

Jesus
Or
Muhammad?

A Question of Assurance

Steven Masood



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*Jesus or Muhammad?
A Question of Assurance
by Steven Masood*

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To Christians and Muslims

Content



Acknowledgement.....	xiii
Introduction	xv
1. Jesus and Muhammad: Bethlehem and Mecca	19
The advent of Jesus and Muhammad	
Call to ministry	
The essence of their messages	
The difference in their approach	
Conclusion	
2. And God said, 'Let there be . . .'	33
The difference in Creation accounts	
Muhammad and Jesus: Their part in creation	
The Light of the world	
Conclusion	
3. God created Adam from . . .	40
Adam created in the image of God?	
Adam and Eve in the garden: the Qur'anic perspective	
The fall: Satan in the garden	
The dilemma that demands solution: Biblical versus	
Qur'anic perspective	
The broken covenant: A review of the Qur'anic and	
Biblical narrative	

The result of the broken covenant	
The solution: Guidance?	
God's 'Grace and Mercy plan'	
Conclusion	
4. God spoke to Abraham	53
The call of Abraham in the Qur'an and the Bible	
Covenant between God and Abraham as Friends	
Abraham, the Father of all true believers	
The promised son	
Ishmael and Hagar: Biblical and Islamic perspective	
Abraham and the Ka'ba	
Muhammad and the Ka'ba	
The Great Sacrifice	
Jesus as the Great Sacrifice	
Conclusion: A recap of the whole situation	
5. God gave Moses the Law	73
Childhood of Moses	
Moses flees to Midian	
Moses and Jethro	
Moses and the burning bush	
Moses initiated as the Prophet	
Moses before Pharaoh	
Plagues strike Egypt	
What about the Passover? The Qur'an avoids the subject	
Crossing the waters	
Muhammad in imitation of Moses, the Torah and the Israelites	
The tablets and the Calf	
Moses and the Torah	
Moses and the Law - The Mosaic Covenant	
The story of Korah in the Qur'an and the Bible	
Qur'anic claim: God turned some Israelites into apes and pigs	
Argument over figurative and literal	

God and the Promised Land: The Islamic narrative
Muslims and the Replacement Theology
Conclusion

6. God anointed kings107

- The story of Saul
- Gideon's story mixed up with Saul's
- Other discrepancies in the Qur'anic version of the story of Saul
- Islamic Jihad behind the story of Saul in the Qur'an
- David and Solomon as kings and prophets
- David's appointment
- David and Goliath: Islamic exegetical perspective
- The Book of Psalms and the Qur'an
- David and Bathsheba
- Repentance of David as an example for us
- God blessed David with Solomon
- Solomon spoke the languages of birds and animals
- Biblical perspective of Solomon
- King Solomon's Temple and Islam
- The temple and the Masjid – Dome of the Rock
- Were Solomon's craftsmen and workmen Jinns and demons?
- Talking ants and the bird with the news
- Solomon's Phantom and the signet Ring
- Conclusion

7. Beyond the narratives of the Prophets.....142

- Noah and the Flood
- Comparing the similarities in the Qur'an of Muhammad and Noah
- Separation from family and the establishment of the Muslim brotherhood
- Jesus and Noah
- The Qur'an and the story of Lot
- The Bible's account of Lot and the city of Sodom
- Arab stories

The story of Joseph
Similarities between Jesus and Joseph
Parallels of Joseph in the Qur'an with Jesus in the Bible
The Suffering of Job in the Bible and the Qur'an
Job's oath and Muhammad's practice
Oaths in the Jewish culture
Muhammad's outlook and Jesus' outlook concerning oaths
Job's situation: a picture of Jesus?
Prophet Isaiah, unknown to the Qur'an
Isaiah in Classical Islamic literature
Jonah in the Qur'an
Jesus and Jonah
Conclusion

8. Is Muhammad mentioned in the Bible?172

The Qur'anic claims about Muhammad in the Torah and the Gospel
A prophet like Moses
From among their brothers
Attributes of the Prophet like Moses
Is Muhammad or Jesus like Moses?

Psalms of David: Is Muhammad or Jesus mentioned?

Psalm 45 – mighty with the sword
Psalm 84:6 – Pilgrimage to Mecca?
Psalm 110 – a prophecy about Muhammad?
Psalm 149 – a prophecy about the Qur'an and Muhammad?
Jesus and the Psalms

Muhammad in the Songs of Solomon

Isaiah and Muhammad

Isaiah 9:6-7:- Muhammad the prince of Peace?
Isaiah 21:7-9:- Muhammad on the camel?
Isaiah 29:11-12:- The Illiterate Prophet

*Isaiah 42:1-13:- Muhammad the servant of God?
Isaiah 42 is really about Jesus
New Testament full of references to prophecies in Isaiah*

Islamic claim: Muhammad's coming mentioned by Jesus

A Biblical response
Conclusion

9. Analysis of the Islamic perspective Concerning Jesus	210
The name of Jesus and its significance in the Bible	
The name of Jesus and its significance in the Qur'an	
Jesus' Miraculous Birth	
Jesus as the Messiah	
Jesus: the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies	
The Messiah and Muhammad	
Other descriptions of Jesus in the Qur'an	
The Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit	
Islam and the belief in Jesus	
Why Jesus came	
Jesus' teachings and the Bible	
The Divine Status of Jesus	
Jesus' Miracles: the Qur'an and Ahadith	
A Biblical understanding of the Last Days of Jesus	
The Ascension of Jesus	
The Second Coming of Jesus	
Conclusion	
10. The Final Hope: Jesus or Muhammad?.....	242
What about inclusivism?	
Who is the seal of the message: Jesus or Muhammad?	
A gift of the Holy Spirit: Prophecy that echoes Jesus	
Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies	
Does Muhammad's message come from the same source as Jesus?	
Muhammad and 'Gabriel'	

The sinful state of man and the sinless state of Jesus
The difference in their leadership
The last days of Jesus and Muhammad
Jesus and Muhammad: Difference in the message of Paradise
God's intent in creating mankind fulfilled in the Biblical Paradise
Muhammad and Jesus: Two very distinct leaders
Jesus and Muhammad: differences in missions
The result of the teaching among the early followers
The Later period and today

11. Jesus or Muhammad: A Question of Assurance ...275

Jihad as a mean of assurance
Judgment, Hell and Paradise
Judgment, Hell and Paradise in Christian beliefs
Love, mercy and forgiveness
Grace and Mercy available here and now
Jesus is the only hope of assurance!
Transformation through Jesus
What must I do?
Why delay?
Suffering for Jesus – what?
Conclusion

Epilogue295

A recapitulation
Major Point considered: Assurance
Key observation: Ideology and the ideal

Bibliography305

Acknowledgements



Dedicated to Muslims and Christians who wish to know more about the real difference between Jesus and Muhammad, their claims and the hope they gave to humanity. It is my desire that both sides will know the truth about the vast difference of approach to the eternal salvation.

This book is also for those who have stepped on the trap of 'inclusivism', whether innocently or intentionally, to present the Islamic faith to non-Muslims more palatable using words like 'peaceful' and 'loving' but not telling that Islam has a different dictionary for such a vocabulary.

This book took shape with the help of many and I express my heartfelt gratitude to them all, to both Muslim and Christian friends on the internet and in person, not just for their many stimulating conversations but also for their searching questions and lively debates.

I am grateful also to my family and to brothers and sisters in faith for their help, Art Dykstra, Lewis and Kathy Dinkins, Marty Shea, and several others who do not want to be named; to Elizabeth Curry, Samuel and DeLynn Mora for their extra efforts with editing, proof reading and suggesting an initial layout and design. However, none of them bears any responsibility for any of the comments expressed and material presented in this book.

Many references from the Bible and the Qur'an are referred to in this book but not all are quoted in text. To read them and

for full understanding of the subject or an issue, a copy of the Bible and of the Qur'an will be good to refer to.

Unless otherwise indicated, Qur'anic quotations are adapted from Yusuf Ali's *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, (Maryland: Amana Corporation, 1983).

Please be aware that often between several Qur'an translations there is a difference in numbers for respective verses - usually one or two verses, but sometimes up to five. The reader may find that to keep the continuity of the book, I have added the 'extra info' to footnotes.

All dates are AD (*anno domini* - in the year of our Lord) unless otherwise stated as BC (Before Christ).

Introduction



Jesus and Muhammad - considered as reformers by some, prophets by others, regarded by some as infallible, by others as ordinary human beings, denied by some as to whether such personalities ever even existed.

For followers of Jesus or Muhammad, it is vital to make sense of the claims that Jesus and Muhammad made and above all what the Bible and the Qur'an say about them. Our relationship and vocation depend on who we choose as our guide, lighting our lives in the present and beyond. For Muslims, it is important to know more about Jesus outside the Qur'an, from the pages of the Bible. Similarly, in the face of modern movements that are preaching 'co-exist', it is becoming more important for Christians to know about Muhammad and what the Qur'an and traditions of Islam say about him. This helps further to understand how and why a "considerable amount of 'biblical' material turns up in the Qur'an, texts about Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus."¹

Both, Muslims and Christians believe that to lead people onto the straight path, God spoke through many prophets. Christians believe that God spoke through Jesus, as his living word, bringing the revelation to completion (Matthew 21:33-39; Hebrews 1:1-2). Jesus is the way to God and is proclaimed as the only Savior of humankind (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Muslims deny this, stating that God, whom we know as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, sent Muhammad as his

¹ Shedinger, *Was Jesus a Muslim?*, p. 2.

final prophet after Jesus. They believe that prior to God's revelation through the pages of the Qur'an via Muhammad, God revealed his guidance and truth to Jews and Christians through the *Torah*, *Sahayaf* (books of the prophets), *Zabur* (Psalms) and *Injil* (the Gospel) which are parts of the Bible. It is in the light of such claims that this book attempts to examine the claims of Christianity and Islam, based on their respective books.

Islam and Christianity are missionary faiths. The missionary dimension of Islam is based on its claim that the Qur'an is a revelation for everyone and that Muhammad is the final prophet. Thus they consider Islam to be the only way of guidance to God (Sura 3:25; 33:40; 21:107; 3:19). Muslims preach, share and invite people to convert (or as some Muslims insist on the word 'revert') to Islamic faith in light of the Qur'an. Centuries before, Christians (followers of Jesus) were commissioned in the Bible to share the gospel, 'the good news' about God's plan of assurance with everyone (Matthew 28:19-20; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).

Both the Bible and the Qur'an state that truth stands out clear from error (Sura 2:256; Acts 5:33-40). I have based this study on the respective Scriptures, the Bible and the Qur'an, and what Muhammad and Jesus have claimed or shown by their examples. In our approach and study of the Bible and the Qur'an, the focus shall be on God as the creator, on the guidance he gave to us as human beings, and the way he relates to us. We will compare some key details of high profile personalities chosen by God and how the Bible and the Qur'an relate to them. Considering their lives we will have a closer look at aspects known as 'salvation' and 'assurance', examining them in the light of the Qur'an and the Bible, as well as what Jesus and Muhammad each have to offer us.

In my previous book, I have already discussed the preservation of the text of the Qur'an and the Bible, which will not be a subject matter in this present study. The following note concludes *The Bible and the Qur'an: A Question of Integrity*: (Please read the book to address your questions on the accuracy of the texts).

Introduction

Both the Bible and the Qur'an have the message well preserved. The question is not of preservation but of salvation, *Najah*. What do these scriptures say about what we are and where we are heading? Both Muslims and Christians pray repeatedly for the forgiveness of their sins, and for the mercy of God, hoping to be accepted into His paradise. However, the question is whether one can be sure of that acceptance in the light of the Bible or the Qur'an. Both Muslims and Christians should be considering and sharing what their scriptures have to say about the fundamental question of salvation, *Najah*.²

This book, *Jesus or Muhammad*, goes into the details of the above questions. Much of the uniqueness of the messages of the Bible and of the Qur'an includes the character of Jesus and Muhammad. In this book, we will compare the two individuals in order to understand them and their messages in a better way in response to the above questions. In the last sections of the book, some subjects are opened with Muhammad, and then germane comparisons are selected from the life, times and teaching of Jesus.

At times you will feel that I am addressing two different audiences, each with their own conceptual frame of reference. To a certain extent, this is intentional on my part. I find it the optimal way of reaching the goal set in this book – that goal being to help both Muslims and Christians understand the values of their leaders and see for themselves who and whose message they should choose to follow with the question of eternity is at stake.

I write these pages with the plea to reconcile ourselves to God (2 Corinthians 5:20)! He is the God who encounters us, not just from his throne in the heavens, but also through someone special he sent to us! Who is this special someone? Jesus or Muhammad?

² Masood, *The Bible and the Qur'an: A question of Integrity*, p. 210.

Jesus and Muhammad: Bethlehem and Mecca



Both Jesus and Muhammad have connection to the Middle East. However, they are from different lands a thousand miles apart, and from different eras. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in the nation of Israel, some 600 years before Muhammad; the town is about five miles to the south of Jerusalem. The Bible identifies Bethlehem as the city of David and the location where the prophet Samuel crowned him as the king of Israel. In the New Testament section of the Bible, Gospels of Matthew and Luke, identify Bethlehem as the birthplace of Jesus (Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:1-7).

The town of Bethlehem is inhabited by one of the oldest Christian communities in the world, but the size of the community has diminished from ninety percent to thirty percent in just a few decades due to migration, mainly due to religious and geo-political struggles of Palestinian and other movements against Israel. Today Bethlehem has a Muslim majority.

Muhammad was born in Mecca, Western Arabia in 570 AD. In the Qur'an, Mecca is identified as *Bakkah* (Sura 3:96), while the form Mecca (or Makkah) is also used (Sura 48:24). Other references to Mecca in the Qur'an call the city as *Umm al-Qura*, meaning 'mother of all settlements' (Sura 6:92). The city is visited by more than 14 million Muslims annually,

including several million during the days of the pilgrimage known as *Hajj*. This pilgrimage is the fifth pillar of Islamic faith.

Mecca today has become one of the most cosmopolitan and diverse cities in the Muslim world. Following the Qur'an and Muhammad's instructions, non-Muslims remain formally prohibited from entering Mecca and Medina, the holy cities of Islam. Among many two reasons are given. According to the Qur'an non-Muslims are unclean (Sura 9:28); secondly, the traditions (*Ahadith*) of Islam state that Muhammad said: "I will expel the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula and will not leave any but Muslims."¹

About a century before Jesus, the Romans had conquered most of Asia west of the Euphrates River. They called this region *Palestina* which included Galilee. The Romans did not have much geo-political interest in the Arabian Desert. They let it be ruled by nomad leaders, which differentiate the land of Arabia from the conquered nation of Israel. The economy that had been ushered in through forced peace by Caesar Augustus at the time of Jesus' birth marks a difference, mainly between the eras of Jesus and Muhammad.

Although war was not raging during Jesus' time, many people had the burning desire to get rid of the Roman occupation. Few were enamored by the Herodian dynasty - the Jewish puppet rulers directed by the Romans. A full rebellion against Rome did not happen until almost a whole generation after Jesus.

In contrast, Arabia was very much a stateless society governed by many contending tribal chiefs, also known as Sheikhs. Mecca was one such sheikhdom. Some assumptions in history include the opinion that there was a trade between Mecca and Ethiopia via the nearby Red Sea port of Jeddah. Others believe that Mecca was a trading post. As such the city was also involved in trade between Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq, northeastern Syria, southeastern Turkey, and part of

¹ *Sahih Muslim*, Book 19, Hadith 4366.

southwestern Iran) and Yemen in Southern Arabia.² In recent years such a claim has been questioned in Academia.³

The advent of Jesus and Muhammad

Although the Qur'an is silent about how Muhammad was born, except for the acknowledgement that he was an orphan (Sura 93:6), the traditions and biographies of Muhammad have information concerning his birth. For example, Ibn Ishaq (d. 761 or 767)⁴ states:

It is alleged in popular stories and God knows [the truth] that Amina daughter of Wahb, the mother of God's apostle [Muhammad], used to say when she was pregnant with God's apostle that a voice said to her, 'You are pregnant

² Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.3; Cook, *Muhammad*, p. 13; Rodinson, *Mohammed*, p. 39.

³ For example, according to Patricia Crone, "Only by the most tortured map reading can it [Mecca] be described as a natural crossroad between a north-south route and an east-west one." (Crone, *Meccan Trade and the rise of Islam*, p. 6). Elsewhere, she states that Meccan "trade was a local trade in the sense that the commodities sold were of Arabian origin and destined for consumption in Arabia itself or immediately outside it" (p. 149).

According to Crone and Cook, "Mecca was a barren place, and barren places do not make natural halts, and least of all when they are found at a short distance from famously green environments. Why should caravans have made a steep descent to the barren valley of Mecca when they could have stopped at Ta'if. Mecca did, of course, have both a well and a sanctuary, but so did Ta'if, which had food supplies, too" (Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, p. 22).

⁴ Muhammad ibn Ishaq ibn Yasar ibn Khiyar (d.761 or 767) was born in Medina, ibn Ishaq was an Arab Muslim historian and hagiographer. He was the grandson of a Christian man, Yasār, who had been captured in one of the campaigns ordered by Abu Bakr after the death of Muhammad. He was taken to Medina as a slave, where later he accepted Islam. Ibn Ishaq collected oral traditions that formed the basis of the first biography of Muhammad. It was edited later by Ibn Hisham (d. 833). Ibn Ishaq's work, *Sirat Rasul Allah*, is lost and is now only known in the recension of Ibn Hisham and al-Tabari (d. 923). English translation of this work is available as '*The Life of Muhammad*' [Ed. Alfred Guillaume].

with the lord of this people (Arabs) and when he is born say, 'I put him in the care of One from the evil of every envier; then call him Muhammad.' As she was pregnant with him she saw a light come forth from her by which she could see the castles of Busra in Syria. Shortly afterwards Abdullah the apostle's father died while his mother was still pregnant.⁵

For the birth of Jesus, we do not have to go outside the Bible for secondary sources. Christians find a number of passages with prophecies about the birth and ministry of Jesus in the Old Testament (also known as the *Tanakh*). The most prominent is in the book of Isaiah. Several hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah was given this prophecy: "The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). In a similar context the prophet was told:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever (Isaiah 9:5-7).

In the New Testament of the Bible, we read about the angel, Gabriel, visiting Mary and giving the news of Jesus. The angel said to Mary:

Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be

⁵ Ibn Hisham, *Sirat al-Nabwiyah*, vol. 1, p. 134; Alfred Guillaume (ed). *The Life of Muhammad*, [A translation of Ibn Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah*], p. 69.

called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end (Luke 1:30-33).

Elsewhere we are told, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet [Isaiah]: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' — which means, 'God with us'" (Matthew 1:23).

The Qur'an too mentions the miraculous birth of Jesus but also describes him as being a conversing prophet as a baby in the cradle (Sura 19:29), a subject we will come to in later chapters of this book.

From their childhoods, both Jesus and Muhammad seem to have had spent their lives influenced and affected by the religion and ideology of their day. After the death of his mother when he was six years old, Muhammad lived with his paternal grandfather Abd Al-Muttalib. The family was part of the Quraysh tribe which controlled the main place of worship in Mecca, a temple filled with idols known as Al-Ka'ba. Muhammad's grand-father served as the caretaker of repairs and cleaning.

Although all the tribes of Arabia believed in a supreme god, to earn his favor they looked for mediators making different types of idols to be their protectors. The Qur'an alludes to this practice (Sura 39:3). At differing times of the year, tribes according to their own traditions and customs would gather for annual pilgrimage to that place. As a boy, Muhammad would have visited the temple. While still a young boy of ten, his grand-father died. The care of the temple, as well as for Muhammad, then passed to one of his sons, Abu Talib. As he grew older, Muhammad disliked people bowing down to the idols and those who made a living by making and selling idols.

What was the experience of Jesus as a child? There are several narratives available to us in the Bible. We are told: "When

ries told Muhammad's uncle that the child was going to be the final prophet of God.⁶ Although Islamic sources mention this, we have no evidence that Nestorians or Ebionites believed in the coming of a final prophet.

Call to Ministry

At age twenty five Muhammad married Khadija, a forty years old wealthy widow whose relative, Waraqa bin Naufal, was a leader of a Christian group. We are told that apart from travelling, Muhammad would go to a cave outside of Mecca and spend time in prayer. It was during these visits that angel Gabriel is said to have appeared and conversed with him. This was the beginning of Muhammad's ministry to reach his people, endorsed by Waraqa, who himself did not see the day of Muhammad's preaching and teaching.⁷

We do not know what Jesus did as a young man;⁸ the Bible simply mentions that "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and

⁶ Ibn Ishaq, pp. 79-81.

⁷ Ibn Ishaq, p. 107. According to traditions, 'Waraqa was the son of her paternal uncle, i.e., her father's brother, who during the Pre-Islamic Period became a Christian and used to write the Arabic writing and used to write of the Gospels in Arabic as much as Allah wished him to write. He was an old man and had lost his eyesight' (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Volume 6, Book 60, Number 478; Volume 9, Book 87, Number 111). Waraqa was also one of the four *hanifs* mentioned by Ibn Ishaq. The others are 'Uthman b. al-Huwayrith, Ubaydullah b. Jash and Zaid b. Amr (Ibn Ishaq, p. 99).

