

Jesus Christ and Virgin Mary in the Holy Qur'an

By: Dr. Syed H. Akhtar
Austin, Texas

The Qur'an is a source of knowledge about the Prophet Jesus and his mother Virgin Mary, peace be upon them, that is not generally known to those who follow the Christian faith. The Qur'an not only leads us to a better understanding of who he was, but also it increases our respect and love for him. The Qur'an was revealed 600 years after Jesus' birth. It provides a great perspective – which no other source can provide – on his role as a Prophet and his teachings, in the Unitarian tradition.

The Qur'an does not cover in great detail about the personal life of Prophet Jesus. The miracles and powers which he was given are mentioned, but mostly in general terms. Similarly, the Book he was given by God, known as the Injeel (Evangel), is mentioned in the Qur'an. However, the Qur'an is quite specific as to his purpose and mission, how he appeared on Earth, how his mission ended, who he was, and equally important, who he was not.

Qur'an says this about Jesus in Chapter two:

And truly We gave to Moses the Books and We caused a train of messengers to follow after him, and We gave to Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs and We supported him with the Holy Spirit. (2:87) (The holy spirit here refers to the Angel Gabriel).

The following verse refers to the line of messengers to which Jesus belonged.

And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob; each of them We guided. And Noah did We guide in an earlier time, and from his seed David, and Solomon, and Job, and Joseph, and Moses, and Aaron. Thus do We reward the good. And Zachariah, and John, and Jesus, and Elias; each one was of the righteous. And Ishmael, and Elisha, and Jonah, and Lot; each one of them did We prefer above the creation. (6:84-86)

The Qur'an states that the list of messengers it gives is not comprehensive, for there are:

“...messengers We have mentioned to you before and messengers We have not mentioned to you...” (4:164)

In fact, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh&p) said that Jesus was one of 124,000 Prophets, and there was no conflict or disagreement among them. In one passage of the Qur'an, God reveals:

Say: We believe in God and what is revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and what was entrusted to Moses and Jesus and the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we have surrendered. (3:84)

All the Prophets were well aware that they were sent by God for the same. In fact, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh&p) said that Jesus was one of 124,000 Prophets, and there was no conflict or disagreement among them. In one passage of the Qur'an, God reveals:

All the Prophets were well aware that they were sent by God for the same purpose and with the same message:

And when We exacted a covenant from the Prophets, and from you (Muhammad), and from Noah and Abraham and Moses and Jesus, son of Mary. We took from them a solemn covenant; that He may ask the loyal of their loyalty. And He has prepared a painful doom for the unfaithful. (33:7-8)

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He has ordained for you that religion which He commanded to Noah, and that which We inspired in you (Muhammad), and that which We commanded to Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying: Establish the religion and do not be divided in it! (42:13)

Thus, the picture of Jesus in the Qur'an is that of a messenger who, like all the other messengers, was sent for his time and age, as a part of an ordered unfolding of the universe:

And We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps, confirming what was before him, and We bestowed on him the Gospel wherein is guidance and light, confirming that which was before it in the Torah – a guidance and a warning to those who are careful. (5:46)

Jesus had knowledge of the past and the future:

Jesus, son of Mary, said: O Children of Israel! See, I am the messenger of God to you, confirming what was before me in the Torah, and bringing good news of a messenger who will come after me, whose name is Ahmad (the Praised One)... (61:6)

About Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus, the Qur'an says:

Remember when the wife of Imran said: My Lord! I have vowed to You what is within my womb, so accept it from me. See, You and You alone are the Hearer, and the Knower! And when she delivered, she said: My Lord! See, I am delivered of a female – and God knew best of what she was delivered – and the male is not like the female. And see! I have named her Mary, and I crave Your protection for her and her offspring from Satan, the outcast. And her Lord accepted her

with full acceptance and accorded her a goodly growth, and made Zachariah her guardian. Whenever Zachariah went into the sanctuary where she was, he found her with food. He said: O Mary! Where does this come from? She answered: It is from God. God gives without stint to whom He will.

