

Jesus taught the same eternal message that was taught the Most Merciful by all the Messengers of God, from Adam on through Noah, Abraham, Moses and ending with the mission of God's last Prophet, Muhammad, peace be on them all, whose coming was foretold by Jesus himself.



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FYI

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In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful



There are varied beliefs about Jesus among people of different faiths. Many believe he is God or the son of God. Some maintain that he was simply a very wise man. Others do not recognize Jesus at all, religiously or historically. The Islamic position regarding Jesus comes from the Quran, the last revelation of God preserved in its original form, in which God relates the story of Jesus in great detail. The Quran tells us that Jesus said, *"I am a servant of God. He has granted me the Scripture and made me a prophet"* (19:30). This brochure summarizes the reality of Jesus according to Islamic teachings.

Muslims believe that Jesus was a human being appointed by God as His messenger. His birth was extraordinary and he was blessed with great miracles from God (*Allah* in Arabic). In essence, God chose Jesus to deliver the same unified message that past prophets had brought to humanity: to worship the One God and to lead a morally upright life in order to attain salvation in the eternal life after death.

Jesus lived about 2,000 years ago in ancient Palestine when the Roman Empire was at its zenith. He was not conceived normally, but was miraculously implanted in the womb of a young woman named Mary by the command of God. In this sense, Jesus was a "word" from God and a special sign for humanity. In fact, he was the last in a long line of messengers sent to the Jewish people.



MARY, THE BLESSED

Mary was a righteous woman whose mother had dedicated her to God's service even before she was born. As a child, she lived an admirable life marked by good health and piety. She was raised by the wise Zachariah, who instilled in her a beautiful sense of faith in God. As a young woman, Mary sought to purify herself further for her Lord. She withdrew from her people to a sanctuary in the east, where she could meditate in seclusion and peace.

During this period, on a day that seemed no different from the rest, the angel Gabriel visited her in the form of a man. Fearful of the stranger, Mary prayed for protection. He comforted her, declaring that God sent him to announce the glad tidings of a faultless son. Stunned, Mary asked how this was possible since no man had ever touched her. Gabriel replied, *"This is how God creates what He will: when He has ordained something, He only says, "Be," and it is"* (Quran, 3:47).

When she felt the baby within her, Mary fled her sanctuary, fearing what people would do or say when they heard the news. In her anguish, she cried out, *"I wish I had been dead and forgotten long before all this!"* (Quran, 19:23). The angel Gabriel reassured her of God's blessings and she found shade and a cool spring. Under a date-palm in the warmth of late summer, she made her dwelling, and there bore the child who was unlike any other in human history.

Shortly thereafter, the Quran recounts that Mary returned to her community carrying the child who was to be called the *"Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary"* (3:45). When her people saw the baby in her arms, they could not believe their eyes. They accused her of being unchaste and implied that she had ruined her family name and reputation. Gabriel had already instructed her to abstain from conversation (19:26). So, Mary simply pointed towards the child.

JESUS' MIRACLES AND MESSAGE

God granted Jesus many miracles which began right after his blessed birth. The Quran testifies that in defense of his mother and of the truth, Jesus spoke as an infant, saying, “I am a servant of God. He has granted me the Scripture and made me a prophet. And He made me blessed wherever I may be. He commanded me to pray, to give alms as long as I live” (19:30-31). This miraculous speech silenced the detractors.

Throughout his youth, Jesus remained dutiful to his mother and developed quickly in intelligence, wisdom and devotion. He astounded the learned and was greatly admired by his companions. Jesus claimed to be a sign of God and a Messenger to the Israelites.

When he came of age, Jesus began to travel and preach throughout the land of Palestine. He taught the scripture that God sent to him, known as the *Injeel* (Good News or Gospel), which confirmed the truth of previous holy books.