⁸ Some have speculated that as a young man, Jesus travelled to India to learn the philosophy and ethics of the East. A story of such a pilgrimage to the East is mentioned by a Russian journalist Nicholas Notovitch, who in 1894 published a book, *Vie inconnue de Jesus-Christ*. Later that year the book was translated into English under the title, *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1894). Notovitch claimed that during his tour of Ladakh in India in 1887, he had found an ancient manuscript in a Buddhist temple in Leh which stated that Jesus had travelled to India in his youth (Notovitch, *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*, pp. 12-52). Although the whole matter was a hoax, since then, several publications have come out with theories suggesting that Jesus lived in India and travelled widely on the sub-continent, educated himself and returned with that knowledge

in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). The Bible does not record Jesus ever marrying. It is possible that Joseph died before Jesus' ministry began. Jesus' mother and brothers are mentioned in the Scriptures but Joseph is not (Mark 6:31; John 19:26-27). It can also be inferred that Jesus must have been a known figure in the synagogue at Nazareth because when he started his ministry, he was given the opportunity to read the Scripture (Luke 4:16).

In the case of Muhammad, it took him some time to be sure of his calling to be a prophet. Jesus, on the other hand, was very sure for what purpose he had come. About Muhammad, we are told that Waraqa, a cousin of Muhammad's wife testify about his prophethood. Ibn Ishaq states:

Waraqa cried, "Holy, Holy! Verily by Him in whose hand is Warqa's soul, if thou hast spoken to me the truth, O Khadija, there hath come unto him the great *Namus* (Gabriel) who came to Moses afore-time, and lo, he is the prophet of this people. Bid him be of good heart."⁹

In the case of Jesus, it was a specific forerunner, his cousin John the Baptist (known in the Qur'an as *Yahya*), testified about him. John's testimony is a firsthand witness. He said, "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One" (John 1:32-34).

Both Jesus and Muhammad were endorsed by their cousins, and later died. John was beheaded by Herod (Matthew 14:10).

to Israel to teach. Not only is there a total dearth of evidence for any visit of Jesus but also there are obvious contradictions between Eastern philosophy and the teaching of Jesus. For example, Hinduism and Buddhism teach re-incarnation but Jesus taught that we have just one existence in this world.

⁹ Ibn Ishaq, p. 107.

However the circumstances about Waraqa are unknown. We have no Muslim tradition concerning when and how Waraqa died.

The Essence of their messages

Traditionally, it is agreed upon that Jesus, at the age of thirty, started his ministry preaching and teaching (Luke 3:23). As for Muhammad, Islamic sources state that he was around forty.¹⁰ While Muhammad began his preaching quietly, first to his wife, followed by friends and nearest members of the family, Jesus had a unique and dramatic start. Within a few days after his baptism, people started following him (John 1:35-40). The gospel narratives relate that he began to speak in Jewish synagogues, and the "news about him spread through the whole countryside..." The impact was so that "everyone praised him" (Luke 4:14-15). In his teaching, Jesus claimed that prophets before him had already prophesied about him. At the Synagogue in Nazareth, he was handed the scroll of Isaiah to read before the worshipers. The Gospel narrative states that Jesus read to the people:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18-19).

After reading the passage, he began to teach them by saying, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21).

It is interesting to note that as Muhammad is said to have been rejected by his hometown of Mecca and the leaders at the temple of Ka'ba, Jesus too had been rejected by his home town and the religious leaders in Jerusalem.

¹⁰ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 4, Book 56, Number 747.

In his teaching, Jesus spoke of the Torah, the Psalms and the books of the prophets, lifting their integrity. At one time, speaking to an unbelieving audience who claimed to adhere to the Torah, Jesus said, "You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39). Jesus claimed that Moses predicted about his coming (John 5:46). Elsewhere, he claimed that what was taking place in his ministry and to his person were all predicted in the Scriptures. This is the reason why Christians uphold the earlier scriptures revealed through Moses and the prophets after him and not just the New Testament.

Muhammad too, referred to the earlier Scriptures. The Qur'an which he claimed to have received from God, through Gabriel, has several narratives of the lives and callings of the Old Testament personalities. He claimed that the same God who spoke to all the prophets of Israel, prophets like Abraham, Moses, David and including Jesus, spoke to him through angel Gabriel. Muhammad claimed uniformity between the message of the prophets gone before and his own message. It is due to such claims that in the following pages, we will be comparing the message of the Qur'an with that of the Bible to check this claim.

There are some Muslims and non-Muslims in the West who try their best to bring syncretism between Islam and Christianity. In a discussion with such friends for example, to this effect, a well-educated Muslim addressed the case in such a way in a friendly gathering at a local Islamic center:

Both Jesus and Muhammad preached the unity of God and advised followers to be good. Both got upset seeing that the house of God was used to gain worldly profit. As in the case of Jesus, when he saw men selling cattle, sheep, and doves and changing money, he became furious and with a whip drove every wicked one out of the temple, shouting at them, 'how dare you turn my Father's house into a market!' (John 2:16).

The Muslim friend then turned to an event in Muhammad's life, stating how he ordered that all idols from the temple of Ka'ba be removed and the place be used only for worship of God.

Such a comparison is disingenuous. The fact is that Muhammad marched towards Mecca with the full intention to fight. Due to previous fights, the city had already lost its strength to defend itself and thus this time, in spite of some skirmishes between a few individuals, the majority of Meccans willingly surrendered. Muhammad and his army were welcomed. The story is mentioned by biographers like Ibn Ishaq that then Muhammad ordered that the temple be cleansed of idols.¹¹

In the case of Jesus, he never marched with an intention to invade Jerusalem with an army. The temple at Jerusalem was not occupied with idols as was in the case of Ka'ba where several hundred idols were and where Muhammad ordered that they be "collected and burned with fire and broken up."¹² In the case of the temple in Jerusalem, it was the outside courts that were used by shoppers for their goods. Jesus accused them of turning the place into 'a market' but not of 'idolatry' (John 2:16).

The Difference in their approach

While Jesus preached and ministered to people the same way from the beginning to end, Muhammad was different in his approach. From the beginning to end the epicenter of Jesus' preaching was to give his life as a ransom for many that he came as the mediator between our Creator and us, as human beings. About himself, Jesus would state again and again words like, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). With that main purpose, according to the scriptures, he died on the cross, was buried and on the third

¹¹ Ibn Ishaq, p. 540 ff.

¹² Ibn Ishaq, p. 552.

day rose from the dead. For 40 days he appeared to his disciples and had fellowship with them and then ascended to heaven with a promise of his second coming as the mighty judge. We will discuss main areas of these aspects later.

In the case of Muhammad, for several years he was silent, not sure of his calling. When he eventually came out, his teaching was more directed to the people of Mecca to believe in one God, namely Allah. The gist of his message in the first decade of his ministry was that it did not matter if one was a Zoroastrian, a Jew or a Christian, as long as one believed in God and on the Day of Judgment. Later, as Muhammad became acquainted with the messianic hope of the Jewish community around him, he incorporated several of their practices of prayer and worship in the direction of Jerusalem. He claimed that his coming was mentioned in the previous scriptures and thus they should believe in him. Most of the Jewish communities shunned him. In his 14th year of preaching, Muhammad changed the direction of prayer towards the Ka'ba in Mecca. In the following years, he adopted the belief that God now made military action legal for Muslims against non-Muslims. He claimed to be the final prophet of God, the Qur'an as the final guidance and Islam as the only religion acceptable to God.

Muhammad was not only a claimant to prophethood, but also a military leader. He used his mosque at Medina not only for worship but also as a place to pass judgment. He used it for military expedition plans. After taking the control of the hub of Arabia, the political and tribal system collapsed. Tribe after tribe gave in to the alliance of Muhammad's leadership, becoming united politically as well as religiously, thus the popular Islamic phrase we know today, '*al-islam ad-din wa dawla*' – Islam is (both) religion and government. It was this legacy that just in one century Muhammad's followers, Muslims, established an empire that covered the Middle-East as far as North Africa, in the East as far as India, and into Europe as far as Spain.

In contrast, the mission of Jesus was that he came not only as the prophet of God, but as the only mediator between God and man, foretold by prophets before him. He came to fulfill the promises given to the Patriarchs and prophets. He brought the final covenant through which not only the Israelites, but that all the world may be blessed. This fulfilled the promise made by God with Abraham and repeated in many ways from Moses (Musa) to John the Baptist (Yahya).

After Jesus, his disciples followed the 'Great Commission' to reach the entire world with his message. They travelled, preaching, teaching, and inviting people to repentance in the name of Jesus. Through Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the outermost nations, they spread through the Roman empire, even as far as to Europe in one direction and India to the other. They did not use military action but rather followed the example of Jesus. The first century disciples repeated again and again to their audiences: God has spoken in these last days through Jesus and only through him salvation and assurance is available (Acts 4:12; Hebrews 1:1-2).

In contrast to this, we find in the Qur'an the claim that God revealed the religion of Islam through Muhammad so to take over all other faiths (Sura 9:33; 48:21; 61:9). This meant for Muslims not only to preach and teach but also use the dictate of military action to conquer. The Qur'an claims that "Allah loves those who kill for him" (Sura 61:4). The problem is that many Muslim protagonists in the West do not tell people this. In the light of the Qur'an, Ahadith (traditions) and Islamic history, we find that Islam not only is exclusive but also teaches to oppose those who deny Islam, with the exception of some spared, if they accept to be a second class citizen under Islamic jurisdiction.

Conclusion

Both Jesus and Muhammad claim to be sent by God. If it is the same God, why did he send them with two different messages for what we know as the 'last days'? In the next chap-

Jesus or Muhammad?

ters we will find that the message of Jesus, his person and his mission aligns itself with what went on and that what the prophets before him were saying and predicting. We will seek to find out why Muhammad's claim and message do not fit or align with what was preached by prophets and predicted before Jesus and nor does it fit with what Jesus taught. Since both, Jesus and Muhammad, referred to the earlier Scriptures, known to us as the Bible, we will compare its teaching with the message of the Qur'an. We will see finally whether it is Muhammad or Jesus to be followed when the question of assurance is faced.

And God said, 'Let there be . . .'



Creation, in the Bible and in the Qur'an, has a place of imperative magnitude. Both books state that God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1-3; Sura 2:164; 6:1). Both promote a Maker from the self-evident facts of creation. People just need to open their eyes and ears to God's creation in order to discover the precious truths reinforced, concerning what God has already revealed about Himself. 'The heavens declare the glory of God' is the theme both in the Qur'an and the Bible (Psalm 19:1-6; Isaiah 40:26; 45:12; Sura 7:54, 10:6; 40:62).

In the Qur'an, there is no coherent account of creation, as in the first two chapters of the Bible. Both books, however, relate that God created the world in six days (Sura 50:38; Genesis 2:1-2:3). We find passages in both books, scattered throughout, that God is the Creator of the heavens and earth. Both the Bible and the Qur'an relate the stars, the sun, and the moon as being God's handiwork.

In the traditions of Islam, Muhammad is related to have said, "Allah the Exalted and Glorious, created the clay on Saturday and He created the mountains on Sunday and He created the trees on Monday and He created the things entailing labor on Tuesday and created light on Wednesday and He caused animals to spread on Thursday and created

Adam after 'Asr [late afternoon] on Friday; the last creation at the last hour of the hours of Friday, ie. Between afternoon and night."¹

Occasionally, the Qur'an goes beyond what the Bible teaches about the sun and moon. For example, it claims that a mighty man saw the sun land in a muddy pool in the far west. It explains that the sun and moon orbit the earth and are not allowed to catch up with each other. It mentions seven heavens, celestial spheres and the sun floating towards its resting place (Sura 67:3; 36:38-40). Other passages talk of shooting stars whose function is to stone over-curious demons (Sura 15:17-20; 26:210-212; 37:6-10; 67:5). According to Islamic traditions the throne of God is above the seventh heaven. The journey between each heaven according to Muhammad is said to be 500 years.²

The Bible describes how the earth was covered with water until God ordered the land to come up out of the sea (Genesis 1:1-2, 6-9). The Qur'an, however, declares that the earth was leveled flat. Then, mountains were set down on the earth from above. The mountains were allegedly placed on the earth to keep the land from sliding around (Sura 15:19; 16:15; 21:31, 31:10; 78:7; 79:30-32; 88:19-20).

Although the Qur'an agrees with the Biblical narrative that God created the world in six days, elsewhere it would seem that it took God eight days to create. The Qur'an states that God created the earth in 2 days (Sura 41:9); he placed hills rising above it, and blessed it. He measured its sustenance in 4 days (Sura 41:10). Finally, God created the 7 heavens and the things in them in 2 days (Sura 41:12). These verses reveal a superficial discrepancy regarding the number of days of creation.

The creation narrative in the Bible suggests that God was very pleased with his creation. Six times throughout the process of creating, God stops six times and savors his accom-

¹ *Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 6707; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayya*, vol. 1, p. 56.

² Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayya*, vol. 1, p. 63, 71.

plishment. It is interesting to note that five times he says it is good but after the creation of Adam, and giving him authority over what was on the earth, the Bible states, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day" (Genesis 1:31).

Does the Hebrew word *yom* refer to a time period, with a beginning and an end, and not necessarily that of a 24-hour day? Although Muslims like the majority of Christians take it to be a 24 hour day, there are some Muslim exeges who have suggested a thousand year day and night and others more.³

The Difference in Creation accounts

The Bible states that after Creation, on the seventh day God 'rested' from all his work (Genesis 2:2). To some Muslims, this is strange as it may be strange to some Christians reading in the Qur'an that after God had finished he "went to sit down on his throne in heaven" (Sura 10:3, 13:2, 20:5, 25:59, 57:4). Both statements are in allegorical tones. The Qur'an states that God does not slumber or tire (Sura 2:255). The Bible too says that our Creator does not get weary or tired (Isaiah 40:28). Scholars agree that the Hebrew word, *shabath*, in Genesis, translated here as 'rest' does not really refer to a requirement to sleep or take a break due to weariness but rather as a form of stopping or ceasing.⁴

In spite of such an explanation some Muslim friends question the Bible's use of human aspects being attributed to God. Interestingly like the Bible, the Qur'an too uses such a vocabulary. For example, in the Qur'an, God's throne is not simply a metaphor for his rule or sovereignty, but is an actual physical object that God sits upon. For instance, the Qur'an refers to a time when eight angels will carry God's throne: (Sura 69:13-17).

³ Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, vol. 1, p.46ff.

⁴ Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Definitions: *shabath* שַׁבַּת (Strong's H7673).

In the case of Adam the Qur'an states that God created him **with his own hands**. In his discourse with Satan, the Qur'an states that God asked Satan, "O Iblis! What prevents thee from prostrating thyself to one whom I have created with my hands? Art thou haughty? Or art thou one of the high (and mighty) ones?" (Sura 38:75).

Usually the answer is that what God was saying is that Adam was created in a special way by him and that in the Qur'an God's hand has been used in a metaphorical sense. However, the traditions of Islam attribute several things to God creating with his own hands including Adam. For example that God wrote the Torah with his own hand.⁵ Some traditions include God's throne; his pen and part of paradise which God created with his own hands.⁶

There is agreement between the Bible and the Qur'an over God creating the heavens and the earth. The Bible states: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). The Qur'an states: He has created the heavens and the earth with truth (Sura 16:3). In other words, "the universe was formed at God's command" (Hebrews 11:3).

At first instance it may seem that the Bible and the Qur'an share a similar creation story but that is not the case. While in the Biblical passages on 6 days of creation we see God creating and inviting the created to pro-create, in the Qur'an it is God who keeps all the cards in his hand.

In the Bible we read, God saying, 'Let there be ...' but in the Qur'an it is simply, 'Be' (*Kun*) and 'it is' (*faykun*). The Biblical command has a tone of permission, of invitation. Here is a God who endows creation with creative powers. In phrases like 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures,' and 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind,' we can hear God as the Creator inviting the creatures to pro-create. It is less like a command and more like an invitation.

⁵ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 4, Book 55, Number 556; Volume 9, Book 93, Number 614; *Sahih Muslim*, Number 6409.

⁶ See for example here a detail both in Arabic and English: http://www.subulassalaam.com/articles/articlea.cfm?article_id=128

He gives the swarms of sea life with the power to produce new swarms. The same we see with animals and the birds of the air to procreate new animals and new birds after their own kind. The Bible states, God said "Be fruitful and multiply and fill up the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth" (Genesis 1:22). From the Bible thus it seems that in his creative act God is not solo. Creatures are invited to contribute their God given creative efforts. Against this when we check the Qur'an carefully; we find that God retains for himself all instances of creative power. There it is God who produces every living thing (Sura 21:30).

Muhammad and Jesus: Their part in creation

There is a crucial difference between the Bible and the Qur'an which is very important. The Bible declares Jesus as the 'radiance of God' (Hebrews 1:3) and states that God created all things through His Word, who is Jesus. "Through him all things were made" (John 1:3, 10). Elsewhere, we are told about Jesus:

"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:16-17)

With regard to Jesus and Muhammad's parts in Creation, the Qur'an is silent.⁷ Although the Qur'an does mention Jesus

⁷ The post-Qur'an literatures among Sufi circles exalt Muhammad to the divine essence of God. The doctrine is known as "*Haqiqat al-Muhammadiyyn*" or "*al-haqiqat al-Muhammadiyya*" (Muhammadan Reality). Ibn Arabi (d. 1240) is seen one of the main propagator of this doctrine. It became formative for later Islamic mysticism. It is here that certain traditions are quoted that God said to Muhammad, "If it had not been for you, I would not have created the heavens." According to Ibn Arabi, Muhammad is identical with 'the first intellect' (*al-'aql al-awwal*), the eternal principle unifying the immutable entities. All the other prophets, beginning with

as the word from God, nowhere does it mention God creating all things through Jesus or Muhammad (Sura 4:171). Thus, Muslims strongly deny this aspect of God and the relation Jesus has with him in the Creation story. The story we find in the Bible becomes the most important story of restoration and reinstatement of the universe: the lost paradise, a subject we will look into in the next chapters.

The Light of the world

In the Bible we find that Jesus claimed, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12; 9:5). No such direct claim is found in the Qur'an about Muhammad. There are Muslims who claim that Muhammad is referred to as the light (*nur*) in the Qur'an: "There has come to you a light from Allah, and a manifest Book" (Sura 5:15). Some Muslim exegetes state that the first part of this verse refers to Muhammad.⁸ To support a sort of preexistence before the Creation of the world for Muhammad, some secondary very late traditions in Islam state that Muhammad said, "The first thing created by the Almighty was my Light. When Adam was created, the Lord having placed that light upon his forehead, said: 'O Adam, this light which I place upon thy forehead is that of the greatest and best of thy descendants, the light of the Chief of Prophets that shall be sent.'" This light descended from Adam to Seth, and then

Adam, only became prophets during their historical mission; each was the bearer of a fragment of this Muhammadan reality in a particular place and time, a bezel in which a jewel of the divine wisdom was displayed. None the less, after their mission the prophets continued to exert an influence through the saints who were their spiritual heirs.

⁸ For example: Jalal al-Din Suyuti (d. 1505), *Tafsir al-Jalalain*, p. 110. The work originally was by Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli (d. 1459) but completed by Suyuti. See also: Tabari (d. 922), *Jami' al-Bayan* (also known as *Tafsir al-Tabari*), 6.161.

Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 1210) gives three opinions: first is that the light '*nur*' is Muhammad; second that Islam is referred to as light; and third that both words '*nur*' and '*kitab*' refer to the Qur'an (*Al-Tafsir al-Kabir*, vol. 4, p.327). The same is reiterated by al-Baidawi (d. 1286).

in successive generations to Abdullah (Muhammad's father), and from him to his wife Amina at the time of Muhammad's conception.⁹

Conclusion

Both the Bible and the Qur'an stand for the Creation by God. The Bible mentions the pre-existence of Jesus and God created everything through him. In the case of Muhammad, it is not the Qur'an but very later sources, by the medieval mystics, which state that God first created the light of Muhammad and then the universe. Still, nowhere do we find that God created the universe through Muhammad.

While the Qur'an, the first hand authority for Muslims, does not refer to the miraculous birth of Muhammad, both the Bible and the Qur'an refer to the birth of Jesus. In the case of Muhammad's birth, we read about his unique birth in the late traditions and some biographies. The Qur'an declares Jesus as the word from God, but it does not mention God creating all things through Jesus (Sura 4:171). This aspect of Jesus is very important to know because the restoration and reinstatement of people back to God is through him. This subject is the theme of the Bible but is missing from the Qur'an.

⁹ Ahmad Shihab Al-Deen Al-Qastallani, *Al-Mawahibul-Ladunniyah*, vol. 1, pp. 5, 9, 10. For the English translation of the book, see: <http://www.rasulallah.info/id36.html>; Also <http://www.al-islam.org/lifeprophet/3.htm>

God created Adam from . . .



The story of Adam is the story of us all, as the human family. Both the Qur'an and the Bible agree that the first man to be created was Adam. God fashioned him from dirt (Hebrew *adamah*). The Bible gives a somewhat detailed scenario of how God created first Adam and then his mate Eve (Genesis 2:4-25). Like the Bible the Qur'an seem to agree that Adam and Eve are our ancestors. The Bible reminds us that it is God who created us all, with all humanity springing forth from the first man and his wife (I Corinthians 15:45). Regardless of race or nationality, we all have a common bloodline (Acts 17:26). Both, the Qur'an and the Bible agree that God gave human beings 'dominion over all the things he has created (Psalm 8:6-8; Sura 31:20).

Both Muhammad and Jesus recognized that men and women (Adam and Eve) existed right from the beginning of the creation. Jesus taught that men and women were made essentially at the same time as the cosmos itself, when He said that '*from the beginning God . . . made them male and female*' (Mark 10:6). Here '*The beginning*' obviously is a reference to Genesis 1:1, and Jesus was specifically citing Genesis 1:26.