Then Zachariah prayed to his Lord and said: My Lord! Bestow on me, of Your bounty, goodly offspring. See, You are the Hearer of Prayer! And the angels called to him as he stood praying in the sanctuary: God gives you good news of (a son) John, who comes to confirm a word from God, godly, chaste, and a Prophet of the righteous. He said: My Lord! How can I have a son when age has overtaken me already and my wife is barren? The angel answered: It is so. God does what He will. He said: My Lord! Appoint a token for me. Said (the angel): The token to you shall be that you shall not speak to mankind for three days except by signs. Remember your Lord much and give praise in early hours of night and morning.” 3: 35-41

(John the Baptist is referred to as “Yahya” in the Qur’an. He was the Prophet who directly preceded Jesus and heralded his coming).

The event of the birth of Jesus is given here:

And when the angels said: O Mary! See, God has chosen you and purified you, and preferred you above the women of creation. O Mary! Be obedient to your Lord, prostrate yourself and bow with those who bow (in worship). This is of the news of things hidden. We reveal it to you (Muhammad).

You were not present with them when they cast their lots, to decide which of them should be the guardian of Mary, nor were you present with them when they disputed it. And when the angels said: O Mary! God gives you good news of a word from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, exalted in the world and the hereafter, and one of those brought near (to God). He will speak to mankind in his cradle and in his manhood, and he is of the righteous. She said: My Lord! How can I have a child when no man has touched me? He said: It is so. God creates what He will. If He decrees a thing, He says to it only: Be! And it is. And He will teach him the Book and the wisdom, and the Torah and the Gospel. And He will make him a messenger to the Children of Israel, saying: I come to you with a sign from your Lord. See! I fashion for you out of clay the likeness of a bird, and I breathe into it and it is a bird, by God’s will. I heal him who was born blind, and the leper, and I raise the dead, by God’s will. And I announce to you what you eat and what you store up in your houses. Here truly is a sign for you, if you are believers. And I confirm what was before me of the Torah, and to make lawful some of what was forbidden to you. I come to you with a sign from your Lord, so keep your duty to God and obey me. God is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is the straight path. But when Jesus

became conscious of their disbelief, he cried: Who will be my helpers in the cause of God? The disciples said: We will be God's helpers. We believe in God, and bear you witness that we have submitted. Our Lord! We believe in what You have revealed and we follow him whom You have sent. Enroll us among those who bear witness. (3:42-53)

An account of the birth of Jesus in the Chapter titled Maryam (Mary):

And make mention of Mary in the Book, when she withdrew from her people to a chamber looking East, and secluded herself from them. Then We sent to her Our spirit* and it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man. She said: I seek refuge in the Beneficent One from you, if you are God-fearing. He said: I am only a messenger from your Lord that I may bestow upon you a sinless son. She said: How can I have a son when no man has touched me, and I have not been unchaste? He said: It is so. Your Lord says: It is easy for Me. And We will make of him a sign for mankind and a mercy from Us, and it is a thing ordained. And she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a far off place. And the pangs of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree. She said: O! Would that I had become a thing passed into nothingness, forgotten! Then (a voice) cried to her from below, saying: Grieve not! Your Lord has placed a stream beneath you. And shake the trunk of the palm tree toward you. You will cause ripe dates to fall upon you. So eat and drink and be comforted. And if you meet any person, say: I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent, and may not speak this day to any person. Then she brought him to her own folk, carrying him. They said: O Mary! This is an astonishing thing you have brought. O sister of Aaron! Your father was not a wicked man, nor your mother a harlot. Then she pointed to him. They said: How can we speak to one in the cradle, who is an infant boy? He spoke: See! I am the servant of God. He has given me the Book and has appointed me a Prophet, and has made me blessed wherever I may be, and has commanded me to prayer and charity for so long as I live. And has made me dutiful toward her who bore me, and has not made me arrogant and unblessed. Peace be on me the day I was born, and the day that I die, and the day I shall be raised alive! Such was Jesus, son of Mary: a statement of the truth about which they doubt. It does not befit God that He should take to Himself a son. Glory be to Him! When He decrees a thing, He says to it only: Be! And it is. And see, God is my Lord and your Lord, so serve Him. That is the right path. (19:16-36)

