

Walk on Water

THE WISDOM OF JESUS



FROM TRADITIONAL ARABIC SOURCES

Translated by Hamza Yusuf

The following sayings of Jesus ﷺ from traditional Arabic sources are excerpted from Walk on Water, a forthcoming book by Hamza Yusuf.

According to Aḥmad, Jesus ﷺ was known to have said, “Virtuous action does not consist in doing good to someone who has done good to you—that is merely returning a favor. Virtuous action consists in doing good to those who have wronged you.”

(AḤMAD)¹



According to Mālik b. Anas, Jesus, the son of Mary, ﷺ said, “Do not speak much without remembering God, for by doing so, you harden your hearts. Surely a hard heart is distant from God though you are unaware. Do not, like lords, look at the faults of others. Rather, like servants, look at your own faults. In truth, humanity is comprised of only two types, the afflicted and the sound. So show mercy to the afflicted, and praise God for well-being.”

(MUWAṬṬA’ OF MĀLIK)



According to Hilāl b. Yūsuf, Jesus, the son of Mary, ﷺ said, “If a day of fasting comes upon one of you, let him oil his hair and beard; let him moisten his lips lest others know he is fasting. If he gives alms with his right hand, let him conceal that from his left; should he pray, let him draw the curtain across his door. Surely, God apportions praise to people just as provision is apportioned.”

(IBN AL-MUBĀRAK)

According to Sālim b. Abī al-Ja‘d, Jesus, the son of Mary, ﷺ said, “Work for God and not for your stomachs. Look at the birds: they rise up at dawn and enter into the evening having neither planted nor harvested, yet God provides for them. Now if you say to me, ‘Our stomachs are so much larger than those of birds,’ look then at the oxen, the wild beasts and the donkeys; they neither plow nor harvest the earth, yet God provides for them as well. Beware of the luxuries of this world, and fear them, for the luxuries of this world are filth in the sight of God.”

(IBN AL-MUBĀRAK)



It is related that Jesus, the son of Mary, ﷺ said, “It is of no use to know something if one does not act upon it. In truth, an abundance of knowledge only increases one in pride if one does not act accordingly.”

(AḤMAD)



Once someone asked Jesus ﷺ, “How are you able to walk on water?”

Jesus replied, “With certainty.”

Then someone said, “But we also have certainty!”

Jesus then asked them, “Are stone, clay, and gold equal in your eyes?”

They replied, “Certainly not!”

Jesus responded, “They are in mine.”

(AḤMAD)



Jesus, the son of Mary, ﷺ was known to have said, “Love of this world is the source of every wrong action, and there is much harm in wealth.”

They asked, “What is its harm?”

Jesus replied, "Its possessor is never safe from pride and arrogance."

They said, "What if he is free of those two? Is there still harm?"

Jesus responded, "Yes, for by nurturing his wealth, he is diverted from the remembrance of God."

(AḤMAD)



Once Jesus ﷺ and his disciples were outside the temple of Solomon, and the disciples said, "O Messiah of God, look at the House of God! What could be finer?"

Jesus replied, "Amen. Amen. But I say to you that God will not leave one stone of this House standing. Indeed, God will destroy it because of the misdeeds of its people. God does not build anything of worth with gold or silver, nor even with these stones. Righteous hearts are more beloved to God than these stones. For God cultivates the earth with righteous hearts; and, in their absence, the earth is destroyed."

(AḤMAD)



Jesus, the son of Mary, ﷺ was accustomed to say, "O my God, surely I have entered into the morning unable to neither forestall what I fear nor hasten what I hope for. The whole affair is in another's hand. I have arisen bound to my deeds. There is no one poorer than me. Do not make me the cause of my enemies being cursed, nor make me the reason any harm should come to a friend. Do not place tribulation in my spiritual path, nor empower anyone over me who shows me no mercy."

(IBN ABĪ AL-DUNYĀ)

Once Jesus ﷺ met Iblīs [Satan] and Iblīs said, "Is it not true that only what has been decreed will happen?"

Jesus replied, "That is true."

Then Iblīs said, "So throw yourself down from the top of this mountain, and let us see if you live or not!"

Jesus answered, "The servant does not test his master; rather, it is the master who tests his servant."

(ABŪ NAʿĪM)



Some people once said to Jesus ﷺ, "O Spirit of God, inform us about the nature of wealth."

He answered, "The possessor of wealth always has one of three qualities: he either gains it by unlawful means, obstructs it from reaching the one who deserves it, or by accumulating it is distracted from worship of his Lord."

(IBN ʿABD AL-BARR)



Sufyān al-Thawwārī relates that Jesus, the son of Mary, ﷺ said, "Love of this world and love of the next world can never reside in the heart of a believer simultaneously, just as fire and water cannot be contained in a single vessel at the same time."

(IBN KATHĪR)



ʿUbayd Allāh b. Muslim relates that Jesus ﷺ once said, "Woe to the possessor of this world, since he must die and leave the world behind. He places his hope in it and is deceived. He trusts it and is forsaken."

Woe to the deluded, for this world shows them what they detest. In the end, they must abandon what they love, and depart for that which they were promised. Woe to the one whose constant preoccupation is this world and whose grave mistakes are his very actions. What shame they will cause him soon enough!”

(IBN ABĪ AL-DUNYĀ)



Jesus ﷺ said, “You will never obtain what you desire except through patience with what you despise.”

(AL-GHAZZĀLĪ)



According to Salām, Yazīd al-Ḍabī reported that once a woman said to Jesus, son of Mary, ﷺ as he was working, “Blessed be the

womb that bore you, and blessed be the breast that suckled you.”

Approaching her, Jesus said, “And blessed be someone who, having read the Book of God, acted in accordance with what was in it.”

(AḤMAD)



Jesus, the son of Mary, ﷺ said, “God has given me the power to give life to the dead, sight to the blind, sound to the deaf; but He did not give me the power to heal the fool of his foolishness.”

(AL-RĀZĪ)



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- 1 The names in parentheses indicate the hadith scholar in whose collection the hadith is found.