In the light of the Biblical narrative, it is understood that God made a covenant with Adam and Eve but they broke it. According to this covenant Adam was to: 1. Populate and

subdue the earth (Genesis 1:28); 2. Exercise dominion over the animal creation and care for the Garden of Eden and enjoy its fruit (Genesis 1:29; 2:15); and 3. Refrain from eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, under penalty of death (Genesis 2:16, 17). This covenant was terminated by man's disobedience, when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, resulting in their spiritual and physical deaths. The narrative of Genesis chapters 2 and 3 can be summed up as follows:

There were two trees in the center of the Garden of Eden. One was called the tree of life and the other was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God told Adam that he was free to eat from any tree in the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. However, the *serpent* (devil also known as Satan) questioned Eve (who God created from the rib of Adam) about God's command to Adam. He swayed Eve into thinking it would be good to eat from the forbidden tree to gain the knowledge of God. She ate and also gave to Adam, and he ate. The narrative concludes that God banished them from the garden so that they would not eat from the tree of life and live forever. As for the serpent, Satan, there is enmity between him, God, and God's people. A time will come when Satan will be defeated and crushed.

Adam: Created in the image of God?

In the story of the creation of Adam, Muslim theology is reluctant to describe human beings to be created in the image of God, as it would imply too close a connection between a mere creature and the Creator of all things. The Bible declares however that God made man (which obviously includes Adam and Eve) in his own image, thus making them capable of fellowship with Him. "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image . . .'" (Genesis 1:26-27). So God created man in his own image. Although some late traditions suggest that

Muhammad said, "God created Adam in his image" (*khalaqa adama lisuretihī*), the Qur'an only states that God created man 'in the best of molds', but then 'he reduced him to the lowest of low' (Sura 95:4-5). The Arabic word *Insaan* is used in the Qur'an also for all human beings. Thus it becomes problematic when it gives differing statements. Some examples include the following: Man was created weak (Sura 4:28); Man was created from clay (Sura 15:26; 32:7); he was created from dust (18:37); and he was created from nothing (Sura 19:67).

Adam and Eve in the garden: the Qur'anic Perspective

As for the Qur'anic version, the story appears in parts and is repeated in several places, still confined to generalities (Sura 2:30-39; 7:11-24; 20:115-124). God created Adam from mud (Sura 15:26) or from dust as another passage has it: "He created him from dust, then said to him: 'Be.' And he was." (Sura 3:59) In the traditions, Muhammad is mentioned to have said, "God created Adam, making him 60 cubits tall."¹ Elsewhere, we learn as mentioned in the previous chapter that Adam was created by God with 'his own hands'.

The Qur'an does not reveal the name of Eve. She is always referenced as Adam's wife. For example God is mentioned as saying to Adam:

O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will; but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression (Sura 2:35).

Adam is not the exception. Others too are not mentioned by name. For example, Abraham's, Lot's, and Pharaoh's wives are not mentioned by their names but only in terms of their relation to their husbands. It would seem that through history, Muslim scholars gained knowledge of the Biblical stories and

¹ *Sahih Bukhari*. Volume 4, Book 55, Hadith Number 543.

The fall: Satan in the garden

The fall of angels is mentioned in the Qur'an with prolonged insistence on their sin, while Adam's fall and his sin is dealt with fewer words. God asks all the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam. All obeyed except *Iblis* (Satan). The prospect does not please him and he refuses (Sura 7:12; 38:76; cf. 15:33; 17:61). The reason was his pride and origin (created from fire and not clay). This account does not agree with the rest of the Qur'an because it states over and over again that God alone should be worshipped. Therefore, God would not have told the angels to commit the first sin by telling them to bow down to Adam. The Qur'anic narratives suggest that Satan's refusal to prostrate himself before Adam is why God cursed him (Sura 38:77-78) and banished him from Paradise. Satan, however, asks for a reprieve until the Day of Judgment. It is granted (Sura 15:37; 38:79-81). Satan told God that he will use the time until that Day to tempt people away from God and lead them astray (Sura 7:16-17; 15:39; 17:62). God warns him "over My servants no authority shalt thou have, except such as put themselves in the wrong and follow thee." (Sura 15:42) He vows to fill Hell with Satan's followers (Sura 17:63-64; 38:85).

The Qur'an sets the narrative of the temptation of Adam and his wife in the garden as Satan's work. In contrast to the Biblical narrative, it is not Eve (Genesis 3:1-4; 2 Corinthians 11:3) but rather Adam who is tempted by Satan with the fruit of an unidentified tree (Sura 7:19-20). In another account of the same story, it is identified as the *Tree of Eternity* – known in the Bible as the Tree of Life (Sura 20:120; Genesis 3:22). According to the Qur'an, Satan told them about living forever (Sura 7:22). In other words, the temptation is not eating of the Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil in order to be 'like God, knowing good and evil' (Genesis 3:5), but in order to have everlasting life.

Both Adam and Eve sinned by tasting the fruit. The promise turns out to be a lie – no everlasting life. God gets

angry with them for heeding the words of Satan and banishes them from the garden. Another point to note is that while the Bible sets the scene in an earthly garden, the Qur'an seems to suggest that it was in heaven.

In paradise, Adam and Eve could eat anything except from the forbidden tree. The Qur'an does not tell what kind of tree it is. The detail is ambiguous. It is Satan alone who speaks of the tree of immortality (Sura 20:120). He whispered to Adam and convinced them to eat of the forbidden tree. God is upset with Satan and the couple. Adam and Eve ask for forgiveness (Sura 7:23). God, in of his grace, forgave them. They were then sent down from the garden to live on earth. One wonders, if God forgave Adam and Eve, why were they not reinstated?

Here the Qur'an in its narrative seizes an opportunity for the listeners to be introduced to a series of prophets to guide the children of Adam, warning that Satan is there to tempt and seduce them: "We said: Get ye down all from here; and if, as is sure, there comes to you Guidance from me, whosoever follows My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve" (Sura 2:38). This guidance is referred to as the 'dos and don'ts' in Islamic law (*Shari'a*), known in Arabic as *al-Amr bi-l-Ma'ruf* and *al-Nahi'an al-Munkar*, a phrase that appears in its plural form in the Qur'an (Sura 3:110). The simple meaning of the phrase is: Commanding what is good and forbidding that is vetoed as evil. The Bible too agrees that God sent prophets with all such commands of dos and don'ts but he also has dealt with the central issue, the inherent leaning of human beings toward wrong.

The dilemma that demands solution: Biblical versus Qur'anic perspective

The Qur'an teaches that those who follow God's guidance will not lose their way (Sura 20:123), that there is no fall in the moral sense. Muslims believe that man's present state is normal. The Qur'an states: "God would make the burden light for you, for man was created weak." (Sura 4:28) Thus Muslims believe that

all human beings are born weak but good. Through following God's guidance and faithfully performing his prescriptions given through Muhammad, Muslims will '*inshallah*' (if Allah wills) be accepted back into his paradise. The question is: Are we sure? Will God truly do so? The answer is: not really. Yes, for some this may be a surprise.

In the creation story, the Bible says that "all that God made was very good" (Genesis 1:31), insisting that what God creates is good. He is the author of good. The Qur'an, however, goes in the opposite direction to state that God is the author of both good and evil: "Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of Daybreak from the evil of that which He created" (Sura 113:1-2). If that is not enough, there is more. Adam is mentioned in Islamic traditions as putting the whole responsibility on God of his failing to keep his covenant with God. Muhammad said: "Adam and Moses argued with each other. Moses said to Adam. 'O Adam! You are our father who disappointed us and turned us out of Paradise.' Then Adam said to him, 'O Moses! Allah favored you with His talk (talked to you directly) and He wrote (the Torah) for you with His Own Hand. Do you blame me for action which Allah had written in my fate forty years before my creation?'"⁵

Muslims do recognize that Adam and Eve disobeyed God and were expelled from God's presence. For them, it was mere forgetfulness or just 'a freak mistake' - *khata'*. They were forgiven and told they had nothing to fear if they followed God's guidance - i.e., his laws. The Bible rejects such a notion and does not pretend it was trivial. The seriousness of the matter is that the covenant between God and the household of Adam was broken, resulting in the loss of intimate fellowship with God in person. Human beings, Adam's descendants, lost the benefit of that covenant and link. Since then, each person is born with a sinful nature and has fallen into a state of moral and spiritual corruption (Psalms 14:3; 51:5). We as human beings are under judgment and need salvation (Romans 3:23).

⁵ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 8, Book 77, Number 611.

The broken covenant: A review of the Qur'anic and Biblical narrative

The Bible explains how death, violence, pain and decay entered a once perfect Creation as a result of Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:17, 3:19; Romans 5:12-17; 8:19-22; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22). Thankfully, this situation is only temporary, as God sent Jesus to rescue what was lost and restore the covenant. Those who believe in Him can look forward to the coming world with 'no more death, mourning, crying or pain!' Soon we will experience no more the broken covenant! Rather, we will live in the eternal dwelling place, in the presence of God! (John 1:18, 3:16; Acts 3:21; Revelation 21:4, 22:3)

If God wanted to create, it was for one purpose - to fulfill His desire of fellowship with us. The Qur'an says that Adam was God's representative (*khalifa*). For such a purpose God created him and breathed into him His spirit (Sura 2:30; 15:29). The Qur'an states that God taught Adam the names of all things (Sura 2:31). This obviously indicates that God talked to Adam and Eve many times. Living in perfect circumstances, they must have had dialogues and were in personal direct covenantal relationship with God. In fact, the Qur'an states that God told Adam, "Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden, and eat the bountiful things therein." (Sura 2:35) Satan did not like this union and enters the picture to destroy. He tempts Adam and Eve (Sura 2:36). The Qur'an says that they enjoyed peace and felicity until they disobeyed God and thus were cast out of the Garden (Sura 7:19-24).

In Sura 2:36 and 7:24, the Arabic word *ahbitu* is translated as 'get ye down.' Muslim scholar Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall says, "Here the command is in the plural, as addressed to Adam's race."⁶ Another scholar, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, whose translation and commentary of the Qur'an is very popular and is distributed by Islamic organizations in the West by millions, explains the phrase 'Get ye down' in

⁶ Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*, note 7, p. 52.

these words: "Allah's decree is the result of man's action ... Evidently Adam is the type of all mankind."⁷

In line with the above, another Qur'an's commentator, Muhammad Asad puts it in similar words: "With this sentence, the address changes from the hitherto-observed dual form to the plural: a further indication that the moral of the story relates to the human race as a whole."⁸ This indicates that through Adam's fall, the penalty was extended to all people -implicating the whole human race. In Sura 2:38 with the phrase *ahbitu*, 'get ye down' is another word *jami'aa* which means *all*.⁹ This would suggest that the Qur'an not only recognizes that a covenant between Adam and God was broken but it also, like the Bible, implicates the whole human race in the act of disobedience and its consequences.

The result of the broken covenant

In the light of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures and late Islamic traditions, we see that God created man in His own image. God gave him freedom of choice; man chose badly. Consequently, Adam's sin distorted God's image. The human nature fell captive to the power of sin. Fellowship with God was broken and evil began weaving its destructive web. If the expulsion was not enough, the family of Adam very soon saw conflicts between their children and a tragedy struck. Their first son, Cain, grew angry and murdered his brother Abel. Both he and his brother Abel had made sacrifices to God and his had been rejected. Instead of correcting his attitude and making a proper sacrifice, Cain chose evil. He turned against his

⁷ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, note 53 on Sura 2:36, p. 26.

⁸ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, note 30 on Sura 2:36, p. 16. (see also: <http://www.islamicity.com/Qur'ansearch/shownote.asp?chap=2¬e=30>

⁹ *jami'aa*, an Arabic word defined in Kassis', *A Concordance of the Qur'an*, as "a host, a congregation, all, together, altogether", (p.595).

brother and killed him. (Genesis 4:1-17).¹⁰ The story, with the motives and the aftermath of the killing, is mentioned also in the Qur'an (Sura 5:27-32). Muhammad related this first terrible incident in his view of unjustly killing on the earth. Muhammad said, "Whenever a person is murdered unjustly, there is a share from the burden of the crime on the first son of Adam for he was the first to start the tradition of murdering."¹¹

According to the Qur'an, "The [human] soul is certainly prone to evil" (Sura 12:53). Elsewhere, it states that "if Allah were to punish men for their wrong doing, He would not leave, on earth, a single living creature" (Sura 16:61). On top of this, there is Satan in the world whose effort is to keep people away from being restored back to God. The situation is so terrible that even Muhammad is mentioned to have said, "Satan runs in the body of Adam's son (i.e., man) as his blood circulates in it . . ."¹²

Considering such Islamic sources, we cannot make light of Adam breaking the covenant by saying that it was just his forgetfulness. God did not give him 300 commandments but only one. The theory of some Muslim friends that he just forgot is baseless. Another point is that Adam's household did not forget what God had told them. In the Qur'anic narrative, Satan actually reminds Adam of God's command to him not to eat of the forbidden tree (Sura 7:20). Therefore, even in light of the Qur'an, the argument that Adam merely 'forgot' his Lord's command is not sustainable.

The solution: Guidance?

Indeed, God has sent us His guidance in how to be restored back to him but many in the world take their state of affairs so lightly. The Prophet Isaiah tells us, "Surely the arm of the

¹⁰ Cain is also mentioned in Hebrews 11:4, 1 John 3:12, and Jude 11. In the Qur'an, Cain is mentioned as Qabil and Abel as Habil (Sura 5:27-31).

¹¹ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 4, Book 55, Hadith Number 552.

¹² *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 8, Book 73, Hadith Number 238.

Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God" (Isaiah 59:1-2). God was quite clear in his warning of the devastating consequences of the broken covenant. He had said: "For when you eat of it, you will surely die" (Genesis 2:17). This referred to the separation from God as well as physical death. This happened not only to Adam but to the entire human race. The broken link caused another serious problem. The Bible states: "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). We as the descendants of Adam inherited all the characteristics of his nature after his fall.

God's law and justice give a clear verdict: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). In Genesis, we see how the aspects of the human condition, following Adam's sin, would be on every human being. It also records that Satan, who caused all this, will be crushed too. How? God is just and merciful! His mercy extends not in the case of Satan but in our case. Let us not forget that we are also the victims of Satan's treachery. To bring his justice and mercy together in line, God took the initiative upon himself to save us from our demise. This is something so important, yet the Islamic Scriptures and traditions failed to mention this glorious remedy.

Like the Bible, the Qur'an does speak of life on earth as it is at present and the end in the future. The Qur'an mentions the hard struggle against Satan and of the hostility of people against each other and against God. It states how God promised to guide the faithful and, should they fall, offers his forgiveness and promises the eternal happiness in his paradise. On the other hand, there is eternal torment in hell for those who would not accept God's guidance.

Muslims believe that the key to eternal life is available by following what the Qur'an and Muhammad said (Sura 47:33; 4:80; 3:31). Is that so? Are we sure? Not really. One may perform all the prayers and get involved in all the do's and don'ts, yet still not be sure of his assurance and life in paradise. This is not peculiar. Muhammad too was not sure what

would happen to him in eternity. The Qur'an speaks of God asking him to tell people, "I do not know what will happen to me or to you" (Sura 46:9). This unsure business is so deep that Muhammad told his companions: "No one of you will enter Paradise through his good works. They asked: 'Not even you, O Apostle of God?' 'Not even I,' he replied, 'unless God covers me with His grace and mercy.'" ¹³

God's 'Grace and Mercy plan'

Both the Bible and the Qur'an agree that God is merciful, just, the beneficent and yes loving. According to the Qur'an however, his love is conditional. He loves us only when we turn to him by following what He has commanded through Muhammad (Sura 3:31). In contrast, when we check the Bible, it states that the very nature of God is love. He is love (1 John 4:16). It is not us who have loved him first. He has taken the first step towards us in his love to reconcile us to a personal relationship. The Bible tells us that He did so to restore our relationship with him. On one hand, God's holiness demanded justice and punishment towards us, the guilty. On the other, His love for us pleaded for grace, mercy and forgiveness for us. To fulfill these aspects, God sent His own Word and Spirit known to us as Jesus the Christ (known in the Qur'an as *Isa al-Masih*) in the form of second Adam. On our behalf, Christ voluntarily paid the price so that now by believing in Jesus and through him by faith, we will be accepted back! The Bible declares, "For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

God has shown his love and mercy to us through Jesus. Like the Bible, the Qur'an declares Jesus as mercy from God for people (*rahmat lin-naas*) but fails to point out how (Sura 19:21). The Bible gives a clear answer: " . . . because of his

¹³ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 9, Book 93, Hadith Number 558; *Sahih Muslim*, Book 039, Hadith Number 6764 ff.

great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions . . ." (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Through Adam we all forfeited the covenant of eternal life in the paradise of God, as well as His fellowship. However, God provided a living covenant of grace and mercy, Jesus, to bring us back to that status from which we fell through Adam. Jesus did this by giving his life for you and me (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). He has opened the door of reconciliation (Romans 5:10-11; Colossians 1:22). He has done his job. It is now up to you and me to accept him as the final hope and follow him for the rest of our lives. The Bible states about Jesus that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. He has come so that by accepting him as our savior (you included) we all may have life - life abundantly (John 3:14-15; 10:10; 20:31).

Conclusion

Both the Bible and the Qur'an refer to Adam's fall and guidance, although with glaring disagreements. Both do agree that because of the state we are in, only God himself through his grace and mercy can rescue us. While the Qur'an and Muhammad do not give a clear solution to the dilemma, the Bible makes it plain that God has sent Jesus as the second Adam, the restorer of the covenant and the source of the gift of eternal life for you and me. By believing in him, we can have the gift of eternal life. "For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!" (Romans 5:15)

Is Muhammad mentioned in the Bible?



Many friends reject the integrity of the Bible yet quote from it, claiming that several key prophets prophesied Muhammad's coming. They quote from the Torah, the books of the Prophets, the Psalms, and passages from the New Testament to support their claim. We will check several of those passages in this chapter to see how they raise their point of view. We will look into the very context, to show that many of the cases mentioned by them in reality have no bearing.

The Qur'anic claim about Muhammad in the Torah and the Gospel

In the Bible, we see Moses receiving a covenant in line with God's promise to Abraham through the election of a people by now known as the Israelites, the children of Israel. However in the Qur'an, which claims to be from the same divine source, neither the promise nor the election appears. In one instance, after presenting more than 50 verses concerning Moses, including his witness to Pharaoh, the plagues in Egypt, the crossing of the red sea, Moses receiving the Torah, the displays of the Israelites' stubbornness, the appointments of 70

wise men, and the writings of guidance, the Qur'an abruptly interjects the claim of Muhammad being predicted in the Torah and the Gospel (Sura 7:157). The Qur'an then returns to the story of Moses and his people in the wilderness facing thirst, with God directing where to strike for water.

Like an evangelical preacher in the middle of his sermon, Muhammad makes an altar call, "I am sent unto you all, as the Messenger of Allah, to whom belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth: there is no god but He: it is He that giveth both life and death. So believe in Allah and His Messenger, *the Unlettered Prophet*, who believeth in Allah and His words: follow him that (so) ye may be guided" (Sura 7:158). It is on the bases of such an assertion that Muslims refer to the Bible, searching for passages with the attempt to prove the coming of Muhammad as stated in the Qur'an.

The Qur'anic passage refers to "the Unlettered Prophet" (*Ummi*). Nowhere in the Torah and the *Injil* (the Gospel) is there any mention about a prophet who cannot read or write. Some Muslims, in their arguments, refer to Isaiah 29:11-12. However, many issues contradict this claim. First, Isaiah is not part of the Torah.¹ Also, the context does not help our Muslim friends. The context takes place in Jerusalem, not in Arabia. Verse 13 in Isaiah 29 tells of those people who say they cannot read or comprehend the scroll, and it states that their hearts are far from God. A Muslim would hardly be prepared to accept such a statement for Muhammad. We will discuss this matter more deeply later on in the chapter.

A prophet like Moses

Deuteronomy 18:15-19 is the passage in the Bible most often cited by Muslims as a prophecy about Muhammad. In verse 15 Moses is speaking; in verse 18 the Lord himself is speaking through Moses.

¹ In Jewish Rabbinical circles what we know as "The old Testament" is referred to as the *TeNaKh*, an acronym based on the initial letters of the three words *Torah* (law), *Nebi'im* (prophets), and *Ketubim* (writings).

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. For this is what you asked of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the Lord our God nor see this great fire any more, or we will die." The Lord said to me: "What they say is good. I will raise up from them a prophet like you among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account" (Deut 18:15-19).

Muslims assert that God promised a great prophet from amongst the Arabs, who are descendants of Ishmael, the brother of Isaac. Their main argument is built around the two phrases in the above passage: 'among their brethren' and 'like unto thee'.²

Jamal Badawi for example claims: "There were hardly any two prophets who were so much alike as Moses and Muhammad. Both were given comprehensive law and code of life, both encountered their enemies and were victors in miraculous ways, both were accepted as prophets/statesmen and both migrated following conspiracies to assassinate them."³

From among their brothers

Let us look first at the word 'brothers' in the context. As the Qur'an is taken by Muslims to be its own exposition, the same then should apply to the Bible. The best method of explaining one passage from the Bible is by another passage.

First of all, in the light of the Torah no prophet was expected from Ishmael's lineage because God's covenant was made

² Ata'Ullah Kalim, *Synopsis of Religious Preaching: Christianity and Islam*, pp. 38-41; Ahmad Deedat, *What does the Bible say about Muhammad?*, p. 3 ff.

³ Jamal Badawi, *Muhammad in the Bible*, p. 2 (http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/muhammad_bible.htm).

with Isaac only (Genesis. 17:18-21; 21:10-12). As for Ishmael, God promised to make him 'into a nation' only (Genesis 17:20; 21:13). Although the Qur'an mentions Ishmael as a prophet, it recognizes the prophetic office having been entrusted to Isaac's descendants through Jacob (Sura 29:27; 45:16).