(“Our spirit” here again refers to the Angel Gabriel)

Jesus' disciples are mentioned in the Qur'an as follows:

“O you who believe! Be God's helpers, even as Jesus, son of Mary, said to the disciples: Who are my helpers for God? They said: We are God's helpers. And a party of the Children of Israel believed, while a party disbelieved....” (61:14)

Qur'anic description of "The Last Supper."

And when I inspired the disciples: Believe in Me and My messenger, they said: We believe. Bear witness that we have submitted. When the disciples said: O Jesus, son of Mary! Is your Lord able to send down for us a table spread with food from heaven? He said: Observe your duty to God, if you are true believers. (They) said: We wish to eat from it, that we may satisfy our hearts and know that you have spoken the truth to us, and that we may be witnesses to this. Jesus, son of Mary, said: O God, our Lord, send down for us a table spread with food from heaven, that it may be a feast for us, for the first of us and the last of us, and a sign from You. Give us sustenance, for You are the Best of Sustainers. God said: See! I send it down. And whoever disbelieves in you afterwards, him I shall surely punish with a punishment with which I have not punished any of (My) creation. (5:111-115)

Jesus, a servant of God:

And when the son of Mary is quoted as an example, behold! The folk laugh out loud, and say: Are our gods better, or is he? They raise not the objection but for argument's sake. No! But they are a contentious people. He is nothing but a servant on whom we bestowed favor, and we made him a pattern for the Children of Israel. (43:57-59)

"...and we caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow, and gave him the Gospel, and placed compassion and mercy in the hearts of those who followed him. But they invented monasticism – which We did not ordain for them – seeking only God's pleasure, but they did not observe it with correct observance. So We gave those of them who believe their reward, but many of them are evil-doers." (57:27)

Jesus brought a simple message:

When Jesus came with clear proofs, he said: I have come to you with wisdom, and to make plain some of that about which you differ. So keep your duty to God, and obey me. God, he is my Lord and your Lord. So worship Him. This is the right path. (43:63-64)

Jesus' miracles mentioned in the Qur'an:

When God says: O Jesus, son of Mary! Remember My favor to you and to your mother; how I strengthened you with the holy spirit*, so that you spoke to mankind in the cradle as in maturity; and how I taught you the Scripture and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel; and how you shaped from clay the likeness of a bird by My permission, and blew upon it and it was a bird by My permission, and you healed him who was born blind and the leper by My permission; and how I restrained the Children of Israel from you when you came to them with clear proofs, and those of them who disbelieved exclaimed: This is nothing but mere magic! (5:110)

The Qur'an explicitly refutes that Jesus was the "begotten son of God":

They say: God has taken a son. Glory be to Him! He has no needs! His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. You have no basis for this. Do you speak concerning God that which you do not know? (10:68)

When God said: O Jesus! See, I am gathering you and causing you to ascend to Me, and am cleansing you of those who disbelieve and am setting those who follow you above those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection. Then to Me you will all return, and I shall judge between you as to that in which you used to differ. As for those who disbelieve, I shall chastise them with a heavy chastisement in the world and the hereafter; and they will have no helpers. And as for those who believe and do good works, He will pay them their wages in full. God loves not the wrong-doers. This We recite to you is a revelation and a wise reminder. The likeness of Jesus with God is as the likeness of Adam. He created him of dust, and then He said to him: Be! And he was. (3:55-59)

