

The Schlelein Family

Missionaries to the Tsongas of South Africa

JANUARY 2014 | LIMPOPO, SOUTH AFRICA

Christian/Muslim Debate

Two weeks from Saturday, I will be debating Muslim Abu Bakr Akoo on the topic "Did Jesus Claim to Be God?" The debate will be held at the historic Dutch Reformed Church in Makhado, with renowned South African scholar and linguist Koos van Rooy serving as the moderator.

Was Jesus a mere prophet, as Muslims believe, or is he God in the flesh, as believed by Christians? The two hour debate will address this issue, followed by 45 minutes of questions from the audience.

Muslims and Christians view Jesus in radically different ways. We will not be discussing women's rights, terrorism, or even Jesus' claims about himself within the Qur'an. For sake of time and clarity, Abu and I have narrowed the topic to what Jesus claims about himself within the Gospels, the portion of Scripture the Qur'an says was given by God (Surah 5:46).

Though my opponent has memorized the Arabic Qur'an in its entirety, he is not afraid to interact with the English Bible. He quotes from it often. He will not be arguing that Jesus denied deity in the Qur'an. That much is obvious. Rather, he will seek to prove that within the Christian Scripture itself Jesus never claimed to be God.

Most certainly he will go to passages like John 14:28, where Jesus said "My Father is greater than I" or Matthew 24:36 where he said "concerning the day and hour no one knows...nor the Son, but the Father only" or Mark 10:10 where he said "why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone."

Many Christians see these passages as an albatross of a problem for the Christian faith. They shouldn't. There are clear, rational explanations to these texts and Christians ought to know how to articulate them.

How You Can Pray

Abu is a friend of mine. We have eaten together on a number of occasions and he has heard the Christian message many times. But for most Muslims in the audience, this will be the first time they hear a clear presentation of the gospel.

I desperately need your prayers. Pray that I would exhibit an attitude of mutual respect but not an attitude of compromise. May the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus and the truth of His Word reign.

Cordially in Christ,
Paul and Melinda