Secondly, we find that the word 'brothers' in the book of Deuteronomy does not refer to another nation or people but only to the sons of Israel: the descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel (Jacob). Even if we leave the rest of the Torah aside and just look in Deuteronomy, we will be able to remove any misunderstanding. In this book alone the word 'brothers' is used about 48 times, referring to the Israelites every single time. Not even once is it used for the Ishmaelites nor Arabs. Some examples of 'brother' Israelites include Deuteronomy 1:16, 3:18, 23:20, and 24:7.⁴

The first two verses of Deuteronomy 18, the same chapter of the prophet like Moses prophecy, tell us, "The priests, who are Levites - indeed the whole tribe of Levi - are to have no allotment or inheritance with Israel . . . They shall have no inheritance among their brothers" (Deuteronomy 18:1-2). In this passage 'they' refers to the tribe of Levi; 'their brothers' refers to the remaining tribes of Israel.

In Deuteronomy 17:15, we read how God advised Moses to instruct the Israelites to choose a king. He told them, "Be sure to appoint over you the king the Lord your God chooses. He must be from among your own brothers." There is no mention of Ishmaelites as brothers of the tribes of Israel. The Israelites always chose kings from among their own twelve tribes.

If such were indeed a wrong interpretation, then the prophets of God would have recommended that the Ishmaelites be given a chance to be king over the tribes of Israel. However their silence is evidence that 'brethren' means only among the twelve tribes of Israel. In light of this,

⁴ See NIV 1984 and the link <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Bible/Deutertoc.html> for the Jewish Bible, as well <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0.htm> for Hebrew text.)

Christians understand that when the promise of the Prophet was given, the Israelites understood that he was to be from among them, their brother Israelites, and fellow descendants of the sons of Israel (Jacob).

Let's see some Qur'anic examples. A prophet is a brother of those to whom he is sent. In the Qur'an, a prophet by the name Hud is called the brother of the tribe Ad. Hud was from among this tribe. (Sura 7:65). We find the same about two other prophets, Salih and Shu'eyb (Sura 7:73, 85) who were from their own tribes.⁵ Thus when Moses was given the good news of the coming prophet, it was understood that he was to rise from among the Israelites. Since Muhammad is not from any of the tribes of Israel, he is not that prophet.

Attributes of the Prophet like Moses

God spoke to Moses in a special way. Even the Qur'an testifies that God spoke directly to Moses in a way that he did not speak to other prophets. (Exodus 33:11; Sura 4:164). Moses performed signs and wonders. He was given a covenant for the people of Israel. Thus the distinguishing features of the coming prophet would be that:

1. He would have personal knowledge of God. He would know God face to face. God would speak to him directly. (Deuteronomy 18:18)
2. Great signs and wonders would confirm his mission, like Moses. He would be a mighty miracle worker (Deuteronomy 34:10-12).
3. He would be the direct mediator of a covenant between God and his people. (Deuteronomy 18:19)

⁵ Hud, Salih and Shu'eyb are not mentioned in the Bible but the Qur'an identifies them as God's messengers to pre-Islamic Arabia.

Is Muhammad or Jesus like Moses?

Moses spoke to God directly (Numbers 12:6-8). God sent him with signs and wonders. Muslims call Moses 'Kalimullah' meaning, "with whom God conversed." If Muhammad is the prophet like Moses, then he was supposed to fulfill the above attributes. According to traditions and the Qur'an, we are told that God spoke to him through Gabriel and other means (Sura 2:97).⁶ In the light of the Qur'an, we find that God did not speak to him face to face. God did not give Muhammad revelation directly. Instead it was Gabriel who was the go-between.

We also find that Muhammad performed no signs and wonders. *Ahadith*, the Islamic traditions, do record some fanciful miracles of Muhammad. However, the Qur'an, the Muslim first-hand authority, clearly points out that Muhammad performed no signs (Sura 29:50). If he had performed signs, people would not have asked the question as is mentioned in the Qur'an: "Why are not (signs) sent to him, like those which were sent to Moses?" (Sura 28:48) Also, nowhere in the Qur'an is Muhammad mentioned as a mediator of a covenant between God and people, as Moses was.

In their discussions with Christians, some Muslims argue that Moses and Muhammad were both born naturally of human parents and buried, whereas Jesus did not have an earthly father. He was born of a virgin woman and instead of dying ascended to heaven. They further argue that Jesus cannot be a prophet like Moses because Christians believe Jesus is the Son of God. Now, if such an argument has to be followed then surely one may say Moses was born in Egypt and both Jesus and Muhammad were not born in Egypt.

A Christian response is that none of such differences between Jesus and Moses are of importance. The Bible does call Jesus a prophet as well as the Son of God (John 1:14; 1:45; 6:45). Jesus is both prophet and Son of God, the Messiah. The fact that Jesus died on the cross and Moses did not is irrelevant to the issue (Matthew 13:57; 21:11; John 4:44). Both

⁶ *Sahih Bukhari*, volume 1, Book 1, Number 2-4

the Qur'an and the Bible testify that many prophets were killed (Matthew 23:31 & Sura 2:91). Therefore the similarity should be of more unique aspects, the similarities specifically addressed in Deuteronomy.

If we follow the Muslim reasoning of discrediting Jesus as that prophet and reverse the process, we can also bring out many similarities between Moses and Jesus where Muhammad does not fit at all. For example, we have earlier discussed that this person is to be from among the brother tribes of Israel. Muhammad is not; he cannot be that prophet. Moses and Jesus both were called from Egypt to perform God's work (Hebrews 11:27; Matthew 2:15) while Muhammad was never in Egypt. For the cause of God, Moses left the wealth of Pharaoh's family and Jesus left the temptation of worldly desires in order to share the poverty of the people (Hebrews 11:25-26 and 2 Corinthians 8:9). However, Muhammad confiscated booty after conquering his enemies, his own people (the Arabs), as well as the Jewish tribes in Arabia who rejected his claim.

When we examine the New Testament, we find that Jesus fulfills all the distinguishing features mentioned in Deuteronomy 18. We see that God not only spoke to Jesus, but that he is His Word (John 1:1). Even the Qur'an in its own way suggests that Jesus is the *Kalima* – word from God (Sura 3:45). We see that the first sign or attribute is fulfilled in Jesus.

The second sign of this coming Prophet is being a mighty sign and miracle worker. The Gospel narratives testify to that. When Jesus spoke and people witnessed his signs and wonders, they proclaimed, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote" (John 1:45). In the Qur'an as well, we find that Jesus was the greatest miracle worker (Sura 19:21; 5:110,111, 113).

We also read in the Bible that when people saw the miraculous signs Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the prophet who is to come into the world" (John 6:14). The apostles of Jesus also proclaimed that Jesus had fulfilled the prophecy through Moses. Peter, for example, used

Deuteronomy 18:18 as a distinctive proof that God had foretold the coming of Jesus through Moses (Acts 3:22). Stephen in his presentation to the Jews before his martyrdom referred to Deuteronomy 18:18 as a proof that Moses had announced the coming of Jesus whom they had recently rejected (Acts 7:37).

Jesus himself claimed that Moses wrote about him. He rebuked some unbelieving Jews of his time, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me" (John 5:45). He further said, "If you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins" (John 8:24; cf. Deuteronomy 18:19).

God promised that he would mediate a new covenant. Though the Prophet would be like Moses, his covenant was to be different from that given through Moses (Jeremiah 31:31-34). We read in the New Testament that Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant (Hebrews 9:15).

God said to the people of Israel that he would indeed raise up for them a prophet like Moses, "just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly" (Deuteronomy 18:16) when they had pleaded that God speak to them through a mediator only. Moses mediated a covenant between God and the people. After the Ten Commandments and other laws had been delivered to them, Moses anointed the Book of the Law and the people with the sprinkled blood of calves and goats as well as the tabernacle and vessels used in worship saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you" (Exodus 24:8; cf. Hebrews 9:20).

In Deuteronomy 18:15, God said, "You must listen to him". We hear the same words at the transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36). Moses said to the Israelites that the judgment of God would be upon those who would not hear this Prophet, even as it would fall upon the people to whom he spoke for their unbelief at Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 14:1-38). Some scholars are of the opinion that because the nation of Israel in general refused to listen and follow Christ, the Judgment of God came upon them in the

destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D. as well as world dispersion (Luke 19:41-44; 21:20-24).

Further in the prophecy God promises, "I will put my words in his mouth" (in Deuteronomy 18:18). We find Jesus saying, "I did not speak on my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it" (John 12:49; John 14:10, 24; 17:8).

Like Moses, Jesus knew God face to face. Jesus claimed that he knew God because he had come from him (John 7:29). In this knowledge he was so far ahead that another place he proclaimed, "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son choose to reveal him" (Matthew 11:27). This means that not only did Jesus talk to God, the Father, face to face, he also had seen God and had communion with him. No one else ever had. He claimed, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9; John 6:46).

When Moses spoke to God face to face, the skin of his face shone (Exodus 34:29-30). At the event known as the transfiguration, Jesus' face shone like the sun. (Matthew 17:2) There is no such record in the case of Muhammad.

God confirmed the mission of Moses with miracles and wonders. Moses stretched his hand over the sea to divide it. After him other prophets showed power over water, but it was Jesus who calmed a raging storm on the Sea of Galilee by his word alone. His disciples were amazed, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!" (Matthew 8:27 see also Exodus 14:21; Joshua 3:13; 2 Kings 2:14; Mark 4:39). As for Muhammad, when asked to show any signs, his argument was: "Miracles are in the power of God alone; and as for me - I am but a plain warner" (Sura 29:50).

As Moses performed the sign of feeding the Israelites, Jesus similarly fed about 5 thousand people with just a few loaves of bread. People were amazed and said, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world" (John 6:14).

In the Bible, Moses prophesied events that were fulfilled (Deuteronomy 28:15-67). Similarly Jesus prophesied events that were fulfilled (Matthew 24:1-2). In the Qur'an, Muhammad never prophesied specific events except for some referring to battle victories.

Moses offered himself as atonement before God, to take upon himself the sins of all his people (Exodus 32:30-32). Muhammad never did this for his people. He was asked to plead for the forgiveness for his own sins and then for his people (Sura 47:9). Jesus not only offered himself to take the sins of all people, he went through victoriously (Matthew 26:28; Isaiah 53:5).

In view of these points, we find that Muhammad was not like Moses while Jesus is. Most significant is the fact that to save mankind, God promised Abraham the covenant through Isaac and later Isaac's son Jacob. He rescued and led the children of Jacob (Israel) from slavery in Egypt through Moses. He accomplished bringing all believers of every people out of captivity from sin through Jesus!

The Promised Prophet was to be a brother. Jesus came from the tribe of Judah. He sent his first apostles to the Jews (Matthew 10:6) and later to the whole world (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:7-8). However Muhammad according to the Qur'an was sent to the Arabs among whom he was born. It was later that he claimed to be a prophet for the Jews as well.

About Moses we learn that he was "educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action" (Acts 7:22). However, the Qur'an regards Muhammad as an *Ummi*, an unlettered prophet (Sura 7:158). Moses knew how to read and write, whereas Muhammad is claimed to have been illiterate.

Most Muslims quote John 1:17 and assert that Jesus did not bring a law as Moses did, while Muhammad gave a law like Moses. However, Christians know that Jesus gave a Law, which is mentioned in the Bible. The Law Jesus gives is not natural, but spiritual (Matthew 5:17-48; Matthew 22:36-40;

John 6:29; John 13:34; Romans 8:2; Galatians 6:2; James 1:25; 2:8; Hebrews 8:10; 10:16).

Psalms of David: Is Muhammad or Jesus mentioned?

Muslims believe that God revealed to David the book of Psalms, thus it must have something about the coming of Muhammad. Since the Qur'an claims that both Moses and Jesus predicted the coming of Muhammad, then David too must have said something about Muhammad. Some of the major prophecies in Psalms that Christians see as predictions about Jesus, Muslims in their discussions use as being fulfilled in Muhammad. Let's check a few in context and background.

Psalm 45 – mighty with the sword

Gird your sword upon your side, O mighty one; clothe yourself with splendor and majesty. In your majesty ride forth victoriously in behalf of truth, humility and righteousness; let your right hand display awesome deeds. Let your sharp arrows pierce the hearts of the king's enemies; let the nations fall beneath your feet. (Psalm 45:3-5)

Nowadays, many Muslims in the USA try to play the 'being politically correct' card and present Muhammad as the prophet of peace. However, others in the rest of the world present him as 'the final prophet of God with the sword.' They argue that this passage does not refer to Jesus, since he never came with the sword, as he himself admitted (Matthew 26:52; Luke 22:49-51; John 18:10-11).

A Christian response is that through reading the whole Psalm in context, we find that right in the first verse of this Psalm, it is the king who is addressed. This king has a throne in verse 6. In the Qur'an we do not find that Muhammad was called a King with a throne. In fact it is Allah whose throne is mentioned in the Qur'an (Sura 7:54). It is noteworthy that several centuries before Muhammad verses 6 and 7 of this

Psalm were quoted in the Book of Hebrews 1:8-9, as the ultimate fulfillment in Jesus.

The context in Psalm 45:10 refers to Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter. The occasion is a symbol of the spiritual union between Christ and his church. Verse 9 in this Psalm speaks of Kings' daughters, honorable women who symbolize the Church as the 'Bride of Christ' (Revelation 21:2; 19:7,8; 21:9). The enemies mentioned in Psalm 45:5 refers to Satan, his hosts, and the nations who fight against Jesus and his gospel (Revelation 19:11-21). Although Jesus did not come the first time with the sword, He will come with one in his second coming (Revelation 19:11-16; cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

Psalm 84:6 - Pilgrimage to Mecca?

As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools (Psalm 84:6).

Muslims claim that Psalm 84 describes pilgrims travelling to the house of God. Verse 6 tells us that they pass through the valley of Baca. In Sura 3:96 the word *Bakka* appears as a name for Mecca. Muslims identify the well or the spring in Psalm 84:6 with the well *Zam-zam* in Mecca, which has ritual significance during the *Hajj* ceremony (as well as way before Muhammad's time when the Ka'ba was full of idols). They assert that this Psalm is a description of pilgrims going to Mecca for the *Hajj*. The argument that stems from this assertion is that because the Psalm was written considerably before the time of Christ, this would show that Mecca was a center of pilgrimage long before the time of Muhammad. This would hence support the Qur'anic claim that Abraham built the Ka'ba and that pilgrims used to come from far and wide.

Christians believe that this Psalm was in praise of the house of God (the temple) in Jerusalem. Since Muslims have followed a kind of literalism, we can point out that Psalm 84:6 describes a well or spring made by the pilgrims. The well

Zam-zam in Mecca was not made by pilgrims. The Scriptures state that the rains fill the valley with pools of water (Psalm 84:6). Mecca is mostly very dry all the year round; it virtually never finds itself surrounded by pools of standing water left by rains. Verse 7 mentions the pilgrims before God in Zion. This is, of course, Jerusalem - not Mecca. In the Bible, Zion is often used synonymously with Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:31; Psalm 51:18; Psalm 128:5; Psalm 135:21; Isaiah 2:3).

Verses 5-7 describe the last part of the ascent of pilgrims to the temple in Jerusalem. These pilgrims ascend from the southwest through the valley of Baca. The Valley of Baca is described by Holman's Bible dictionary as: Hebrew - Baca BACA (bay' cuh) Place name meaning, 'Balsam tree' or 'weeping.'⁷

It would seem that Psalm 84:6 reflects a poetic play on words, describing a person forced to go through a time of weeping. God then turned the tears into a well, providing water.

What about the word Baca in this Psalm, which Muslims think refers to Mecca? We find this Hebrew word elsewhere where it is translated into English as 'Balsam trees.' Both 2 Samuel 5:23- 24 and 1 Chronicles 14:14-15 identify a valley in which David fought the Philistines. This place was full of balsam bushes near Rephaim. It is to the southwest of Jerusalem and forms an approach route to the city. The Philistines had encamped in Rephaim to attack Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:17 -18). The Bible further narrates how David attacked the Philistines who were encamped in that place (2 Samuel 5:23, 24; 1 Chronicles 14:14,15). Therefore the valley poetically called Baka by the sons of Korah (in Psalm 84) is near Jerusalem and not Mecca in Arabia. This makes sense, since the Sons of Korah lived in Israel and not in Arabia.

⁷ <http://www.studylight.org/lex/heb/view.cgi?number=01056>

Psalm 110 – a prophecy about Muhammad?

The LORD says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet (Psalm 110:1)

Some Muslims believe that the first LORD is God himself and the second is Muhammad, who they consider to be the lord of heavens and the earth. They claim that David through prophecy is predicting Muhammad's victory over his enemies.⁸ In their dialogues with Christians on the subject of Muhammad in the Bible, it is mentioned by Muslim protagonists that the Qur'an predicts further victory for Muhammad by choosing the faith of Islam to take over all religions (Sura 48:28; 61:9).

When Christians mention that the reference is about Jesus, the response is remarkably similar to the assumption of the Pharisees whom Jesus confronted with this verse. Muslims ask, "How could this refer to Jesus, as he is David's son and David calls him Lord?" And so they answer this question by suggesting that the Lord of David is in fact Muhammad.⁹

Christians do not have to go far to check for an answer. In Matthew 22:42-44, we learn that Jesus himself tells us that this verse refers to him;¹⁰ it cannot therefore refer to Muhammad. David calls Jesus *Lord* because he is not only the son of David but also the Messiah, the son of God, which fulfills God's promise to King David in 2 Samuel 7:11-16 and 1 Chronicles 17:7-14. Gabriel, the angel who came to Mary, told her that Jesus "...will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:32-33).

Jesus' apostles, including Peter, confessed that Jesus is the Christ - Messiah - Son of God (Matthew 16:16-17). Jesus was

⁸ Dawud, Abdul Ahad. *Muhammad in the Bible*, Page 81ff.

⁹ Baagil, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue*, p. 50

¹⁰ Psalm 110:1 is quoted also in Mark (12:36), Luke (20:42) and Acts (2:34,35).

known among the people of being a son/descendant of King David (Matthew 9:27; Matthew 15:22; Matthew 21:9; Luke 18:38-39). We find Peter on the day of Pentecost explaining Psalm 110 and its fulfillment in Jesus (Acts 2:34-36).

As with regard to Muhammad being the *Lord*, the Qur'an does not claim that Muhammad is the Lord. He is mentioned in the Qur'an as *Rahmatal-lil-'alamiin* - mercy for the world and *Khataman-Nabiyyin* - seal or the last of the prophets, not as Lord (Sura 21:107; 33:40). In fact the Qur'an states that God asked him to declare among his people, "I am a mortal like you" (Sura 41:6).

Psalm 149 – a prophecy about the Qur'an and Muhammad?

Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints. Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King. Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp. For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation. Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds. May the praise of God be in their mouth and a double-edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples ... (Psalm 149:1-7).

Muslim friends claim that the above passage contains a prophecy about Muhammad. According to their interpretation, the new song in verse 1 is the Qur'an. The king in verse 2 is Muhammad and a double-edged sword in verse 6 refers to the sword of Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Muhammad's son in-law.

According to Muslim exegetes the Qur'an is not poetry. Therefore, it cannot be a song. Singing is not part of Islamic worship. However, the passage in this Psalm, as well as many other Psalms (songs) suggest several ways to worship God and praise him: in dance (Psalm 30:11; Psalm 150:4) with the voice (Psalm 7:17; Psalm 9:11; Psalm 13:6, Psalm 18:49; Psalm

21:13; Psalm 27:6) and with musical instruments (Psalm 33:2; Psalm 71:22). Such things are discouraged in Islam.

The king in verse 2 cannot be Muhammad because this king is referred to as the 'maker' of Israel. The maker of Israel is God himself, which the Qur'an also testifies. The sword in their hands in verse 6 actually means in the hands of the Israelites as is very much obvious from verse 2. The double-edged sword symbolizes the completeness of judgment that will be executed by the Messiah when he returns to punish all evildoers (Revelation 1:16).

Jesus and the Psalms

In the Gospels, Jesus quotes more than twenty times from the Psalms. Passages such as Mark 12, Luke 20, and Matthew 27, for instance, refer back to Psalms 118, 110, and 22. Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1 on the cross. We find this psalm itself unfurls the entire passion scene — the mocking words and wagging heads; Christ weak and thirsty; the pierced hands and feet; the divided garments; even in a sense his final words, "It is finished".

As with Psalm 22 in particular, the prophetic links to Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah in the rest of the Psalms are impossible to miss. For example:

1. God's only begotten Son, the Lord (Psalms 2, 89, 110)
2. His supreme kingship (Psalms 2, 45, 72, 89)
3. Role as the suffering servant (Psalms 28, 55, 102)
4. Healing ministry (Psalm 107)
5. Quelling of the raging sea (Psalms 65, 107)
6. Hated without cause (Psalms 35, 109)
7. None of his bones broken (Psalm 34)
8. His atoning work (Psalms 69, 72)
9. His ascension (Psalms 24, 47)
10. That he is judge over the earth (Psalm 50)

to redeem us so that through him we may regain our spiritual inheritance which we lost through Adam. No wonder, the Bible states: 'The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit' (1 Corinthians 15:45). In Adam we die, but because of our belief in the redemptive Jesus we are raised to eternal life again.

In the Qur'an (Sura 3:40-46) Jesus is described as one who is among the nearest to God (*min al-muqarrabin*) and as of the upright (*min al-salihin*) and as eminent (*wajih*). Baidhawi amplifies this, saying that Jesus is illustrious in this world as a Prophet and in the next as an intercessor.¹⁵ However, to understand the full picture one should read how these aspects or attributes of Jesus are understood in the Bible.

Following the Qur'anic presentation of Jesus (in Sura 3:45; Sura 4:171), we find that Jesus is not only *Kalimatullah* (the word of God), but also *Ruh Allah* (the spirit of God).¹⁶ No other prophet has been described in such terms. Muhammad, who is claimed to be the final leader of the prophets, has never been called the spirit of God. Muslims see the stigma of this belief. Although in the Christian Scriptures these epithets denote special place of honor and origin of Jesus with God, Muslim exegetes seem to feel threatened by these titles in their comparison of Muhammad's status to Jesus. To circumvent it, they try to weaken the interpretation of such titles given to Jesus.