And they say: The Beneficent has taken unto Himself a son. Certainly you utter a disastrous thing, whereby almost the heavens are torn, and the earth is split open and the mountains fall in ruins, that you ascribe to the Beneficent a son! When it is not fitting for the Beneficent that He should take a son. There is no one in the heavens and the earth but that he comes to the Beneficent as a servant. (19:88-93)

And they say: God has taken to Himself a son. Glory be to Him! No! But whatever is in the heavens and earth is His. All are subservient to Him, the Originator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a thing, He says to it only: Be! And it is. (2:116-117)

The Qur'an further rejects that Jesus was "divine" or "God incarnate":

They indeed have disbelieved who say: God is the Messiah, son of Mary. Say: Who then can do anything against God, if He willed to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, and his mother, and everyone on the earth? To God is the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them. He creates what He will. And God is able to do all things. (5:17)

The scenario on the Day of Judgment regarding Jesus's teachings is foretold:

And when God says: O Jesus, son of Mary! Did you say to mankind: Take me and my mother for two gods besides God? He says: Glory be to You! It was not mine to utter that which I had no right to do. If I used to say it, then You would have known. You know what is in my mind, and I know not what is in yours.

You and You alone are the Knower of all things hidden. I spoke to them only what You commanded me: Worship God, my Lord and your Lord. I was a witness of them while I lived among them, and when you took me You were the Watcher over them. You are the Witness over all things. If You punish them, they are Your slaves, and if You forgive them (as well). You and You alone are the Mighty, the Wise. (5:116-118)

They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! God is the Messiah, son of Mary. The Messiah said: O Children of Israel, worship God, my Lord and your Lord. Lo! Whoever ascribes partners to God, for him God has forbidden the Garden. His abode is the Fire. For evil-doers there will be no helpers. (5:72)

The Qur'an refutes and rejects the concept of "Trinity":

O People of the Book! Do not exaggerate in your religion, nor utter anything concerning God except the truth. The Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, was only a messenger of God, and His word which he conveyed to Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers, and do not say "three" – cease! It is best for you! God is only one God. It is far removed from His Majesty that He should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And God is sufficient as a Defender. The Messiah would never scoff at being a servant of God, nor would the favored angels. Whoever scoffs at His service and is proud, He will assemble all such of them to Himself; then as for those who believed and did good works, to them He will pay their wages in

full, adding to that out of His bounty; and as for those who were scornful and proud, them He will punish with a painful doom; and they will not find for themselves any protector or helper against God. (4:171-173)

They surely disbelieve who say: God is the third of three; when there is no god save the One God. If they desist not from saying it, a painful doom will fall on those of them who disbelieve. Will they not rather turn to God and seek forgiveness of Him? For God is Forgiving, Merciful. The Messiah, son of Mary, was no more than a messenger; messengers had passed away before him. And his mother was a saintly woman. But they both used to eat food. See how We make the revelation clear for the people, and see how they are turned away! (5:73-75)

The Qur'an rejects the doctrine of the crucifixion of Jesus, but affirms his ascension to God:

“And because of their saying: We killed the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, God's messenger – they did not kill him or crucify him, but so it was made to appear to them; and look! Those who disagree concerning it are in doubt about it; they have no knowledge of it except pursuit of a conjecture; they did not kill him surely; but God took him up to Himself. God was ever Mighty, Wise”. (4:157-158)

There is a significant amount of literature in Islam on Prophet Jesus apart from what was revealed in the Qur'an. It came from the teachings of Prophet Muhammad pbuh and members of his family endowed with inspired knowledge.

The above is a partial listing of verses in the Qur'an about Prophet Jesus, son of Virgin Mary. For a complete review please refer to an approved translation of the Qur'an.

The End

References: 1. The Holy Qur'an. Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali. Published by Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an Inc. NY. 2. Jesus a Prophet of Islam by Attaur Rahim.