Jesus taught that love and mercy overcome hate and anger. He stressed that only true and sincere faith in the Creator and obedience to Him can bring a person salvation in this life and the hereafter. To reinforce his message, God granted him the ability to perform miracles. He healed the sick, uplifted the distressed and revived the dead. All of these miracles happened with God's permission, and Jesus never took credit for them himself. According to the Quran, Jesus said,

“...I have come to you with a sign from your Lord: I will make the shape of a bird for you out of clay, then breathe into it and, with God's permission, it will become a real bird; I will heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead back to life with God's permission; I will tell you what you may eat and what you may store up in your houses. There truly is a sign for you in this, if you are believers. I have come to confirm the truth of the Torah which preceded me, and to make some things lawful to you which used to be forbidden. I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. Be mindful of God, obey me: God is my Lord and your Lord, so serve Him—that is a straight path.” (3:49-51)

Jesus led a simple and pious life, attracting an inner circle of devoted followers who listened to his teachings with fervor and humility. These disciples included Peter, Barnabas and John, who helped spread Jesus' message of submission to the One God.

A TEST OF WILLS

As the message of Jesus began to gain wider acceptance, a small group of hypocritical and self-serving men began plotting against him. They were some of the priests and leaders of the Israelites, whose status and wealth depended upon their position as the sole interpreters of religion to the masses. They pursued him and his followers, and plotted to crucify him on a Roman cross. They were sure they had killed him, but God protected Jesus, saved him from their schemes and raised him up to Himself. God says in the Quran, “[They] said, ‘We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of God.’ They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, though it was made to appear like that to them;

those that disagreed about him are full of doubt, with no knowledge to follow, only supposition: they certainly did not kill him – God raised him up to Himself. God is Almighty and Wise” (4:157-158)

Hence, Islam teaches that God rescued the noble Jesus by removing him from this world. God raised him to the heavens, to a place near Him, and will cause him to return to this world at a later time.

“[This is] a statement of the Truth about which they are in doubt: it would not befit God to have a child. He is far above that: when He decrees something, He says only, ‘Be,’ and it is.” (Quran, 19:34-35)

With their messenger gone, the devoted followers of Jesus tried to maintain the purity and clarity of his teachings. However, in the next few centuries, different beliefs about Jesus developed amongst some of the early Christians. They held that he was divine, calling him the son of God, which eventually became the dominant Christian belief. In contrast, others maintained he was not the literal son of God or God Himself, but a messenger sent by the One God. Muslims share this second view of the early Christians, holding that Jesus was sent to guide his people just like the other prophets before him.

RESTORING JESUS' LEGACY

Muslims believe that every nation received a messenger from God. Just like the prophets before him, Jesus' message lasted in its original purity for a period of time, but the scripture he received was slowly altered and his original call to absolute monotheism became corrupted. Six centuries after Jesus, God sent His last messenger, Muhammad^{PBUH} and revealed His final scripture, known as the Quran. Prophet Muhammad^{PBUH} was sent to all of humanity and he confirmed the miraculous birth of

Jesus, the miracles he performed and the essential truth of the message that God chose to reveal through Jesus. The Quran has been preserved in its exact original form for over 14 centuries. Through this final revelation, God protects His guidance for the entire human race, containing the same core message sent to all prophets and messengers of the One God, including Jesus, Moses, Abraham and Noah, peace be upon them.

According to the Quran, Jesus himself puts any false claims about his identity to rest: “I told them only what You commanded me to: ‘Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.’ I was a witness over them during my time among them. Ever since You took my soul, You alone have been the watcher over them: You are witness to all things” (5:117).

Today, Muslims seek to follow the original message of Jesus and all the prophets before him as confirmed by God's final messenger, Muhammad^{PBUH}. Islam literally means ‘submission’ to God and is the same way of life followed by all the messengers of God. Only by following the original call of God's messengers can we find clear direction and tranquility in our lives.

by **Yahiya Emerick**

Suggested Reading:

Muhammad by Yahiya Emerick
The Cross & The Crescent by Jerald Dirks

Note: The Superscript PBUH next to Prophet Muhammad PBUH represents the invocation Muslims say with his name: May God's peace and blessings be upon him.