¹⁵ Baidhawi, *Tafsir al-Baidhawi*, vol. 1, p. 160; Hughes, Dictionary of Islam, p.229

¹⁶ Arabic: *Kilimatuhu . . . wa ruhun minhu* – His word ... and spirit from him. The 2003 translation of the Qur'an by Muhammad Asad deliberately translated Sura 4: 171 in such a way so to water down his position better than Muhammad or other messengers. A literal translation should be: Indeed the Messiah Jesus son Mary was an apostle of Allah and His word, conveyed unto Mary and His Spirit. However, Asad translates: "The Christ Jesus, son of Mary, was but God's Apostle – [the fulfillment of] His promise which He conveyed unto Mary – and a soul created by Him." (Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, p.156. words in bracket are also his.)

The Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit

When Christians point out that Jesus was miraculously and uniquely conceived through the Holy Spirit of God and that even the Qur'an claims him to be the Spirit from God, Muslim protagonists are quick to point out that John the Baptist (Yahya) was also honored by the Spirit of God while still in the womb of his mother (Luke 1:15).

The Christian response is that the Holy Spirit did not only conceive Jesus, but Jesus also had the authority to grant the Spirit to whomever he chose to give it. Even John the Baptist recognized it and told his audience: "After me comes one who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:7-8). It is worthy of note that when John sees Jesus, he shouts, "this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (John 1:33).

Some Muslims claim that Jesus blessing others with the Holy Spirit is not unique; other prophets did it too. However, there is a difference. While other prophets did not have direct access to the Holy Spirit, Jesus did. For example, when Moses saw how the Holy Spirit rested upon some elders, he exclaimed, "I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them" (Numbers 11:24-29).

Jesus has been given direct access to send the Holy Spirit, thus claiming "when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness of me..." (John 15:26) Mentioned elsewhere, Jesus said something no other prophet could say to others, "Peace to you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' " (John 20:21-22).

Islam and the belief in Jesus

The Islamic belief is incomplete without a belief in Jesus. In some traditions, the belief that Jesus is the word and spirit of God is considered an essential item of faith, along with the belief in the Muslim *Shahadah* (Creed). Muhammad said, "If anyone testifies that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah alone who has no partners, and that Muhammad is His Slave and His Apostle, and that Jesus is Allah's Slave and His Apostle and His Word which He bestowed on Mary and a Soul from Him, and that Paradise is true, and Hell is true, Allah will admit him into Paradise with the deeds which he has done even if those deeds were few."¹⁷ In other words, belief in Jesus can earn a soul the paradise of God. However, there is a problem about Muhammad. In the Qur'an and in some other traditions, Muhammad denies himself as being an intercessor.

Why Jesus came

On the basis of the derived traditional interpretations of the Qur'anic passages, most Muslims go from emphasizing 'commonality' between Muhammad and Jesus to watering down the eminence of Jesus. They discredit the Bible's testimony about Jesus yet try to cram Muhammad into the Bible.

Many consider Jesus, in comparison to Muhammad, to be only a prophet of God (*nabi*) and a messenger (*rasul*). They think that it was in this respect that he was the recipient of the *Injil* (the gospel) to give to people (Sura 19:30; 4:171; 3:48).

Indeed we find in the Christian scriptures that God sent Jesus, giving him the Good News about the Kingdom of Heaven: the Gospel (Mark 1:14-15; Luke 10:21-24; 4:14-21). In Hebrews 3:1, Jesus is called *rasul* (messenger/ apostle). In John's narrative, Jesus is spoken of as the prophet that was to come in the world and as the Messiah, the Son of God (John 6:14; 11:27).

¹⁷ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 4, Book 55, Number 644.

We also find that those who first heard his teaching called him the prophet (Mark 6:15; 8:28). Although Jesus accepted this title (Mark 6:4; Luke 13:33), he did not think of himself as just a prophet. He claimed that he was greater than the prophets Jonah, David, and even Abraham (Luke 11:32; Matthew 22:45; John 8:58).

According to the Qur'an, God taught Jesus the *Tawrat* (the books of Moses) and gave him the *Injil* (the Gospel) as a confirmation of the *Tawrat*. The Qur'an regards the *Injil* as *Hikma* (wisdom) because it fills the hearts of those who follow it with meekness and pity (Sura 5:82). The Qur'an claims that Jesus' prophetic authority guaranteed the Gospel, the Torah and all other prophetic writings. God taught all of them to him (Sura 3:43; 5:110).

The ministry of Jesus, as the Qur'an sees it, commenced from the cradle, where he allegedly declared his purpose (Sura 19:29-34). Muslims think that Jesus came to the Israelites in order to prophesy about another prophet after him, namely Ahmad (the second name of Muhammad).

God sent many prophets and messengers to lead the people of Israel. At the end, he sent Jesus to them. The Qur'an puts the words in the mouth of Jesus as saying to the Israelites, "I have come to you, with a Sign from your Lord" (Sura 3:49). According to the Qur'an, Jesus came to enhance the inner meaning and purity of the religion. He tried to bring unity and legalized things previously forbidden to the Israelites (Sura 3:50). However, nowhere does the Qur'an mention the main reason Jesus came: "The son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45).

In their reaction to the message of Jesus, the Qur'an generally portrays most of the children of Israel as recalcitrant people from whom God protected Jesus. In the face of such recalcitrance, the disciples of Jesus (*al-hawariyun*) stepped forward to accept the call of Jesus to be his helpers in serving God (Sura 3:52-53; 5:111-113; 57:27; 61:14).

Jesus' teachings and the Bible

Generally, Muslims claim that the original *Injil* can no longer be found. Yet they say that remnants of the Jesus' teachings can be detected in sermons and parables ascribed to him in the current New Testament. Such an idea of corruption in the Christian scriptures goes against documentary evidences that are extant.¹⁸ It also contradicts the Qur'an, that none can alter God's words (Sura 6:34; 10:64).

Little importance is given in the Qur'an to the moral teachings of Jesus, including the Beatitudes. The Qur'an includes only one reference to Jesus' parables, though we find in abundance Jesus' parables in the four narratives of the Gospel in the New Testament. One reference that we find is only used to describe the followers of Muhammad:

Muhammad is the apostle of Allah and those who are with him are strong against Unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other. Thou wilt see them bow and prostrate themselves (in prayer), seeking Grace from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure. On their faces are their marks, (being) the traces of their prostration. This is their similitude in the Taurat; and 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. As a result, it fills the Unbelievers with rage at them. Allah has promised those among them who believe and do righteous deeds forgiveness, and a great Reward (Sura 48:29 compare with, for instance, Mark 4:27-28).

Some of the things Jesus is alleged to have said resemble several New Testament sayings of Jesus about eating, fasting and worship (Matthew 6:16-26). The attitude of Jesus to the Law, and the profoundness of Jesus digging deep into the Law is found in his sermon on the mount (Matthew 5:17).

¹⁸ Masood, *The Bible and the Qur'an: A question of Integrity*, pp. 41-64.

Sufi traditions depict Jesus in his teaching and practice as an ascetic. One of the most famous Sufis in the Umayyad period was Hasan al-Basri (d. 728). He was renowned for his scholarship as well as his piety. A letter that he wrote to the caliph to plead with him to follow the teaching of the prophets, depicts the prophets as ascetics. He portrays Jesus as saying:

"My daily bread is hunger, my badge is fear, my raiment is wool, my mount is my foot, my lantern at night is the moon, my fire by day is the sun, and my fruit and fragrant herbs are such things as the earth brings forth for the wild beasts and cattle. All the night I have nothing, yet there is none richer than I!"¹⁹

Here too we see that the whole picture of Christ is not available. Jesus has given us an example of not loving the world (Matthew 6:19-21; Matthew 8:20; John 12:23-26). Our abode is not this world but the coming world, where we will be in fellowship with God. That is our goal, which can be achieved through Jesus.

The Divine Status of Jesus

The Qur'an denies that God begets or takes to himself offspring (Sura 112:3). It asks, "How can Allah have a son, when he hath no consort?" (Sura 6:101). Allah "has taken neither a wife nor a son" (Sura 72:3).

Such denunciation was directed primarily against the polytheism of the people in Mecca since many of the Arab people during the time of Muhammad were polytheists. Thus, many passages in the Qur'an deal with the Arabs' polytheism. However, Muslims use these passages to condemn Jesus being the Son of God, taught in Christianity (Sura 19:88-93). Jesus in the Qur'an is deliberately made to distance himself from the doctrines that his community is said to hold

¹⁹ A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An account of the Mystic of Islam*, pp. 34-35.

of him. It states that he will be cleansed from the perverted beliefs of his followers (Sura 3:55).

The idea behind the denial of the divinity is that every messenger of God is a *shahid* (witness) to the true faith before his people. The Qur'an says that on Judgment Day, God will ask Jesus whether he taught people to worship him and his mother. It has Jesus denying this, affirming that he had said, "Worship God, my Lord and your Lord" (Sura 5:116-117). The Qur'an portrays Jesus as himself playing an active role in the cleansing process.

It is thought that the Qur'an also denies the doctrine of the Trinity (Sura 4:171; 5:73,116). However, what it denies is the idea of three gods. Nowhere does the Bible suggest that type of trinity, or that God is one of three or the third of three. Christians certainly agree that there is only One God. The notion of three gods is as offensive to Christians as it is to Muslims. There is nothing in the Bible which could suggest that Jesus ever spoke of Mary being taken as a god beside God. What the Qur'an re-edits is some of the heretical doctrines that were around in those days in Arabia and its neighboring areas.

It is thought that the Qur'an denies the doctrine of the Trinity (Sura 4:171; 5:73,116). However, what it denies is the Trinity that consists of Father, Mother and Son. Nowhere does the Bible suggest that type of trinity. Christians certainly agree that there one God.

It is important to appreciate that Jesus spoke with authority. Others have claimed to speak the words they have received from God. For example, Moses begins revelations from God by emphasizing that the LORD says so (Exodus 10:3; 11:4). However, Jesus says, "But I say to you..." (Matthew 5:21-48). The people who heard him "were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority" (Luke 4:32). No other prophet spoke with such authority.

Prophets claim to have a deeper insight into the Truth. However, Jesus went further by claiming to be the Truth and the source of all Truth. (John 14:6; John 18:36-37) The Bible

portrays him as the “image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15) and as the living Word of God (John 1:1-18) through whom He has spoken in a way He never did before (Hebrews 1:1-3).

Jesus certainly did not go around saying, “I am God.” Indeed, he joyfully acknowledged his dependence upon God. However, the things he said and did convinced his contemporaries that he was stepping into the space reserved for God, acting and speaking for him in a way never seen or heard before.

The fact is that Christians have not raised a mere human being to the status of being equal with God. Jesus, before coming into this world, existed with God as his Word (John 17:5; John 1:1-2). It is due to the glory and the existence of Jesus as the Word of God according to the Bible before God planted him in the womb of Mary that Christians believe he is one with God. This is the aspect that Jesus referred to and is mentioned in the Bible (John 17:5; 1:1-2; Philippians 2:1-11). On this earth, Jesus came as the biological son of Mary, as *Ibn Adam* (the Son of Man), and the descendant of King David. (Matthew 1:1). God revealed himself through Jesus, thus his attribute *az-Zahir* (revealed).

Jesus’ Miracles: the Qur’an and Ahadith

The Qur’an reports that Jesus performed a series of miracles, such as giving life to birds made of clay by breathing into them (Sura 3:49; 5:110); feeding people from meager supplies, healing the blind and the lepers; and giving life to the dead. All these extraordinary performances, including the miraculous birth of Jesus, were meant to show people that God is able to perform anything, without being subject to human limitations.

Muslim exegete Tabari says that Christ created birds out of clay when He was a child.²⁰ Christians on the other hand, believe Jesus is the Word of God and that he made all things;

²⁰ Tabari, *Jam’ al-Bayan*, his comments on Sura 7:127.

without Him nothing was made (John 1:3). Christians, in the light of their Scriptures, believe that after Jesus came to this world as a human being, he waited 30 years before starting to preach and work miracles (Luke 3:23).

In the Qur'an, Sura 5 is named as 'al-Ma'idah' after Jesus' miracle of providing "a table laden with food" (Sura 5:112-114). It is not clear whether it is the story of the Last Supper or the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:39-44 ff; 14:12ff). Some Muslims relate it to the prayer Jesus taught his disciples, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). However the Qur'anic reference says that this occasion was "to be to us a festival." The word *Eid* is used, which is applied also to Islamic festivals. This would be appropriate for the Lord's Supper, also known as the Communion, which Christians celebrate.

Some Muslims think that a real table came from heaven, it stayed with Jesus and his disciples for three days and then was taken into heaven. Another version says that there was no table from heaven; it was Jesus who multiplied the bread. They refer to the feeding of the five thousand.²¹ Some Sufi mystics believe that the table symbolized the truths of mystical knowledge, the nourishment of the spirit.

Although the Qur'an mentions Jesus as giving life, no details are given as to how. The New Testament mentions three cases: the daughter of Jairus, the widow's son at Nain, and Lazarus (Mark 5:35-43; Luke 7:11-16; John 11:17-44). In Islam, the traditions (also known as Ahadith) and exegetes, who wrote commentaries known as *Israeli-yaat*, that provide details for these and other works of Jesus. As Muslim writers came into close contact with Christians, they assimilated stories from the Bible. So, there are accounts in their writings about Jesus healing the sick, raising the dead, and walking on water. Legends such as Jesus making birds out of clay also found their way into Muslims' ideas about Jesus' miracles.

For example, Suyuti states, Jesus "created for them a bat, being the most perfectly-created of birds, and they would

²¹ Tabari, *Jam' al-Bayan*, his commentary on Sura 5:112-114.

watch it flying, but when it went out of sight, it would fall dead ... He [Jesus] was sent in an age of [characterized by] medicinal science, and he cured, through supplication, fifty thousand in one day on the condition that each person would become a believer; and I bring to life the dead, by the leave of God — He repeats this to preclude any false attributions of divinity to him — he brought back to life his friend Azar, the son of an old woman, and the daughter of the tithe-collector, all of whom lived on and produced offspring, and [he also brought back to life] Shem, son of Noah, but he died [again] immediately.”²²

Azar seems to refer to Lazarus. The tithe-collector is perhaps a tax collector. Shem, the son of Noah, had been dead for around 4,000 years! These stories have spurious elements to them. From the above quote by the medieval writer Suyuti, it can be derived that this Muslim writer tried his best to cut down the importance of Jesus raising the dead. This is not uncharacteristic of Muslims even today. In conversation, well-versed Muslims say that if Elijah and Elisha raised the dead, there is nothing special about Jesus performing such miracles (1 Kings 17:7-24; 2 Kings 4:18-37; Luke 7:11-7; 8:40-48; John 11:43-44).

Somehow, these Muslim friends ignore the fact that unlike Elijah and Elisha who pleaded with God for the ability to perform the restoration of departed souls, Jesus claimed to be the very source and power. Christians do not argue that Jesus is the Son of God simply because he was able to resurrect the dead; they believe in his uniqueness based on the statements he made in relation to his ability to resurrect individuals from death. Jesus claimed, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes shall never die” (John 11:25-26). Elsewhere, along with claiming to be the Way and the Truth, he claimed to be the Life (John 14:6). He goes on to say that the dead hear his voice (John 5:25). Elijah and Elisha did not make such claims. In fact, we do not find any prophet, including

²² Suyuti, *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*, his comments on Sura 3:49

Moses, daring to make such a claim and then giving proof of it, as Jesus did.

The miracles that are recorded in the Gospels have greater authority in fact as, in these scriptures we learn the reasons why they were performed. For example, through the raising of Lazarus, Jesus demonstrated that he had the authority to raise the dead. He was the one sent by God to be followed (John 11:25-27; 12:10-11).

The Last Days of Jesus

The mission of Jesus, according to the Bible, is in two phases. He first came as a servant and gave his life for us as a ransom. In the second phase, he will come as Judge. According to Islam, in the first phase Jesus was sent as a prophet to Israel. In the second phase, they say he will come as a follower of Muhammad, will fight the *Dajjal* (the anti-Christ), and help Muslims to change the world into an Islamic abode.

In his first phase, during the third year of his mission, Jesus was strongly opposed and harassed by the Jewish leaders. Though they had been long awaiting a Messiah to relieve them of their miseries, they did not believe Jesus to be the true Messiah. Out of their disappointment, hatred, and enmity towards Jesus, they finally accused him of rebellion against the emperor.

Muslim commentators believe that the Jewish leaders failed in their treacherous plot. They assume that the Roman soldiers arrested a person who had a striking resemblance to Jesus, while Jesus himself was lifted alive to Heaven. The Qur'an points out that the Jews claimed, "We killed Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, the apostle of God; but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubt, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not" (Sura 4:157). It further adds, 'Nay, God raised him up unto himself, and God is exalted in Power, wise' (Sura 4:158). The same issue is dealt with in other places

of the Qur'an (Sura 3:54-55). The Qur'an has several verses that may be ambiguously quoted to deny the crucifixion. However, it does not give a satisfactory account of what happened to Jesus.

Commentators, such as Baidhawi, Tabari, Razi, and Zamakhshari, express the opinion that God raised Jesus into heaven, with a substitute being killed who God had made to look like Jesus. Despite some differences, all these commentators agree that Jesus was not killed by crucifixion.²³

Some Muslims do not believe in the substitution theory. In his book, 'City of Wrong' (*Qaryah Zalimah*), Kamil Hussain (d. 1977) is mentioned to have said: "The idea of a substitute for Christ is a very crude way of explaining the Qur'anic text." He points out, "No cultured Muslim believes in this nowadays. The text is taken to mean that the Jews thought they killed Christ but God raised him unto him in a way we can leave unexplained among the several mysteries which we have taken for granted on faith alone."²⁴

Like Hussain, some Muslims disagree with the substitution theory but they insist on a swoon theory. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan of Aligarh, India (1817-1898), in the nineteenth century believed that Jesus was crucified but did not die. This theory, that the soldiers thought he was dead, yet he was just unconscious, was later adopted and enlarged by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908), the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement (*Juma'at-i-Ahmadiyya*). He asserted that Jesus was taken away by friends, his wounds treated and later, he travelled to India where he died at the age of 120.²⁵

The majority opinion is that Jesus was taken up bodily into heaven. However, adherents of the Ahmadiyya Movement, and some orthodox Muslims, do not believe in the bodily

²³ Tabari, *Jam' al-Bayan*, part 6, pp.9-13, line 6; Zamakhshari, *al-Kashshaf*, vol. 1, p. 432ff; Razi, *al-Tafsir al-Kabir*, vol. 2, pp. 454, 455; Baidhawi, *Anwar al-Tanzil*, p.75, lines 8ff.

²⁴ Kamil Hussain, *City of Wrong*, p.222.

²⁵ Ghulam Ahmd, *Jesus in India*, p. 14; Masood, *Jesus and the Indian Messiah*, p. 90

ascension of Jesus. Mahmud Shaltut, late Rector of Al-Azhar University, did not believe in the bodily ascension of Jesus, his being alive in heaven, and his descent from there in the latter days.²⁶ Others have presented similar opinions, like Muhammad Asad and Muhammad Abduh.²⁷ Such interpretations have led some Muslims to wonder whether it is essential to have a clear belief about what happened to Jesus.

A Biblical understanding of the Last Days of Jesus

In spite of such ideas, Christians uphold the belief that Jesus was crucified and died, as prophesied by him (Matthew 20:17-19; Matthew 26:1-2) and by other prophets before him (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53). On the third day, he rose from the dead. Although it is suggested by those who deny his death that the cross was a defeat, the whole story is that he gave his life (dying) for us and rose victoriously!

Jesus himself spoke about this event before it happened (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; John 15:13). After his resurrection, he reminded his disciples, explaining to them how his life fulfills what was predicted about him (Luke 24:36-49) In his revelation to the apostle John, Jesus said, "I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades" (Revelation 1:18).

Christians are often asked: "Why did Jesus go through all this?" The answer is the reason God sent Jesus love for us (1 John 4:9-10). Jesus was sent by God to be the way to eternal life for all who believe in him (John 3:16 and John 14:6). By his death on the cross he became the *fidya* (ransom) for all who believe in him, including for the people of the past. Jesus said, "Before Abraham was born, I am!" and that "Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was

²⁶ Ali Akbar, *Israel and the prophecies of the Holy Qur'an*, page 127.

²⁷ Shaltut, Mahmoud. '[The 'Ascension' of Jesus]' *Majallat al-Azhar* 31 (1960); pp. 198-193; Ali Akbar, *ibid.*, pp. 124-127; Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, p. 154, footnotes: 171,172.

glad" (John 8:54-58). God had announced the Gospel (Good News) of Christ in advance to Abraham that all nations were to be blessed through him (Galatians 3:8-9). The same happened in the case of Moses, David and other prophets who predicted about the coming of Jesus.

After his resurrection, the Bible states that Jesus reminded his followers how Christ was to suffer and enter his glory. "Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he [Jesus] explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). The disciples soon understood!

Sadly in today's world, there are still many people, including Muslims, who do not want to know and understand. Like a shepherd, God is willing to go after even one lost sheep to bring it home (Luke 15:4). Are you that sheep? I was one of the lost sheep that God rescued!

The Ascension of Jesus

Following the Qur'anic passages, Muslims do believe in the ascension of Jesus. "God raised him up unto himself, and God is exalted in Power, wise" (Sura 4:158). The words "up unto himself" in Arabic implies that Jesus was not taken to the second or third heaven, as some Muslims suppose. Instead, it suggests that God took Jesus to himself, to his own glorious presence.

