

## How We as Muslims Celebrate Christ

(part 1 of 2)



We as Muslims share with the Jewish and Christian communities many points of commonality. These include: belief in God, belief that He revealed scriptures to humanity and sent a succession of prophets. The Qur'an, we notice, addresses the Jews and Christians from the vantage point of these points of agreement.

We are concerned in this article with a particular point of commonality between Muslims and Christians – and that is our reverence for Jesus and our recognition that he is the Messiah, the Christ. The Christian world has just recently finished celebrating the occasion of Christ's birth. We as Muslims do not observe Christmas, but we nevertheless celebrate Christ in our lives in a complete way, with constancy and steadfast devotion. Our celebration of Christ is one of faith, remembrance, and emulation.

Muslims honor Christ (peace be upon him) through their faith. What follows is stated in the Qur'an:

### **1. Faith in the miraculous conception of Christ. Jesus (peace be upon him) was born of a virgin.**

The Qur'an says:

**"Relate in the Book (the story of) Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place in the East. She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then We sent her our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects.**

**She said: 'I seek refuge with the Most Gracious (God) from you, (come not near) if you fear God.'**

**He said: ‘Nay, I am only a messenger from your Lord, (to announce) to you the gift of a pure son.’**

**She said: ‘How can I have a son, when no man has touched me, nor am I unchaste?’**

**He said: ‘So (it will be). Your Lord says: It is easy for Me, and We will make him a sign to the people and a mercy from Us, and it is a thing ordained.’” (Quran 19:16-21)**

## **2. Faith in the miracle of Christ's birth and the miracles of his infancy.**

God says:

**"At length she brought the (baby) to her people, carrying him (in her arms). They said: ‘O Mary! You have certainly done a thing unprecedented! O sister of Aaron! Your father was not a man of evil, nor your mother an unchaste woman!’**

**But she pointed to the baby. They said: ‘How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?’**

**He (Jesus) said: ‘I am indeed a servant of God. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet. And He has made me blessed wheresoever I be, and has enjoined on me prayer and charity as long as I live. And (has made me) kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable. So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised back to life.’” (Quran 19:27-33)**

## **3. Faith in the miracles that took place at Christ's hands.**

Jesus Christ performed numerous miracles during the time of his preaching.

For instance, the Qur'an tells us:

**"And (God) will make him a messenger to the Children of Israel, (with this message): ‘I have come to you, with a sign from your Lord, in that I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by God's leave. And I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I give life to the dead, by God's leave. And I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses. Surely therein is a sign for you if you did believe.’” (Quran 3:49)**

#### 4. Faith in Christ's ascension.

Muslims believe that God saved Jesus (peace be upon him) from the schemes of his enemies, by having Jesus ascend unto Him. We read in the Qur'an:

**"And (for) their saying, 'Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, the messenger of God.' And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but (another) was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it except the following of assumption. And they did not kill him, for certain.**

**Rather, God raised him to Himself. And ever is God Exalted in Might and Wise." (Quran 4:157-158)**

#### 5. Faith in the Gospel of Jesus.

Muslims believe in the scripture that God revealed unto Jesus. The following verses of the Qur'an attest to this:

**"He has sent down upon you, (O Muhammad), the Book in truth, confirming what was before it. And He revealed the Torah and the Gospel." (Quran 3:3)**

**"And We caused Jesus, the son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps, confirming that which was (revealed) before him in the Torah, and We bestowed on him the Gospel wherein is guidance and a light, confirming that which was (revealed) before it in the Torah – a guidance and an admonition unto those who ward off (evil)." (Quran 5:46)**

**"(The Day) when God will say: 'O Jesus, the son of Mary, remember My favor upon you and upon your mother when I supported you with the holy spirit and you spoke to the people in the cradle and in maturity; and (remember) when I taught you writing and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.'" (Quran 5:110)**

God describes the followers of Muhammad in terms of the Gospel, saying:

