

Jesus in Islam

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The Islamic view of Jesus lies between two extremes. The Jews, who rejected Jesus as a prophet, called him an imposter, while the Christians, on the other hand, considered him to be the son of God and worship him as such. Islam considers Jesus to be one of the greatest and most forbearing of prophets, in addition to Noah, Abraham, Moses and Muhammad, peace be upon them. Jesus is also considered to be the Messiah as well. This is in conformity with the Islamic view of the Oneness of God, the Oneness of Divine guidance, and the complementary role of the subsequent mission of God's messengers.

The message of God to humanity, which is to worship God and God alone and to live according to His instruction, was revealed to Adam (peace be upon him), who passed it on to his children. All the subsequent revelations to Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and, finally, Muhammad are in conformity with that message. Thus, Islam views any contradictions among revealed religions as man-made elements introduced into these religions. The position of Jesus in the three major creeds- Judaism, Christianity, and Islam- is not an exception.

Although the Quran does not present a detailed life-story of Jesus, it highlights the important aspects of his birth, his mission, his ascension to heaven. It also passes judgment on the Christian and Jewish beliefs concerning him. We will look at some of the truths which God revealed about Jesus in the Quran.

Born of a Virgin Mother

Like Christians, Muslims believe that Mary, Maria in Spanish, or Maryam as she is called in Arabic, was a chaste, virgin woman, who miraculously gave birth to Jesus. Jesus' birth in itself was a miracle in that he had no father. God describes his birth in the Quran as follows:

“And mention in the Book (the Quran), Mary, when she withdrew in seclusion from her family to a place facing east. She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then We sent to her a spirit from Us, (the angel Gabriel), and he appeared before her in the form of a man in all respects. She said: ‘Verily, I seek refuge with the Most Gracious (God) from you, if you do fear God.’ (The angel) said: ‘I am only a messenger from your Lord, (to announce) to you the gift of a righteous son.’ She said: ‘How can I have a son, when no man hath touched me, nor am I unchaste?’ He said: ‘So (it will be), your Lord said That is easy for Me (God): And (We wish) to appoint him as a sign to mankind and a mercy from Us (God), and it is a matter (already) decreed (by God).’” (Quran 19:16-21)

This fact, however, does not necessitate that Jesus is divine in essence or spirit, nor is he worthy of worship, for Adam’s existence was more miraculous than that of Jesus. If his miraculous birth were a proof that Jesus was God incarnate or His son, then Adam would have more right over this divinity than him. Rather, both are prophets who were inspired with revelation from God Almighty, and both were servants to Him living according to His commandments.

“Indeed, the likeness of Jesus with God is as the likeness of Adam. He created him of dust, then He said to him: ‘Be!’ and he was.” (Quran 3:59)

Miracles

Muslims, like Christians believe that Jesus performed miracles. These miracles were performed by the will and permission of God, Who has power and control over all things.

“Then will God say: ‘O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount My favor to you and to your mother. Behold! I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit (the angel Gabriel) so that you did speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. Behold! I taught you the Book and Wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel. And behold: you make out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My leave, and you breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by My leave, and you heal those born blind, and the lepers by My leave. And behold! You bring forth the dead by My leave. And behold! I did restrain the Children of Israel from (violence to you) when you did show them the Clear Signs, and the unbelievers among them said: ‘This is nothing but evident magic.’” (Quran 5:110)

God sent all prophets with miracles specific to the nation to whom they were sent to prove the veracity of their message. These miracles were not performed of their own accord; rather, they were only manifest in their hands by God's will. The miracles performed by Jesus were no different. The Jews were well advanced in the field of medicine, and the miracles which Jesus brought were of this nature, proving the truth of His message and in order to convince the Jews.

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His Divinity

Muslims believe in the Absolute Oneness of God, Who is a Supreme Being free of human limitations, needs and wants. He has no partners in His Divinity. He is the Creator of everything and is completely separate from His creation, and all worship is to be directed towards Him alone.