The Bible shares how Jesus ascended into heaven, 40 days after being seen by his disciples, after his crucifixion, death, and resurrection. His disciples are testimonies to the miraculous event of Jesus' resurrection from the dead! (Acts 1:1-11). Unlike the Jewish leaders who denied Jesus' resurrection, they boldly proclaimed the truth and endured persecution for testifying about Jesus (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 2:14-47; Acts 3:11-26; Acts 4:1-37; Acts 5:17-42).

Muslims do not accept the testimonies of the apostles of Jesus. Rather, they believe that Jesus ascended to heaven without being resurrected from the dead first, ascending later into heaven. Like the Jewish leaders in Jesus' time, they deny

Jesus' resurrection. They even go so far as denying his crucifixion and death, which the Jewish leaders did not deny. Instead of listening to the testimonies of Jesus' apostles who walked and talked with Jesus and who suffered persecution at the hands of the Jewish leaders, they simply believe statements claimed to be the words of God, proclaimed by a man around 500 years later. They cast aside the testimonies of Jesus' apostles, who saw him which have been preserved and passed down for centuries.

As for the ascension of Jesus to heaven, they believe that such a thing is not important or significant. Their excuse is that according to the Bible, Enoch and Elijah did not see death but ascended into heaven alive (Genesis 5:242; King 2:11). They ignore the fact that with Jesus' ascension, there is a promise of great importance. Jesus said that he will come back and take all believers with him: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:1-3).

The Qur'an states only one reason for the ascension of Jesus: that God took him to save him from his enemies. If that was the only purpose, then why has he not sent him back as those who sought his life have been dead a long time? Jesus is in the presence of God for some greater reason. As a baby when his life was in danger, an angel led the family to flee to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-14). When the danger was over, the family came back to Israel. God could have done something like that but he did not. He chose Jesus to be in his presence for the past 2 millennia. Why did God choose this way? The Qur'an has no answer but the Bible does.

While Enoch and Elijah were taken up, Jesus ascended. He is in the very presence of God at his throne of glory, something that the Bible and the Qur'an do not mention about anyone else. He was there before coming to the world as a tiny human in the womb of Mary. Jesus in reference to himself said, "No

one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven" (John 3:13).

To give our minds some understanding of God's glory from the Qur'anic perspective, the allegorical language in the Qur'an tells us of the throne on which God sits (Sura 7:54; 10:3; 13:2; 25:59; 32:4; 57:4). The Bible also talks about God's glory and His throne, giving us a concrete understanding of the status of Jesus in heaven. It says that Jesus sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Acts 5:31; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1). Jesus our mediator, high priest, and our intercessor is seated in heaven in God's presence. Jesus himself talked about sitting on the right hand of God (Matthew 26:63-64; Mark 14:61-62; Luke 22:66-71).

As in the case of the throne of God mentioned in the Qur'an, Muslims do not entangle themselves in the hyper-literalism of it. The same is true about Jesus sitting at the right hand of God. In both the Qur'an and the Bible, the expression reveals the regal authority God has over the universe. The Bible speaks of Jesus at the right hand of the throne in order to express the relationship and status he enjoys in heaven with God the Father. One may wonder: is that the reason why the Qur'an (Sura 3:45-46) describes Jesus as one who is among the nearest to God (*min al-muqarrabin*)? A Muslim may be hesitant to accept such an interpretation but a Christian in the light of the Bible is indeed sure of it. This status is not available to Muhammad in the Qur'an at all.

The Second Coming of Jesus

Two verses in the Qur'an lead Muslims to believe in the second coming of Jesus: "And there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before his death; and on the Day of Judgment he will be a witness against them" (Sura 4:159). The second passage states: "And (Jesus) shall be a Sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment): Therefore have no doubt about the (Hour), but follow ye Me: This is a Straight Way" (Sura 43:61).

According to the first passage, all the *Ahl al-Kitab* (Jews and Christians) will believe in Jesus before their death. Muslim commentators state that the Arabic *lauaminanna* (must believe) refers to an event in the future. This they believe could only be possible should Jesus come again and live in this world till he dies. The second passage shows that Jesus is the sign of the Last Hour. So it is argued, "How can he be a sign for Doomsday if he doesn't appear sometime before it?"

In Muslim tradition, Muhammad is mentioned to have said, "The Hour will not be established until the son of Mary (i.e. Jesus) descends amongst you as a just ruler, he will break the cross, kill the pigs, and abolish the Jizya tax. Money will be in abundance so that nobody will accept it"²⁸

Those Muslims who believe Jesus will come again see him in a subordinate role to that of the Prophet of Islam. According to them, Jesus will be under a Muslim *Amir* - leader, showing his complete adherence to Islam. Some Ahadith indicate that on his arrival, Jesus will kill the one eyed *Dajjal*, an impostor Messiah (i.e. the antichrist).²⁹ He will live for forty years during which he will marry, have children, and perform Hajj (pilgrimage). After his death, he will be buried beside the grave of the Prophet Muhammad.³⁰

Most Muslims believe that Jesus' descent from heaven will be accomplished by resting his hands on the wings of two angels. He will descend onto the white minaret, situated in the eastern part of Damascus.³¹ He will invite the whole world to be Muslim, including Christians and Jews. Jesus, at the place called Lod, will kill the one-eyed antichrist, accompanied by seventy thousand Jews.³² The Jews will be badly defeated. Jesus will break the cross, annihilate swine and will

²⁸ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 3, Book 43, Number 656

²⁹ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 9, Book 88, Number 242:

³⁰ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 3, Book 34, Number 425 ; *Sahih Muslim*, Vol.1, p.92; Wali ad-Din, *Miskat Al-Masabih*, Vol.2, p.1159.

³¹ *Sahih Muslim*, vol.4, p. 1516, Hadith 7015.

³² Lod is a city 15 kilometers (9.3 mi) southeast of Tel Aviv in the Center District of Israel. At the end of 2011, it had a population of 74,000.

end all wars and jizya (poll tax). His position will be like that of a judge. During this period, there will be an abundance of all sorts of goods. Muslims will dominate the world and there will be an end of all religions except Islam.³³ Some traditions state that after dealing with the one-eyed antichrist, Jesus will face Gog and Magog: "Jesus and his companions would supplicate Allah, who would send to them insects" ... eventually the enemy would perish.³⁴

Some Muslim-based groups, like the Ahmadiyya and the Baha'i, believe that their founders were the second coming of Christ. Some Christian-based groups, like the Jehovah's Witnesses, believe that Jesus came back at the turn of this century and took the elect with him. However, the Bible reveals that his second coming will not be secret. When the apostles saw Jesus ascending into heaven, the angels told them: "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Muslims have various ideas about the physical descent of Jesus. Some say he will land on the Ka'ba; others claim he will land on the minaret of the Umayyad mosque in Damascus. Still others think he will descend in Jerusalem. Whether coming to Jerusalem, Damascus, or Mecca, one has to think carefully from where he is coming. If he is coming from heaven, then this coming will not be an ordinary one, with an ordinary body like ours.

The Bible declares that he is coming in heavenly splendor. He will come in all his glory and power (2 Thessalonians 1:7). Jesus said: "as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west", so will be his coming (Matthew 24:27). In simple words, his coming will be visible to everyone. His first coming took place in obscurity, but his second coming will be

³³ Mawdudi, *Finality of Prophethood*, pp. 58-61; Mufti Elias, *Jesus (Isa) in Islam, and his Second Coming* (<http://www.islam.tc/prophecies/jesus.html>).

³⁴ *Sahih Muslim*, vol.4, p. 1516, Hadith 7015

universally visible. His coming will be so dramatic; no one will fail to recognize him. (Matthew 24:30)

Christians are blessed to find a major part of the New Testament directly concerned with Christ's second coming. Jesus and his return as Judge is one of the major themes. Nevertheless, there is no mention of him coming as an ordinary being, nor is there the least suggestion that he will marry, die, and be buried. The Scriptures indicate that when he comes, his people - both living and the dead - will be raised or changed and meet him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:15 -17; 1 Corinthians 15:50-54).

On many occasions Jesus said that he came down from heaven (John 3:13; 8:23; 16:28) and that he would come again (John 14:2-3, 18-19; Matthew 25:31-32). His second coming will be as the Mighty Judge and conquering King (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). The reassuring news and the final reminder is found in the last chapter of Revelation, the last book of the Bible: "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done" (Revelation 22:12).

At his first coming, Jesus became like us in every respect (Phil. 2:5-8; Hebrews 4:14-16) to deliver us from the power of Satan (Hebrews 2:14-17). He came to conquer sin and rise from the dead to gain victory and triumph. At his second coming, we are going to see him as he really is (1 John 3:2).³⁵

The mission that Jesus left to his Church (followers), to perform and proclaim his Gospel to the world, will terminate at his second coming. He will uproot evil and enthrone righteousness forever. He will establish eternal peace. Although

³⁵ Biblical Christians believe in the second coming of Jesus. Some differences of opinion exist on the sequence of events that will take place. Thus, there are several schools of thought. For example, some Christians believe that Jesus will come back before the Great Tribulation. Others think it will happen in the midst of it, and others ascribe to the idea of post-tribulation. Some believe that Jesus will physically reign on earth for a thousand years. Others take it allegorically: thus the ideas are known as Pre-millennium (Pre and Post-tribulation), Post-millennium and A-millennialism (no-millennium).

it is right to campaign for social justice and peace to improve society, the Bible makes it clear that we will never be able to perfect it. Only Christ at his second coming can do this.

The Bible speaks clearly about the unexpectedness of Jesus' return. About the day of his return, Jesus informed us that no one knows the date but God (Mark 13:32). Indirectly, this is advice not to speculate. Instead, we need to be ready and prepared for his return - at any time! Jesus said that he would come when people did not expect him.

Critics consider the idea of Jesus' second coming as naive: "Where is this coming he promised? Ever since our fathers died everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:4). Jesus has already answered such ridicule. He said his coming would be as unexpected as the flood in the time of Noah (Matthew 24:37-41). People were told about it but they did not believe it. Then it arrived and it was too late.

Today, everyone has the opportunity to believe in Jesus now and live as he has commanded (2 Peter 3:9; Acts 2:37-38). At his arrival this chance will have been withdrawn; it will be too late. Because of this, people need to search their hearts, pray, and ask God for wisdom through His Holy Spirit, which Jesus promised (John 14:16). In order to be ready, we need to come to the Way, the Truth, and the Life: Jesus! (John 14:6) Jesus is coming soon for all those who are his! (John 10:7-18; 14:1-3)

Conclusion

The Qur'an and traditions of Islam's portrayal of Jesus is very different from Jesus in the Bible. According to Islam and the Bible, we see the mission of Jesus, in two phases. Both, however, disagree not only on the status Jesus has but also on the purpose he came for and will come again. The Bible presents him in his first coming not only a prophet and servant but also as the great Sacrifice. He gave his life for us as a ransom. In the second phase he will come as Judge. That understanding is totally denied by Islam. Jesus was taken up into heaven

alive where he abides to come back one day. According to Islam the guidance trail did not end with Jesus. There was still room for another prophet, the final prophet after Jesus namely Muhammad. To prove this the Qur'an and tradition had to attribute even some sayings of Jesus to being fulfilled in Muhammad's coming.

And finally present him as a Muslim Jesus who during his second coming as a follower of Muhammad, will fight *Dajjal* (the anti-Christ), and help Muslims to change the world into an Islamic abode. The Biblical narrative of Jesus, the purpose of his coming and his mission fit together. The Qur'anic gospel about Jesus has flaws and its scattered pieces do not fit in the truth the Bible has. Jesus is not coming back to establish a united states of Islam for Muslims, but for those who are his.

God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:11-13).

This friend's main point was that the disciples of Jesus believed that there would be 'some prophets.' Indeed, there was applause by the Muslim listeners. Although I was interrupted several times in my response, I shared that the passage does talk about prophets after Christ, but there is something more to it. This passage states that it is Jesus who will commission not just one prophet but **prophets** for the people from his followers. According to the passage it is Jesus who has assigned some to be prophets.

Now if Muhammad is the prophet of God sent after Jesus and this is the passage that supports it, then that would mean that Jesus is God. However, Muslims do not believe that Jesus is God. According to Islamic beliefs, God alone empowers and commissions prophets. They believe God (not Jesus) sent Muhammad. Therefore, the passage cannot be about Muhammad. Also, this passage's context affirms that the prophets must speak in the name of Jesus. They prophesy about what was preached by Jesus.

Let us not forget! It is not just one prophet but many prophets - given to the body of Christ, the church. There are other categories in the passage: evangelists, pastors and teachers. What are Muslims going to do about them? The passage also refers to the 'body of Christ' which is the church. The church is the body of believers of Jesus.

Muslims use the Arabic word *Ummah* for its body of believers in Muhammad's teachings. Would this *Ummah* then believe that Jesus is the only way to eternal life? According to the Bible, the prophets, the teachers, and the evangelists sent would preach that Jesus is the Son of God and the only way to God the Father (John 3:16; 14:6).

The passage in question basically means that Jesus was the last one sent directly by God. From now on Jesus the Christ would be the one sending out all the rest of the messengers, prophets, evangelists and pastors through the Holy Spirit. As

Jesus or Muhammad?

Jesus was sent by God, now he sends others. Jesus said to his apostles: "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21). These emissaries were sent out to preach Jesus being the final way.

Muhammad did not preach Jesus being the final way. He did not point people to Jesus. Rather, he pointed them to himself, thus making people his followers, not Jesus' followers. Muhammad's message, although mentioning Jesus with some favor, rejects the main reason for Jesus being sent into this world – as the only Savior. Muhammad preached a different message then to what Jesus and his emissaries preached universally (John 8:24; 10:10; Acts 4:11-12; Revelation 5:9; 14:6-7; Mark 14:8-9; John 19:40; John 20:19-22).

The Bible gives a very basic criterion to check the veracity of a claimant to be the messenger of Truth. No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit's leading (1 Corinthians 12:3). Muhammad and his Islamic message fail to admit this very basic criterion. Islam does not accept, 'Jesus as Lord (Rab)'. The Qur'an only accepts part of the truth: Jesus being the Son of Man (ibn Adam) and thus 'only a servant (Abd).' That is not the whole Truth about Jesus and thus not acceptable in the light of the Bible. This brings us to believe that the message of the Bible and the message of the Qur'an do not come from the same God, nor can we accept that Muhammad came from the same source as Jesus.

Several places in the Bible we find God testifying about Jesus, "This is my beloved Son" and "Listen to him" (Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; 2 Peter 1:17). We are told "... God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:9-12)

Muhammad and 'Gabriel'

Muhammad claimed that he received his messages from God through Gabriel. In the light of the Bible, it could not have been the same angel Gabriel bringing a message contrary to the gospel of Christ, but rather a false angel. The Bible tells us that Satan not only "prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" but also masquerades as an angel of light (1 Peter 5:8; 2 Corinthians 11:14) in order to deceive and prevent people from embracing the true message of salvation. Was Muhammad duped into something from Satan? We leave that to the reader to ponder. As for the believers in Jesus, the Bible warns, "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!" (Galatians 1:8)

True believers in Christ cannot accept Muhammad as the final messenger from God nor his message claiming to have superseded the message of Jesus. The amalgamation of Muhammad's messages and his actions with Jesus' teachings and actions is also impossible, because like water and oil, they do not mix. Muhammad, who became a military leader conquering other peoples in Arabia, does not follow Jesus' teachings or Jesus' actions. Jesus did not lead people to war and in confiscating booty, like Muhammad did. Rather, Jesus preached love for one's enemies (Matthew 5:43-47; Luke 6:27-36).

The sinful state of man and the sinless state of Jesus

Muslims point out that the life of Muhammad is the greatest example of how to live a holy and acceptable life in God's eyes. However, we find such a notion is contradictory according to the Qur'an. Nowhere does the Qur'an declare Muhammad to be faultless. On the other hand, according to both the Bible and the Qur'an, Jesus was without sin throughout his life.

According to the Qur'an, Mary was given the good news of a 'faultless son' (Sura 19.19). The Arabic word for 'faultless', *zakiyya*, implies that he was totally without sin. In the Bible we find several passages to this affect. For example, "He committed no sin, no guile was found on his lips" (1 Peter 2:22). This fulfills the prophecy in Isaiah 53:9. Elsewhere, the Bible states, "For our sake he [God] made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). And also, "[Jesus] appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin" (1 John 3:5).

The Qur'an mentions several prophets asking God for forgiveness of their sins. Adam pleaded with God, "We have wronged our own souls: If thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost" (Sura 7:23). Abraham asked God, "I hope [You] will forgive me my faults on the Day of Judgment" (Sura 26:82). Moses cried, "O my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul! Do Thou then forgive me!" (Sura 28:16). The Qur'an teaches that Noah and Jonah were transgressors and that they too prayed for the forgiveness of all their sins (Sura 11:47; 21:87; 37:142).

Not only does the Qur'an teach that many of the former prophets prayed for the forgiveness of their sins, it expressly states that Muhammad himself needed forgiveness for his transgressions. The Qur'an states that God asked Muhammad: "Ask forgiveness for thy fault and for the men and women who believe" (Sura 47:19; 48:1-2; 40:55).

This is not peculiar of the Qur'an. It is a fact that the Bible presents the accounts of the sins of people in the past and declares that all people fall short. David cried out to God, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done that which is evil in thy sight" (Psalm 51:4). Beholding God's glory, another prophet declared, "I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). Yet another confessed: "I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him" (Micah 7:9).

There are many traditions that quote Muhammad pleading with God, "Please forgive my past and future sins and those sins which I did in secret or in public. It is You whom I worship, none has the right to be worshipped except You."⁴ Elsewhere he asked: "O Allah! Forgive me my sins that I did in the past or will do in the future, and also the sins I did in secret or in public. You are my only God (Whom I worship) and there is no other God for me."⁵ Here is another one where one can see the anxiety and burden Muhammad carried:

"O Allah! Wash away my sins with the water of snow and hail, and cleanse my heart from all the sins as a white garment is cleansed from the filth, and let there be a long distance between me and my sins, as You made East and West far from each other."⁶

The above quote sounds like a copy of some of King David's prayers: Psalm 51:2,7 and Psalm 103:12. Like all mere mortals, Muhammad sinned against God. A long time before Muhammad, David cried to God and received his answer through messianic hope, thus he sung boldly, "as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). Through the Prophet Isaiah God gave assurance: "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

Jesus, however, was never commanded to pray for forgiveness because he was faultless. We never find him praying for forgiveness of any faults, wrongs and sins such as the Qur'an attributes in the verses quoted to other prophets. Jesus did not commit any sin, which the Bible affirms. He never wronged his soul, nor was he blameworthy. We can therefore conclude by saying that the Qur'an teaches that of all men, Jesus Christ

⁴ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 9, Book 93, Number 590; Volume 9, Book 93, Number 534.

⁵ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 9, Book 93, Number 482.

⁶ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 8, Book 75, Number 379.

alone was sinless. Jesus Christ alone is indeed sinless; the testimonies of his apostles, written in the Bible, make that clear.

The Islamic traditions mention Muhammad saying, "Every son of Adam is a sinner, and the best of sinners are those who repent constantly."⁷ In the light of such a setting, Islam teaches that men do not have a fallen nature, but a nature that leans toward sin. Christians believe that man has a fallen nature. In the Bible the universal effect of sin is recorded often, but it will be sufficient to quote these words to prove the point: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong; no one does good, not even one." (Romans 3:10-12) The Bible plainly teaches that no man other than Jesus Christ has ever faithfully sought God and been without sin all his days. Every other man has at some time turned away from him and sinned against him.

Why should Jesus be the only man who was without sin among men? The Qur'an admits his sinlessness but gives us no reason, why all the unique features are vested in one man. That man is Jesus. The Qur'an does not reveal openly what made Jesus so unique. That uniqueness is revealed to us in the Bible, because Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

It is essential that he be sinless if he is the Son of God. Jesus said that the Father and the Son are one. (John 10:30) The Son always did the will of his Father. And this we always find him doing, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise" (John 5:19). So we see why it was absolutely necessary that Jesus be sinless if he is the Son of God - because the Son of God can only be doing the will of his Father at all times. No wonder Jesus said, "I always do what is pleasing to him" (John 8:29). Ordinary men do things of their own accord, but Jesus can only do the will of his Father. God sent him "so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin" (1 John 3:5).

⁷ *Mishkatul-Masabih*, Vol. 3, p. 360. Recorded also in the *Sunan of Tirmidhi*, *Ibn Maja* and *ad-Darimi*.

It is through the cross of Jesus that we are reconciled and accepted back into God's presence. Jesus is our high priest, intercessor, and the mediator between God and us (humans). The Bible instructs all believers in Jesus in these words:

Since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin (Hebrews 4:14,15).

Similarly, in the same context we are encouraged to, "draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22). God's forgiveness is through Jesus because of his character and sacrifice, planned by God. God chose to give us new lives through Jesus, along with significant spiritual blessings.

The difference in their leadership

In dialogue with the Pharisees and Scribes, Jesus made three distinct claims to answer their queries:

- (1) That he was greater than the temple. (Matthew 12:6)
- (2) That he was greater than Jonah. (Matthew 12:41)
- (3) That he was greater than Solomon. (Matthew 12:42)

Studying other passages of the Bible, we find that Jesus spoke of his body as being the temple (John 2:13-22). This concept changed worship; it was no longer focused on an earthly place (the physical Temple in Jerusalem) but in spirit and truth (John 4:19-24). The Temple in Jerusalem was no longer needed since the glory of God dwells in Jesus, not any more in an earthly building (John 1:14). We come to God, in and

through Jesus as the only way (John 14:6). As the temple stood as the central focus for the center of the Israelites, Jesus is now the center of the Church, not the building but his followers (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 21:21-23). Jesus is the complete fulfillment of the Old Testament Sacrificial system (Matthew 5:17; Hebrews 9:1-28).