**"Their similitude in the Gospel is like a seed which sends forth its blade, then makes it strong; it then becomes thick, and it stands on its own stem, (filling) the sowers with wonder and delight." (Quran 48:29)**

Our belief in the Gospel of Jesus is a tenet of faith for Muslims, in and of itself, that is part of the Muslim belief in the scriptures – which is one of the essential six pillars of the Islamic faith. God says in the Quran:

**"The messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers; they all believe in God and His angels and His books and His messengers, saying: 'We make no difference between any of His messengers.'" (Quran 2:285)**

This means that a Muslim's belief in the Quran is not valid unless that Muslim also believes in the Gospel that was revealed to Jesus (peace be upon him).<sup>[1]</sup> Why is this the case? This is because the Quran came confirming the Gospel as well as the Torah.

God says: **"It is He who sent down to you (O Muhammad), in truth, the scripture, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel." (Quran 3:3)**

Another reason why our faith in the book revealed to Jesus (peace be upon him) is essential is because we as Muslims are required to believe in all of the scriptures that God has revealed. God commands us: **"Declare: 'I believe in what God has revealed of scriptures.'" (Quran 42:15)**

We ask: Is there any other faith group on Earth, outside of Christendom, who honor and celebrate the Gospel as an essential aspect of their faith besides the Muslims?

This celebration of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) – including his conception, his birth, his miracles, his scripture, and his message – is not merely an idea; it is a lived reality for the Muslims, infused every day in the most essential practices of our faith and worship. When a Muslim recites the Quran – and especially the chapters entitled "Mary", the "Family of Imran" and "The Table Spread" (which refers to the supper that Jesus – peace be upon him – had with the disciples) – this entails reciting the teachings about Christ as a form of worship. The verses honoring and praising Christ are also recited within our daily prayers. Belief in Christ is part of the essential Islamic beliefs that every Muslim is taught from earliest childhood.

All of this should encourage us, Muslims and Christians alike, to redouble our efforts at mutual understanding. It is not conducive to an atmosphere of understanding that many Christians around the world have the misconception that Muslims are hostile to Jesus (peace be upon him) or that we deny him – let alone their lack of awareness that we as Muslims revere Christ and love him from the depths of our hearts. Christian lack of awareness regarding our true beliefs is not only an error in knowledge, but an obstacle to the understanding between our two faiths that is needed to foster tolerance and dispel bigotry.

If Christians understand our true beliefs about Jesus Christ (peace be upon him), it would lead them to respect the prophet of Islam, even if they do not go

so far as to believe that Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, is indeed a prophet. We are talking here about basic human respect as demanded by the dictates of reason and ethics, a respect that precludes the possibility of slander and abuse.

Think about it. If some major American or European corporations got together and mobilized massive financial and human resources for the purpose of "getting to know Christ", depicting Jesus (peace be upon him) in the most beautiful possible manner as an absolutely free service to the public, what would Christians feel about such an effort and how would they describe it? They would certainly consider it to be a noble and positive endeavor.

This corporate effort described above is an imaginary scenario, but there is a reality that far surpasses it. We are talking about something that has taught people about Christ (peace be upon him) in the most noble and sublime of terms, taught people to believe in him, honor him, and love him. This reality is that Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, came with a book that celebrates and honors Jesus Christ (peace be upon him), a book that all Muslims for the past 1,400 years and all of the world's more than 1 billion Muslims living today accept to be the infallible word of God. This program of "getting to know Christ" was not a short-term effort. It has been constant in its success since the sixth century up to the present day.

What, then, should a discerning Christian feel about the prophet who taught literally billions of people all around the world to believe in, love, and honor Christ? At the very least, such a person would feel respect for that prophet who so loved Christ and taught his followers to do so as well, since it is natural to have respect for someone who reveres what you hold in high esteem.

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**Footnotes:**

[1] Muslims believe that the present day Bible has been adulterated over time.