This was the same message brought by all prophets of God, including Jesus. He never claimed any qualities of divinity, nor did he claim that he deserved to be worshipped. He did not say that he was the “son” of God or part of the “Trinity”, but rather that he was only a servant of God sent to the Jews to bring them back to the true religion, worshipping One God and following his instruction. The majority of the verses in the Quran which mention Jesus discuss this aspect. They prove that he was only taken as an object of worship as a result of lies which people invented against him. It confirms accounts of his life where Jesus himself clearly denies that he deserved any worship, and it supports the notion that the parables and examples which God has given showed his mortal nature, not his divinity or filial relationship to God. God narrates of Jesus in the Quran:

“They have certainly disbelieved who say, ‘God is the Messiah, the son of Mary’ while the Messiah has said, ‘O Children of Israel, worship God, my Lord and your Lord...’” (Quran 5:72)

God says about the belief that Jesus is part of a “Trinity”:

“They have certainly disbelieved who say, ‘God is the third of three.’ (Rather) there is none worthy of worship except One (God). And if they do not desist from what they are saying, there will surely afflict the disbelievers among them a painful punishment. So will they not repent to God and seek His forgiveness? And God is Forgiving and Merciful. The Messiah (Jesus), son of Mary, was no more than a Messenger before whom many Messengers have passed away; and his mother adhered wholly to truthfulness, and they both ate food (as other mortals

do). See how We make Our signs clear to them; and see where they are turning away!” (Quran 5:73-75)

And also:

“O People of the Book (Jews and Christians)! Do not exceed the limits in your religion, and attribute to God nothing except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only a Messenger of God, and His command that He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and in His Messengers, and do not say: ‘God is a Trinity.’ Give up this assertion; it would be better for you. For God is indeed (the only) One God. Far be it from His glory that He should have a son. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth. And God is sufficient for a guardian.” (Quran 4:171)

God deems this belief as an enormity against His Essence:

“And they say: ‘The Most Merciful (God) has taken (for Himself) a son.’ Assuredly you utter a hideous thing, whereby almost the heavens are torn, and the earth is split asunder and the mountains fall in ruins; That they ascribe unto the Most Merciful a son, when it is not suitable for (the Majesty of) the Most Merciful that He should take a son. There is none in the heavens and the earth but comes unto the Most Merciful as a slave.” (Quran 19:88-93)

On the Day of Judgment, Jesus again will free himself from this false attribution. God gives us a glimpse of what he will say when he is asked about why people worshipped him:

“And (beware the Day) when God will say, “O Jesus, Son of Mary, did you say to the people, ‘Take me and my mother as deities besides God?’” He will say, ‘Exalted are You! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right. If I had said it, You would have known it. You know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within Yourself. Indeed, it is You who is Knower of the unseen. I said not to them except what you commanded me – to worship God, my Lord and your Lord...” (Quran 5:116-117)

In these verses, God proclaims that ascribing to Jesus the attribute '*son of God*' or '*part of a Trinity*' is indeed a great blasphemy. The reason for this returns to the key fundamental assertion that God is Unique and unlike any of his creation; as well as in His Essence, He is Unique in His Divinity, His Attributes and His Lordship. All of the above make up the strict monotheism

which He revealed in His Scriptures, from them the first of the Ten Commandments:

“I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:1-3)

Ascribing a son to God is in clear opposition to that principle for which He created the Creation and sent prophets. God says in the Quran:

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.” (Quran 51:56)

He also said:

“And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, (saying), ‘Worship God and avoid all false objects of worship...’” (Quran 16:36)

His Mission

As discussed earlier, the Quran clearly affirms that Jesus was a prophet, as well as the fact that he was no more than that. Prophets are indeed the best of creation. They are those whom God chooses to receive His revelation, yet at the same time, they are mere emissaries of God and do not deserve to receive worship. Jesus, as mentioned in the Quran, is no different than any of them in this respect.

Throughout the Quran, Jesus is identified fundamentally as a prophet of God sent to the Jews who had over time deviated from the teachings of Moses and other messengers.

“And (remember) when Jesus, son of Mary, said: ‘O Children of Israel, I am the Messenger of God sent to you, confirming the Torah (which came) before me...’” (Quran 61:6)

Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, was the last in the line of Jewish prophets. He lived according to the Torah, the Law of Moses, and taught his followers to do likewise. In Matthew 5:17-18, Jesus stated:

“Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the (way of) the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

In this aspect, he and his message was no different than the previous prophets chosen by God, who all called to the worship of God and God alone, as well as to obedience to His commandments. As he was miraculously supported by God in his conception, birth, and childhood, he was also supported by numerous miracles to prove that he was a messenger from God. However, the majority of the Jews rejected his prophethood.