Like Jesus, Muhammad also touched upon the laws of Moses and the worship rituals, as we find in the pages of the Qur'an and the traditions of Islam. While Jesus emphasized the spiritual aspect of worship and laws that he fulfills, Muhammad Islamized some of the laws of Moses. He changed the worship pattern and changed the direction from Jerusalem to the Meccan temple. He added the Arab ritual practices into Islam to attract the Arabs.

We find a weak link in Muhammad's leadership. From the Islamic traditions among other issues, we learn that under pressure, Muhammad would make allowances. For example, Muhammad allowed certain rituals and practices and the layout of the temple of Ka'ba only because the Meccans had recently embraced Islam; he thought that they would not like his disagreement.⁸

Jesus and Muhammad, as leaders, are different. Jesus did not give in to the whims of people. In the face of all opposition, he declared the purpose for which he was sent and who he was. Muhammad on the other hand would often say one thing and later, under pressure, change it or do something else. For example, the traditions tell us that one day Muhammad told one of his companions, Abu Hurairah, to go and tell people that God has revealed to him that anyone who would believe in the *Shahada* (creed of Islam), God will let him have entry into the paradise. The very first man he meets was Umar Khattab, who became the second successor of Muhammad.

⁸ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 2, Book 26, Number 654. Another tradition relates that he said to his wife, "O 'Aisha! Had not your people been still close to the pre-Islamic period of ignorance (infidelity)! I would have dismantled the Ka'ba and would have made two doors in it; one for entrance and the other for exit." (*Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 1, Book 3, Number 128).

Hurairah gave him the news. Umar, in his anger, hit him in the chest and told him to go back to the Prophet without telling this good news to anybody else. Hurairah returned to Muhammad and while he was complaining about what had happened, Umar arrived and begged Muhammad not to allow such a thing, "for I am afraid that people will trust in it alone; let them go on doing deeds." Muhammad agreed, "Well, let them."⁹ In other words "OK, leave them and let them perform their works."

Here we see how Muhammad's arm was twisted and he gave in. In comparison when we check about Jesus, we find that he never changed his mind on such crucial issues. When Jesus told his disciples about how he was going to suffer, die, and be raised the third day, one of his nearest disciples, Peter, was so upset that he took Jesus to one side and begged him not to say such things. Instead of giving in to Peter's desire, Jesus rebuked him, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men" (Matthew 16:23).

If Muhammad was 100% sure of his calling and that God had told him it was by faith in the *shahada*: in Allah and Muhammad, that Muslims could enter paradise, then how come a companion like Umar was able to deter Muhammad from his message?

Jesus was sure about his message, his plan, and purpose. He knew 100% where he came from and where he was going. He in fact gave such a statement: "I know where I came from and I know where I am going" (John 8:14).

Muhammad was not sure of himself let alone of others. His words were, "I do not know what will happen to me or to you" (Sura 46:9). Muhammad never claimed greatness like Jesus did. It is a surprise to us that Muhammad is mentioned to have said, "He who says that I am better than Jonah Bin Matta tells a lie."¹⁰ He claimed, "Nobody has the right to be

⁹ *Sahih Muslim*, Book 001, Number 0050; Also *Mishkat al-Masabih*, vol. 1, Hadith 27.

¹⁰ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 6, Hadiths Number 328 and 329.

better than Jonah Bin Matta." Did Muhammad not know that Jesus in his dialogue with the Pharisees claimed that he was greater than Jonah (Matthew 12:41)? To lie is sin. Yet the Qur'an declares Jesus as one without sin (*Zaki*). If Muhammad was from God, how could he ignore such a fact about Jesus?

Once I heard a zealous Christian friend who used to be a Muslim, say, "If greatness can be gauged by comparing oneself with other prophets, Jesus was the greatest of them all." The Bible goes further declaring Jesus the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 17:14; 19:16). In contrast Muhammad's attitude to this ultimate title does not astonish us. The traditions of Islam quote Muhammad as saying, "the most awful name in Allah's sight on the Day of Resurrection, will be (that of) a man calling himself the king of kings (*Malik Al-Amlak*)."¹¹

The last days of Jesus and Muhammad

In the case of Muhammad, he fell ill in dubious circumstances. Most of the traditions suggest that he ate some food cooked by a Jewish woman and it caused him to become ill, making him bedridden for a few days before he died. During that time, we are told that Muhammad kept cursing Jews and Christians, "May Allah curse the Jews and Christians because they took the graves of their prophets as places of worship."¹² He ordered, "Turn the pagans out of the Arabian Peninsula."¹³ Elsewhere he asked that all non-Muslims, Jews and Christians should not be allowed to live in the Arabian Peninsula.

At the time of his death, Muhammad's prayer was "O Allah! (Let me join) the Highest Companions."¹⁴ Some believe that although the word 'Companions' is in the plural, his prayer indicates that Muhammad was pleading for the highest place, next to Allah. Muhammad's wife, Aisha is

¹¹ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Volume 8, Book 73, Number 224.

¹² *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 7, Book 72, Number 706.

¹³ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 5, Book 59, Number 716.

¹⁴ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 8, Book 75, Number 359.

stated, "I heard the Prophet and listened to him before his death while he was leaning his back on me and saying, 'O Allah! Forgive me, and bestow Your Mercy on me, and let me meet the companions.'"¹⁵

Jesus too prayed to God, his Father. His request was not of 'granting' a place but of 'restoration.' He prayed, "Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began" (John 17:5). In spite of the anger over what his opposition displayed, Jesus never cursed the way Muhammad did. Even at the cross he did not curse his enemies; he prayed for them, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Jesus did not ask his disciples to take up arms against people who did not accept him. He was so sure of his place with the Father in the Heavens that he even made a special promise to the repentant thief on the cross beside him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Finally, knowing he had done everything that the Father had determined for him to do while on earth, from the Cross he announced this fact: "It is finished" (John 19:30).

According to the Bible, Jesus was bodily raised from the dead. According to the traditions of Islam, Muhammad's body lies still in his grave. Anyone can claim that his soul will go to heaven, for no one can see a disembodied soul. The disciples of Jesus testified that Jesus' body was raised to life. Repeatedly, the book of Acts relates that the disciples witnessed that Jesus died and rose from the dead. They went and testified before people that the resurrected Jesus had gained victory over death and now was giving his followers the assurance of victory over death. Jesus' resurrection demonstrated divine power, the power of God! Muhammad died and his bones are reportedly within his grave at Medina. Jesus, on the other hand, came back to life three days after he was crucified and confirmed dead by Roman executioners. Both Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection are compelling evidence to who he is, as well as his promise to return!

¹⁵ *Sahih Bukhari, Volume 5, Book 59, Number 724.*

Jesus and Muhammad: Difference in the message of Paradise

The emphasis of Jesus' teachings is love and grace; Muhammad on the other hand taught submission and rules. Muhammad taught that people, by reciting the creed of Islam and by performing the pillars of Islam and doing righteous deeds, would enter the paradise of God. In other words, entering Paradise in Islamic thought depends on the efforts of each individual Muslim. Even then, one has no assurance of forgiveness and must depend upon the mercy of Allah for forgiveness. Some passages in the Qur'an and in Islamic traditions state that one needs God's grace and mercy, though the Islamic scriptures are very contradictory. They do not address how to be sure one will truly receive God's grace and mercy on Judgment Day.

For example, one Islamic concept is the belief that being killed -i.e. martyred - in a military struggle (for the sake of Islam) will gain the candidate a heavenly harem as a reward in Paradise.¹⁶ This suggests that a killed soldier's eternal status is based upon his deeds (killing others while dying) rather than on God's forgiveness and grace. This contradicts with the verses in the Qur'an that are not based on deeds but on God's mercy and grace.

While Jesus talked more about eternal life, Muhammad talked about the paradise of God. The Qur'an declares that the bliss of paradise is kept hidden from us; no indication of it can be found in this world (Sura 32:15-17). Similarly Muhammad is stated to have said that no eyes have seen it nor has any ear heard of it, nor can the minds form any conception of it.¹⁷

It is noteworthy that Paul gave a similar statement several centuries before Muhammad (1 Corinthians 2:9). Even before him the Old Testament prophet Isaiah made similar claims (Isaiah 64:4).

¹⁶ Some places in traditions it is stated:

¹⁷ *Sahih Bukhari*, vol. 6, p.288

Although the Qur'an talks about rewards for both men and women, which includes rivers of milk, wine, and honey – stimulating to the sense of taste, (Sura 16:97; 33:35; 43:70-71; 47:15) its explanation of the rewards in Paradise is bent more towards men's sexual appetite. The fellowship of heavenly females called *hur* and young males called *ghilman* will be there (Sura 44:54; 52:20-24; 55:72-74; 56:10-24, 34-38). The Qur'an says concerning the condition of believers in Paradise, "they will recline on thrones arranged in lines and we [God] shall join them to companions with beautiful eyes (*bi-hurin 'ayn*).¹⁸ Similar statements appear elsewhere (Sura 37:48-49; 44:54).

A great number of *Ahadith* about the believers in Paradise are found in the collections of Islamic traditions. Muhammad is stated to have said, "The state of even the lowliest person in paradise will be that he will have eighty thousand servants and seventy-two wives (*zwja*). A tent will be pitched for him. It will be made of pearls and rubies. The extant of its size will be equal to the distance between *Jabiya* and *San'a*."¹⁹ In today's measurement, that is around 1500 miles. When asked how the heavenly man would be able to cope with seventy-two women, Muhammad is said to have replied, "he shall be endowed with the powers of a hundred men."²⁰

The Biblical statement, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9), is very different from Muhammad's descriptions of Paradise. One may conclude that the Islamic Paradise is all about food, wine, and women.

¹⁸ Sura 52:20.

¹⁹ *Musnad Imam Ahmad*, vol. 4, p. 191; *Sunan Tirmidhi*, vol. 3, p. 399. *Jabiya* is in Syria and *San'a* is the capital of Yemen. The distance between them is about 1500 miles.

²⁰ *Sunan Tirmidhi*, vol. 3, p. 399. Elsewhere according to traditions, in this life Muhammad "was given the power equal to that of forty men and the people of paradise will be given the power equal to eighty men" (Ibn Sa'd, *Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kabir*, part II, Number 77.2).

When Jesus taught about eternal life, he briefly told his disciples about preparing a place for them in Heaven and about being in the fellowship of the Father (John 14:1-3). He never mentioned or portrayed life in Paradise in the way the Qur'an and Muhammad have described. Rather, he made it clear that marriage (which includes sexual relations) is not a part of life at the resurrection:

That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. "Teacher," they said, "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died. Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?"

Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'[Exodus 3:6]? He is not the God of the dead but of the living." (Matthew 22:23-32)

According to the Bible, the former things will not be remembered when the new heaven appear, nor will they come to mind (Isaiah 65:17). In Revelation, we are told about the new heaven and the new earth, where the people of God will live. It is interesting to note that as in Adam we lost our fellowship, namely *paradise lost*, through Jesus that paradise is restored. In the last book of the Bible, the 'Paradise' being restored is recorded in symbolic form. God himself will bring forth the

new heaven and the new earth. John, one of the apostles of Jesus received a vision of it:

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" (Revelation 21:1-5).

This is the Biblical paradise! It is an amazing place where there is no more death, no more sorrow, and no more pain, where people will be with God without the injustices of life on earth as we know it. There is no mention of *hur(is)* or heavenly beautiful women. Rather, the new Heaven is the residence of God among his people! No such thing is mentioned in the Qur'an or Ahadith. The Biblical Paradise focuses on God; the Qur'anic Paradise focuses on tantalizing satisfactions to the tongue and to man's sexual appetite.

In the last chapter of the Bible we see more of this heavenly Paradise that glorifies God, not man's fleshly desires:

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of

the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever (Revelation 22: 1-5).

God's Intent in creating mankind fulfilled in the Biblical Paradise

The Qur'an states, "And it is not given to mortal man that God should speak unto him otherwise than through sudden inspiration, or [by a voice, as it were,] from behind a veil, or by sending an apostle to reveal, by His leave, whatever He wills [to reveal] (Sura 42:51). The Bible states that Moses asked God to show him His face. God told him, "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" (Exodus 33:19-21).

We have to have glorified bodies to see Him in the new heaven and new earth, because we most definitely cannot see Him in our current state. In the last book of the Bible, we learn that there will be a day when we will see Him face to face because he gives us eternal life through Jesus! We will be with Him and in the fellowship of Jesus forever!

No wonder the essence of the teaching of Jesus is that God created us for a relationship and fellowship with Him! However, we rebelled against Him and broke His moral laws. The Bible calls this sin. Such disobedience against the Holy God requires judgment. Our good deeds, money, and/or prayers cannot take away our sins.

The Bible tells us that God pursues us. He does not take pleasure in the (eternal) death of people (Ezekiel 18:23) Rather, He wants all to repent (Matthew 18:14) and accept His gift of salvation through Jesus! He devised a plan to free us from our sin debt through what Jesus did for us (Psalm 22:1-31; Isaiah 53:5-12; Matthew 26:26-30). God's plan is to adopt us into His heavenly family as His beloved children; He is our Heavenly Father! (Psalm 22:22; Isaiah 8:18; Matthew 12:46-50;

Mark 10:14; Luke 20:34-36; John 1:12-13; John 20:17; Romans 8:12-17; Hebrews 2:10-15; 1 John 3:1). Jesus taught that God is our Heavenly Father (Matthew 5:16, 45, 48; 6:1-32; 7:11; 18:14, 19, 35; 23:9; Mark 11:25; Luke 11:13) and showed through his actions the love of God for us!

To meet the aspect of Judgment, God's solution was to pay the price Himself. In order to accomplish that, Jesus came to die in our place as the great sacrifice (Hebrews 10:10). God wants us to become his children through Jesus. Jesus is our path to spiritual adoption and restoration to God.

To a Muslim's ear, this is blasphemy, sadly. In Islam, a Muslim is taught that our relation with God is only of that between a master and slave. He is our master and we are his servants – no more. The love of a father to his beloved children is not how Muslims know and experience God. But the Bible teaches that those who believe in Jesus are the children of God (Romans 9:26; Hosea 1:10).

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God (John 1:12-13).

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure (1 John 3:1-3).

According to the Bible, our hope for eternal life is based upon Jesus' sacrificial death alone, rather than our own deeds. Those who truly put their faith in Jesus are completely forgiven of all their sins and have peace with God, as well as

purpose for living. They discover power through the Holy Spirit to live for him.

A believer in Jesus does not do good deeds to enter the Paradise of God! A believer in Jesus does good deeds because of God's mercy, grace, and love which fuel the person to truly love God and obey Him in the way of Jesus. Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Obeying God shows that we love Him. We don't obey out of fear of a mean dictator that would torture us if we disobey. Rather, we obey God as our Heavenly Father, who loves us and knows the best for us. Out of love for Him, we obey Him. When people asked Jesus the greatest commandment, Jesus replied:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Matthew 22:34-40).

Loving God comes from a heart that knows and adores Him, not one that fears punishment. True love has nothing to do with fear of punishment, but rather consists of truly and selflessly (without fear of what happens to oneself) caring for the person or Being that one loves!

God's intent in creating mankind is love. God made us to love us. The new heaven and the new earth are for us to be with God, not for us to gorge on earthly desires.

Muhammad and Jesus: Two very distinct leaders

Muhammad and Jesus, yes, we have two significant leaders whose words, although very different, are still impacting our world today. Muhammad claimed he was a prophet from Allah, and his followers say that his message supersedes that of all other prophets.

Jesus, on the other hand, claimed to be more than a prophet. He said he existed before the universe was created and that he is one with God the Father. His followers believed his words because they saw him alive after his death.

Muhammad never performed a miracle (Sura 29:50) but Jesus exhibited complete authority over nature by performing numerous miracles (Mark 3:9-10). Other than the Qur'an, Muhammad left us no proof that his message was from God. His followers claim that the Qur'an is a miracle needing no proof or evidence.²¹ Jesus backed up his words and claims with miracles and signs, the significant one being his victory over death through his resurrection. When the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and disciples, they were left in no doubt of what Jesus had said. They went everywhere proclaiming Jesus' claims to be true, even at the cost of their own lives.

Jesus fulfilled ancient Hebrew prophecies; Muhammad did not. Muhammad offered no credentials but his revelation. We find that Jesus Christ fulfilled nearly 300 Old Testament prophecies, with 61 specific details brilliantly observed. Only God could have brought all those details to pass! Jesus is a perfect match for each of them. Jesus' divine credentials were established by his fulfillment of God's prophetic Word.

Jesus and Muhammad: differences in missions

Jesus commanded his followers to make disciples, preaching what he had instructed them (Matthew 28:18-20). He told them to go to all nations, spreading the news. His followers obeyed after they received the Holy Spirit, as Jesus promised them. Since that day, until Jesus comes back, his followers continue to obey his commands in proclaiming the Good News. This is known as missions, evangelism, and discipleship. It is important to note that Jesus did not add the command of fighting to convert people or conquer them. However, Jesus

²¹ For a Christian response see: Masood, *The Bible and the Qur'an: A Question of Integrity*, pp. 170-194.

did place a pointed emphasis on helping the poor and those in need (Matthew 25:31-40). Helping those in need is a part of loving others, which Jesus stressed as he was sharing the Good News (the Gospel). Many believers in Jesus help in medical institution, schools, and charity organizations while sharing the Good News.

Muhammad also commanded his followers to go into the world and spread the news of Islam. The Qur'an, stated by Muhammad, gave specific place to military struggle, along with Islamic evangelism (Sura 2:193; 4:74; 8:39; 9:29). The Qur'an has both defensive and offensive war ideology.

In the light of the Qur'an, we find that Muhammad initially started his preaching with tolerance, with no command of military struggle. Then he moved to defensive strategy and eventually to offensive. The last one (offensive) abrogates the previous two (tolerance and defensive). According to Muslim theologians, the verse of the sword (Sura 9:5) - also known as *aya al-sayf* - along another verse (Sura 47:4) are "said to have abrogated no less than 124 verses [in the Qur'an], which enjoined toleration and patience."²²

Muhammad told his followers, "I am commanded by Allah to fight all the people till they say there is no god but Allah and I am his apostle."²³ Following Muhammad's example, Muslims established an Islamic empire in the Middle East and beyond, all in a period of about one hundred years.

Muslim jurists established terms like *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb*.²⁴ In other words, the world is divided into the following categories:

²² Ibn Salama, *Al-Nasikh wa al-Mansukh*, p. 51; Burton (ed), Abu Ubayd al-Qasim Ibn Sallam's *Kitab al-Nasikh wa al-Mansukh*, p. 131; Guillaume, *Islam*, p. 187.

²³ *Sunnan Al-Nisai*, vol. 6, *Kitab al-Jihad*, p. 7.

²⁴ Early Muslim jurists devised these terms to describe the legal rulings for the Islamic expansion. The very first use of the terms was in Iraq by Abu Hanifa (d. 767) and his disciples Abu Yusuf (d. 798) and Al-Shaybani (d. 805). On the other side in the Levant, Al-Awza'i (d. 774) was leading in this discipline and later Shafi'i (d. 820).

- House of War (*Dar al-Harb*) - where Muslims are in the minority or have no control
- House of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*) - where Muslims are in the majority and have control over the country.

Since the Qur'an states that God has decreed Islam should take over all ('ala kulli-hi), Islam is considered universal, that it is to embrace the whole of the universe. Hence the objective of Muslims who follow the Qur'an is to turn Dar al-Harb into Dar al-Islam. (Sura 2:190-193, 216; 4:91; 9:5, 29; 47:4). So we see that the Islamic mission aims for all people to become Muslims. At the same time, it tries its best to seize power through political and military might wherever possible, so to establish Shari'a law, the Kingdom of Allah.

In contrast, Jesus did not ask his followers to fight in bloody combats, as Muhammad ordered. Jesus chose to die for his enemies on the cross instead of killing them. The mission of salvation is based on his redemptive death, his resurrection from the grave, and the outpouring of the renewing power of the Holy Spirit on his followers, as he had promised them (Acts 2:18). He ordered no military campaigns, nor offered any approval of war or violence. Jesus said he came to give the good news and set the captives (of sin) free (Psalm 68:18; Isaiah 42:1-7; Isaiah 49:1-10; Isaiah 61:1-6; Luke 4:14-21).

Muhammad approved war and demanded captured slaves and a fifth of all other loot taken in war (Sura 8:41). He also demanded to be respected. Jesus on the other hand said, "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:28). He showed true humility in his actions and requirements of his followers (John 13:1-17). He never ordered his followers to kill people or confiscate booty. Rather, he sent them to teach about him and endure persecution, not persecute!

*Jesus preached forgiveness (Matthew 6:12-13; 18:21-22; Luke 6:27-38). Muhammad said, "fight all the people till they say there is no god but Allah and I am his apostle."*²⁵ He personally led twenty-seven battles. He also sent out his army forty-seven

²⁵ *Sunnan Al-Nisai*, vol. 6, Kitab al-Jihad, p. 7.

times without him. In nine battles, he took part in hand-to-hand combat.²⁶ In his last 10 years of his life, he commanded, as well as participated, in all types of raids with his followers. He even asked them to kill his enemies and those who insulted him.²⁷ He supervised the mass murder of 600 to 900 Jewish families in Medina. This is how Ibn Hisham and Ibn Ishaq draw the scene in these words:

The apostle confined them in Medina in the quarter of bint al-Harith, a woman of Bani al-Najjar. Then the apostle went out to the market of Medina and dug trenches in it. Then he sent for them and struck off their heads in those trenches as they were brought out to him in batches. Among them was the enemy of Allah Huyayyy bin Akhtab and Ka'b bin Asad their chief. There were 600 or 700 in all, though some put the figure as high as 800 or 900.²⁸

Muhammad's model as a warlord continues to inspire his followers even today. In contrast, we find that Jesus strictly forbade his followers to fight with the sword (Matthew 26:52; John 18:11). He commanded them to follow him in self-denial and love by word and deed, and to pray for their enemies just as he did. Jesus was meek and humble but did not compromise Truth. He advised his followers to inherit his attributes. He said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29).

