first to Jesus'[p] disciples who - in the wake of recent revelations [Lk 9:18-27] - may have developed some doubt; and then to Jesus[p] himself of God's approval and ultimate redemption.

Jesus[p] was accustomed of approaching solitary mountainous places for prayer [Lk 5:16]. As described, the event entails two basic themes; foremost of which is to assure the disciples concerning divine (glorified) status of Jesus[p] and where he now ranks among the elite of Israel's progeny. Here's something for Muslims to chew upon, in that the Islamic Jesus[p] was of the elite messengers delegated by God to Israel much like those of old. Jesus[p] being visited by arguably the greatest messengers of Israelite history in Moses[p] and Elias[p] aims to solidify Jesus'[p] place among them as the culmination (Son) of Israel's messianic commission.

Highlight of the event has to be Jesus'[p] remarkable transfiguration that fully un-veiled his true identity. We are not seeing a Jesus[p] in his exoteric human form, rather, his full glory is at display here with his disciples brought-forth to bear witness thereto. Yet it also seems to raise a problem for Christians inasmuch as where as a Trinitarian you would ideally expect communion of the Son with the Father and Holy Spirit constituting a proper Trinity as per Christian creed, it is striking that this angelicized Jesus[p] is conversely magnified in the very same light as Moses[p] and Elias[p] making up what you may call a Muslim Trinity of prophetic excellence. Amongst a number of noticeable similarities, consider how Jesus'[p] face becomes to shine as when Moses[p] re-

turned from Sinai [Exo 34:29], a direct result of immediate presence of God's Shekhinah which shrouded Mount Hermon in a glorious descend reminiscent to how it use to envelop Mount Sinai with splendor [Exo 24:16, 1Kg 19]. The Shekhinah is actually God's way of self-expression, whose descend signified by trademark misty cloud-like appearance is unmistakably identical to the Angel of Adonai that aided Israel through Yam Suph [Exo 13-15]. And we've rather conclusively shown elsewhere that this Archangel (most-probably Gabriel) is none other than the Holy Spirit of the New Testament.¹

Furthermore, as we said at the outset, the event also aims to prepare Jesus[p] for harsh hostility and turbulent trials that await him upon entry into Jerusalem, meanwhile, assuring him of God's backing throughout this journey. Before embarking forth, Jesus[p] habitually prayed God, only this time he seems to have been called for prayer out of heaven. What did he pray for? From Luke 6 and 22 we understand Jesus[p], having lived and taught in synagogues all his life and long witnessed ever-increasing Jewish stubbornness in face of truth and excessive regard for elderly tradition, perceived outright rejection and worse, hence devoted himself to seek deliverance of God. It is then that Moses[p] and Elias[p] appear to discuss Jesus'[p] departure. Here the Greek word for departure is exodus and so specifically stated they spake regarding Jesus'[p] eventual exodus, and we know well what exodus connotes. Coupled with descend of the Holy Spirit Muslims can safely insist Jesus[p] in face of adversity was being assured of an outcome not dissimilar to that enjoyed by Moses[p] [Exo 15] and Elias[p] [2Kings 2], both of whom received divine deliverance being miraculously rescued by God's Holy Spirit¹ when there seemed no salvation.

Now of course a single passage does not suffice in substantiating nor disproving an entire doctrine. Our observations per se may be not

conclusive in discrediting the Trinity altogether neither establish Muslim hypothesis of a redeemed Christ[p] [Q.4:157-158] from Gospel records, yet these are sure to lend weight to both Muslim contentions, specially in demonstrating once again how the Trinity doctrine fails to show up when you most expect it.

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¹. See: Identifying the Holy Spirit, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/114365308/>