Not only did Jesus affirm the scriptures revealed before him, but he also foretold of another prophet to come after him. God says:

“And when Jesus, son of Mary, said: ‘O Children of Israel! Indeed I am the messenger of God unto you, confirming that which was (revealed) before me in the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a messenger who will come after me, whose name is the Praised One.’” (Quran 61:6)

This fact is also mentioned in the New Testament. Careful study shows that Jesus, peace be upon him, refers to the same prophet in John 14:16-17:

“And I will give you another Counselor (the Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him), to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth.”

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His Crucifixion

God clarified in the Quran that Jesus was not crucified; rather, it was made to seem that way to the Jews, and that God raised him to the Heavens. The Quran does not explain, though, who was the person crucified instead of Jesus, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him.

“...They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but (another) was made to resemble him to them...” (Quran 4:157)

“God lifted him up to His presence. God is Almighty, All-Wise.” (Quran 4:158)

As such, Islam denies that Jesus came to this earth with the purpose of sacrificing himself for the sin of Adam, Eve, and the rest of humanity, freeing them from its burden. Islam strictly rejects the notion that any person bears the sin of another. God says:

“No bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another.” (Quran 39:7)

Also, Islam stresses the notion that God is able to and forgive all sins, if a person truly repents and then refrains from repeating it. God does not need any blood sacrifice for that, let alone descend in the form of man himself and die for every man's sins. Rather, God's mercy extends to all creatures, believers and disbelievers alike. The door to forgiveness is open to anyone who seeks it.

The Second Coming of Christ

As Christians do, Muslims also believe in the return of Jesus the Messiah to earth, although his role and reason for his return does differ from what the Christians propose. He will return to earth first and foremost to prove his mortality and refute the false beliefs people held about him. He will live a normal life, marry, and also die as any other human. At that point, the matter will be clear concerning him, and all people will have believed that he was truly mortal.

“There is not one of the People of the Scripture but will believe in him (Jesus) before his death, and on the Day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them.” (Quran 4: 159)

Jesus will also fight the false Christ, who will call people to the belief that he is God, and who will appear just before he returns. Jesus will defeat the antichrist, and all people will accept the true religion of God. The world will see a type of peace and serenity unfelt in history, all worshipping the same God, subservient to Him alone, and at peace with one another.

Conclusion

What has preceded was just a brief introduction to the truth which God revealed about Jesus in His final Book, the Quran, which he revealed to Muhammad. There is only One God who created one race of human beings and communicated to them one message: submission to the worship of God and God alone and following His instruction – known in Arabic as Islam. That message was conveyed to the first human beings on this earth, and reaffirmed by all of the prophets of God who came after them throughout all the ages.

Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, performed miracles and invited the Israelites to the same message of submission (Islam) as did all of the prophets who preceded him. He was not God, nor was he the ‘Son of God’, but was the Messiah, an illustrious prophet of God. Jesus did not invite people to worship himself; rather, he called them to worship God, Whom he himself worshipped. He confirmed the laws of the Torah which Prophet Moses taught; he lived by them, and instructed his disciples to follow them to the finest detail, after allowing those things which the Jews made illegal upon themselves. Before his departure, he informed his followers of the last prophet, Muhammad of Arabia, who would come after him, and instructed them to observe his teachings.

In the generations after Jesus’ departure from this world, his teachings were distorted and he was elevated to the status of God. Six centuries later, with the coming of Prophet Muhammad, the truth about Jesus Christ was finally retold and preserved eternally in the last book of divine revelation, the Quran. Furthermore, many of the laws of Moses, which Jesus followed, were revived in their pure and unadulterated form and implemented in the divinely

prescribed way of life known as Islam, while many other aspects and injunctions of the laws which had been brought by the earlier prophets were lightened or dropped altogether.

Consequently, the reality of the prophets, their uniform message, and the way of life which they followed, can only be found preserved in the religion of Islam, the only religion prescribed by God for man. Furthermore, only Muslims today actually follow Jesus and his true teachings. Their way of life is much more in tune with the way of life Jesus practiced than any of the modern day “Christians.” Love and respect of Jesus Christ is an article of faith in Islam, and God stressed the importance of belief in Jesus in numerous places in the Quran.