Jesus presents himself as the Son of God and Lord, instructing his disciples to pray in his name (John 14:13-14). The Qur'an, on the other hand, goes in the opposite direction:

²⁶ Ibn Sa'd, *Al-Tabqat*, vol. 2, part.1.1; Also here: <http://www.soebratie.nl/religie/hadith/IbnSad.html#Book 92.1>

²⁷ For example: the narrative about Ka'b Ashraf's murder. See Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira al-Nabuwiyya*, vol. 3, pp. 9-14; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, pp. 365-369; 657.

²⁸ Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira al-Nabuwiyya*, vol. 3, pp. 163-164; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, p. 464).

"Say (O Muhammad): If the Beneficent One hath a son, then, I shall be first among the worshippers" (Sura 43:81).

Muhammad on one hand claimed ironically, "Both in this world and in the hereafter, I am the nearest of all the people to Jesus, the son of Mary,"²⁹ but elsewhere, claimed Jesus was nothing but a messenger and servant of God. Such analysis shows how different they are in person and in their mission, contrary to Muhammad's claims about himself.

The result of the teaching among the early followers

The disciples of Jesus, following his example and teaching did not even think of world invasion, killing unbelievers, or looting. Following what Jesus had commanded to preach the gospel to all the nations (Mark 15:16), their emphasis was on reaching others.

Following Muhammad's command and example, his companions and their descendants lived as warriors. Their emphasis was on jihad in military struggle. They burst out of Arabia and in one hundred years established an empire that was greater than the Roman Empire. They followed Muhammad's instructions, "He who fights [slaughters, so] that Allah's word should be superior, he is in Allah's cause."³⁰

While Muslims plundered and lived off the wealth of others, followers of Jesus gave away their possessions to those in need (Acts 2:44-45). Muslims captured and enslaved non-Muslim people. Christians on the other hand considered themselves to be slaves of God by serving others. While Muslims killed and "were martyred" in battles, Christians were martyred when persecuted. Christian martyrs did not die killing others. Rather, they died by being persecuted by others. Muslims waged war to keep members from leaving the religion.³⁰ They put apostates to death. Early Christians

²⁹ Sahih Bukhari Vol. 4, Book 55, Number 652

³⁰ For example, after Muhammad's death, during Abu Bakr's leadership, when several tribes apostatized, he sent an army to deal with them. As a result of his operations, the rebel tribes resubmitted and re-embraced

have no record of killing its apostates, but rather understood Jesus' teaching that focused on each person's individual faith, allowing others to leave if they no longer believed (John 6:64-69).

Muhammad's own family and extended family members quickly fell into armed warfare against each other. Jesus' disciples never resorted to violence against one another (or anyone else). Unbelievers murdered the apostles of Jesus, with the exception of one. They also killed many believers in Jesus. In contrast, fellow Muslims murdered eleven of the first thirty-two caliphs.

The Later period and today

Much later after the time of Jesus' apostles, so-called 'Christians' too followed the examples of the world, including that of Muslims, to fight enemies instead of obeying Jesus' commands to love enemies. In this manner, the crusades took place, to take back land once occupied by Christians. Both sides claimed victories and causalities. On both sides, at times Christians killed Christians and Muslims killed Muslims. As for Christians, these acts were never backed up in the teaching of Jesus.

In spite of such atrocities, there have been Christians who did their best to help Christians to go back to the Scriptures. Many were murdered for doing so, yet the Truth of the Bible, preserved for about two thousand years, shows that love triumphs over evil, that Jesus' commands to love echo and confirm the commands God gave the children of Israel to love God and to love others. Today, when a so-called Christian wants to follow what Jesus has commanded in the Scriptures, he becomes a loving and kind person to his neighbor. When a so-called Muslim turns around to follow what the Qur'an and what Muhammad said, sooner or later he supports the idea of Jihad, in the meaning of military struggle. Taking the

Islam. These wars are known as *Hirub ar-ridda* (Wars of Apostasy). [Tabari, *The Conquest of Arabia*, vol. 10, p. 55ff]

Qur'an in one hand and his sword in the other, he embarks on a journey of hating non-Muslims, including Jews and Christians.

It is not a surprise to me when I received an email the other day from a Muslim who wrote to me, stating that he does not need Jesus as his 'intercessor' to go to paradise. God has already decreed that a Jew or a Christians will go to hell in his place, he confided. Where does this idea come from? Well, this is what Muhammad is alleged to have said:

There would come people amongst the Muslims on the Day of Resurrection with as heavy sins as a mountain, and Allah would forgive them and He would place in their stead the Jews and the Christians.³¹

The Muslim translator in English for the Western readers is quick to point out in the footnote, 'It is a metaphorical expression for saying that space in paradise would be provided by Christians and Jews being thrown into Hell-Fire'.³²

Thankfully, Jesus' teachings and actions show that God is not spiteful, but rather loving, merciful, and kind. God wants all people to be saved and to be with Him in Paradise! Through Jesus, people do not spitefully attempt to claim that other groups of people will be in hell instead of them. Through Jesus, people are grateful to God for His amazing Grace and Love that saves people and brings them the most wonderful gift in the universe: knowing Him!

While Jesus was on the cross, people who did not believe in him mocked him. After God raised him from the dead, his apostles and faithful followers saw him and gratefully obeyed him, even to the point of losing their lives (without killing anybody in the process). Although people till this day still mock Jesus, as well as those who believe in him, his followers believe that he is the final hope and joyfully wait for when they see him face to face! Jesus is coming soon, and he

³¹ *Sahih Muslim*, volume 4, no. 6668

³² Abdul Hamid Siddiqi [ed], *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1444.

Jesus or Muhammad?

says to be ready! (Matthew 24:44; Luke 12:40). Are you ready, dear reader? Is Jesus your hope, or is your hope in the spiteful words of other people who contradict Jesus? Jesus welcomes all with open arms. He says he will not turn away any who come to him, since God enables them to come to him (John 6:26-69).

Jesus or Muhammad: A Question of Assurance



Islam has its own dictionary of Biblical words like atonement or expiation, assurance, salvation and redemption. Expiation (*takfir*) of sin must be done by the individual himself. Redemption is what men and women do with their own sin through repentance and through expiation by prayers, fasts, sharing their wealth with the poor, and so on. This is seen as type of redemption. So salvation is not just by faith. One enters Islam by reciting the *Shahada* (lit. witness: There is no god, but Allah and Muhammad is his apostle) but makes progress towards paradise only by strenuous effort that is to observe the five pillars of Islam,¹ including all other religious duties and obligations as prescribed by the Shari'a. So there is in Islam the demand of having the strenuous effort of the heart, the tongue, and the sword. In other words one should believe in the heart of the reality of God and surrender to him, by tongue, confess him both privately and in public and

¹ *Shahada* (Creed); *Salah* (Prayer); *Sawm* (Fasting); *Zakah* (alms giving – offering); *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca).

Muhammad said: The foundation of Islam is on 5 [duties], that [a person should confess] there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the apostle of Allah; to perform prayers, give alms, perform Hajj and fast [during] Ramadan (*Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 1, Book 2, Number 7).

evangelize to the extent of being involved to protect Islam by 'defense' and even by 'offence' that is: if it is seen that the Muslim community and their faith is in danger or perceived as such.²

Jihad as a mean of assurance

Often the obligations of practicing Islam is not just performing and teaching; preaching and fighting to defend and protect Islam is included. For example Muhammad said, "Anyone whose both feet get covered with dust in Allah's Cause will not be touched by the (Hell) fire." This statement although appears in the section of Jihad in the collection of *Sahih Bukhari*, could be easily used to support Islamic evangelism as well as for military struggle.³

Here is another tradition. A man comes to Muhammad and asks, "Shall I fight or embrace Islam first?" Muhammad replied, "Embrace Islam first and then fight." So he embraced Islam, then straight went into a battle and lost his life. Receiving the news, Muhammad said, "A little work but a great reward."⁴ In other words this person did not perform the five pillars of the faith after embracing Islam, but he is rewarded paradise for his fighting.

Amid all this a Muslim is bound to think that during Muhammad's life, it was Muhammad who knew which war was really for God, but who can decide today that a particular war against the opposition is for Allah and Islam? It could be just a geo-political war. Other traditions make the military struggle as the 'last resort' among the duties a Muslim has to perform.

² Duties like *Da'wa* (Evangelism) and *Jihad* (Struggle – inner and external) are further added (*Sahih Bukhari* Volume 1, Book 2, Number 25).

³ *Sahih Bukhari* Volume 4, Book 52, Number 66.

⁴ *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 4, Book 52, Number 63.

Judgment, Hell and Paradise

Like the Bible, the Qur'an talks about life after death. The last day, or the Day of Judgment, figures prominently in the pages of it. It is also known as the Day of Resurrection (Sura 75:1ff; 81:1-19; 83:4-21). Muhammad said, on this day the sun and moon will be folded up.⁵ The day and the hour is a secret, but signs, both major and smaller, signal its approach. All people will then be raised from the dead. The books kept by the recording angels will be opened.

On the surface it seems that in Islam, everyone is his or her own redeemer. To be safe from the punishment of that Day, Islam presents a credit – debit system. Bad deeds can be wiped away by doing good deeds (Sura 11:114). On Judgment Day, God will weigh both the good and bad. Thus, paradise or hell will be granted by the measure of good deeds over bad (Sura 21:47; 23:102-103).

Based on the Qur'anic references (Sura 36:66; 37:23-24) there exists the idea of a bridge, which everyone will cross on that Day. Traditions state that Muhammad said, "I shall be the first amongst the Apostles to cross [the bridge] with my followers."⁶ This bridge is said to be finer than a hair and sharper than a sword. People with good deeds will cross it with the swiftness of lightning; others will creep along in a crawl. Those with evil deeds will loose their steps and fall into the fire beneath. The infidels and the wicked will be tormented in the fires of hell.

The Muslim scholar Abul 'Ala Mawdudi in his book, '*What Islam stands for*', describes the scene in this way:

Man will stand by himself helpless and alone and render his account, and await the pronouncement of the judgment, which shall be in the power of God alone. The judgment will rest on one question: Did man conduct himself, in submission to God, in strict conformity with the truth

⁵ *Sahih Bukhari*, vol. 4, Book 54, Number 422.

⁶ *Sahih Bukhari*, vol. 1, Book 12, Number 770.

Grace and Mercy available here and now

To bestow on us his grace and mercy and to fulfill his principle of holiness, as he himself is holy (*al-Quddus*), God sent Jesus to redeem us and also sent him as his grace and mercy to the world. Through believing in Jesus and what he has done for us, we are accepted by God. When we obey, we no longer have to fear the wrath of God. This is the assurance that is not placed in human confidence or in our 'greatness' but rather in the crucified and risen Jesus who has redeemed us. God sent Jesus not only to be an honest judge but also to be merciful. This is why the Bible states, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Elsewhere, it is stated:

[W]hen the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:4-7).

While the Qur'an and traditions talk about grace and mercy of God in the 'future' and in terms like 'may be', the Bible talks about it now and its full fulfillment in the hereafter. That is the reason the Bible encourages us in this very life to "approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace" (Hebrews 4:16).

Unlike the Qur'an, the Bible declares that God wants his people to share in his holiness and thus expects them to be holy. He himself is pure and completely holy (Leviticus 11:44; 20:26). Evil does not stand a chance against him, nor can even be in his presence (Revelation 21:6)

being spurious and forged for political reasons to elevate the adversaries of the Shia Imam, Ali during the Umayyad reign (661–750 AD).

God, our Creator, desires a relationship with us. For that purpose he created us. Because of disobedience, we lost our closeness to him. To reconcile us with him again, he fulfilled not only his justice but his mercy too when he sent Jesus to die for us. It is not that God loves us because Jesus died for us. **It is because God loved us so much (John 3:14-21) that he gave Jesus to die for us**, in order to fulfill his justice and mercy and to bestow his grace upon us.

To Muslims, this plan of vicarious atonement and redemption from God seems very strange. In Islam, one is expected to bear his or her own burden. Although the Qur'an mentions the Law of Moses, it never states how God commanded Moses and the Israelites to give sin offerings (Exodus 29:10-14, 35-37; Exodus 30:10; Leviticus 4:1-35; 5:1-13; Numbers 6:9-17; 15:22-29) and guilt offerings (Leviticus 5:14-19; 7:1-10; 14:1-24) as well as celebrate an annual Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:1-34) in which animal sacrifices were offered on behalf of the people.

According to the Bible, all these sacrifices were a shadow of the greatest sacrifice: the sacrifice God himself provided for all people once and for all. Thus we see Jesus in the New Testament of the Bible sent by God as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). He is mentioned as 'the holy one' and as 'Immanuel' (meaning: God with us) in the Bible (Luke 1:35; Matthew 1:23). This fulfills prophecies concerning him, recorded in Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 9:6. The wonderful promise made with Adam, Abraham, Moses, and the prophets came to pass in the life of Jesus!

The atonement of those who came before Jesus was given on the basis of Jesus's redemption in the future. Today in our case, we look back in the past to the sacrifice that Jesus made once and for all, accepting God's providence. How do we get aboard? We repent of our sins, trust in Jesus as our Savior, and follow him as our Lord (Master).

The Qur'an talks about Jesus being the word, the spirit, the prophet, the servant, the blessed, the sign, the mercy for people, the healer, the miracle worker, and the bringer of the

gospel (which literally means: the good news)¹³ but misses to tell what this gospel is all about. Here is a glimpse:

[F]or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood – to be received by faith (Romans 3:23-25).

Jesus is the only Hope of assurance!

The Bible offers the only hope and assurance that really matters. It is the kind of hope that neither the Qur'an nor Muhammad in his traditions offer. It is the hope of eternal life. In reference to Jesus as the Christ, the Bible declares, "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 John 5:11). Jesus is the only way. "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Those who embrace Jesus, accepting him as the only way, find in Him full salvation and the assurance of eternity in heaven. This is the promise God made, accounted in the Bible: "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). This promise is further explained that if we are children of God "then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs

¹³ In the Greek New Testament, gospel is the translation of the Greek noun *euangelion* (occurring 76 times) "good news," and the verb *euan-*gelizo (occurring 54 times), meaning "to bring or announce good news." Both words are derived from the noun *angelos*, "messenger." In classical Greek, an *euangelos* was one who brought a message of victory or other political or personal news that caused joy. In addition, *euangelizomai* (the middle voice form of the verb) meant "to speak as a messenger of gladness, to proclaim good news." Further, the noun *euangelion* became a technical term for the message of victory, though it was also used for a political or private message that brought joy (<http://bible.org/question/what-does-term-%E2%80%9Cgospel%E2%80%9D-mean>).

with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory" (Romans 8:17).

The Bible declares, "it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). We cannot save ourselves or please God through our own efforts or intelligence. We can come to him through Jesus, admitting our weakness that indeed, "there is none righteous, no, not one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:10, 23). Jesus said, "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5).

When we recognize that by our own efforts we cannot save ourselves and come to him in repentance, God offers salvation to us through Jesus. He bore the full penalty of sin on behalf of all who would trust him (Isaiah 53:4-6; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Corinthians 15:3). This salvation is offered freely to all who believe in him (Revelation 22:17; Matthew 11:28-30; John 3:16, 18; John 5:24; Romans 10:9).

Please do not make the mistake of those who, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3). Indeed the Qur'an talks about God's love, his forgiveness, and mercy, but all these aspects are bound with conditions upon human beings, their obedience, and the way they respond to God's guidance. In spite of all efforts, the follower is still not sure of his destiny.

Both the Qur'an and the Bible talk about the sinful state of humans on this earth. It is the Bible only that speaks further concerning this issue and gives guidance to being saved from sin by God. First of all, it teaches that all our efforts to find God through laborious moral attempts will come to nothing. Our inside (spirit, soul) has to be changed; a reshaping from within has to take place.

Transformation through Jesus

Jesus is the Living Word of God. The Bible is about why God sent him and how we may by believing in him are translated

into his fellowship and become the citizen of His heavenly kingdom. As God is light, Jesus too is the Light of the world (1 John 1:5). We being God's creation and follower of Jesus, receive his light and no wonder he then tells us, 'you are the light of the world' (John 8:12; 9:5; Matthew 5:14).

By accepting Jesus, our assurance opens a new page of new life for us. The goal of assurance and redemption through Jesus is transformation of our lives on this earth. The purpose of assurance that is available through Jesus is not simply to avoid hell; it is also to glorify God and to be in his fellowship forever.

It is not anymore just to know about God, but to know Him personally, something the Qur'an does not even dare to consider. Consequently, some schools of thought in Islam consider this intimacy as 'blasphemous' much like the religious leaders in Jesus' time accused Jesus of blasphemy (Matthew 26:62-67; Mark 14:60-65; Luke 5:17-26; John 10:25-39). As Jesus is one in the fellowship with God, the Father, we too through Christ become one in fellowship and purpose with God (John 14:9-21). This is that oneness of which Jesus talked about in his prayer before going to the cross, found in John 17. He prayed not only for his apostles but for all those who would believe in Him in such words:

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me— so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them" (John 17:20-26).

What must I do?

Like Christians, no Muslim would like to be in the darkness. The Bible states that God has sent Jesus to bring people out of darkness into his light (Colossians 1:13; 1 Peter 2:9). He sent Jesus so that through our believing in him, he would grant us assurance, salvation, eternal life and translate us into His heavenly kingdom forevermore. Jesus calls this action "to be born again" (John 3:3-21).

A Jewish ruler once said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with Him" (John 3:2). In response Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3) He added by way of further explanation: "no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5).

New birth, being born again, is an act of God whereby eternal life is imparted to the person who believes (2 Corinthians 5:17; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1-4, 18). "Born again" also carries the idea "to become children of God" through trust in the name of Jesus Christ, "to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12). This fulfills the prophecies concerning God's Anointed one having spiritual children (Psalm 89:26-33; Isaiah 8:18).

Before His ascension, Jesus gave His disciples the great commission, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will

be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16).

It was in the light of this command that the apostles of Jesus went out to share the gospel, the good news of assurance available through Jesus. On the day of Pentecost, the apostles of Jesus received the gift of the Holy Spirit. People from all over the world were there that day for this Jewish holiday. They heard Peter's message about how the prophecies of the prophets were fulfilled in Jesus. They asked the apostles what they should do. Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:37-38). The whole of the Book of Acts shows how the message was preached and how both Jews and non-Jews believed in Jesus.

Why delay?

The Bible encourages us to "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6). This chance can be lost. When Jesus comes back, the opportunity will be over (Matthew 25:1-13). When a person dies, that person's opportunity closes as well. A delay is thus unwise.

I remember the day when I had to make a choice. On one hand was the Bible and on the other was the Qur'an. I studied them both and was reminded of Muhammad who said, "I do not know what will happen to me or to you" (Sura 46:9). I thought of Jesus, the living word of God, claiming, "I know where I come from and I know where I am going." (John 8:14) The Scriptures quotations kept coming to mind, "Believe in me and you will have eternal life." (John 5:24; John 6:40)

You see, many came and showed the way but Jesus is different. He lives forever and is the conqueror over evil and death. He wants to be in our lives and walk with us each step of the way. All this convinced me to follow him.

No other prophet has promised he would come back to take us with him to eternity. Jesus is different. He says, "Do

not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:1-3). He gives an open invitation saying, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in ..." (Revelation 3:20).

The Bible states, "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). Yes, belief and public confession through words and action are together. Yes, it is costly to become a believer in Jesus. However, it is indeed much more costly not to become a believer in Jesus and accept what he offers. The fact of the matter is if we lose him, we lose eternity.

Suffering for Jesus - what?

By accepting Jesus, we let him lead our lives. He promises that he will never fail us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Troubles, opposition, and persecution will come but Jesus is always with us, "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matthew 28:20). He tells us in very clear words: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Thus, we should not be surprised to see that our identity with Jesus would draw the same response the world has for Jesus (John 15:18-25).

After deciding to follow Jesus, I faced persecution in the years that followed at the hands of my family, Muslim friends, and the community as a whole. I followed literally what Jesus had said, "When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another" (Matthew 10:23). Many times, I complained to God, asking 'why' and 'how'. Soon however, I learned that for believers in Jesus, faith and suffering go together. I will never forget the day when, during my prayerful time with God, after addressing all my complaints to him, I glanced at

my opened Bible. I read, "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him" (Philippians 1:29).

When the apostles and disciples of Jesus were persecuted, remembering what Jesus had already told them, they rejoiced at being counted worthy to suffer disgrace for the Truth about Jesus (Acts 5:41). They did not even consider the idea of diluting the position of Jesus and his uniqueness by striving for an 'interfaith' community. They did indeed co-exist with those who did not believe; they did not kill anyone or force anyone to believe. Rather, they endured persecution at the hands of those who did not wish to co-exist with them. They did not water down the idea of 'co-exist' to mean not to tell people about Jesus and his unique message. When they were asked not to preach and teach about Jesus, their polite answer was, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God" (Acts 4:19). They were not intimidated or bullied into not telling the truth about sin, salvation, and assurance available through Jesus. They did not join the 'crowds' in a superficial dialogue of "We all are one and the same". They were put in jail and beaten up, and on their release they did not hold seminars on, "How can bad things happen to good people?" They actually became more zealous. Their prayers were not pity parties about their own situations. Rather, they asked God for boldness to do what Jesus instructed them to do:

Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus (Acts 4:30).

Both Christianity and Islam are mission-based faiths. One uses the word 'evangelism' the other 'Da'wa'. Both begin with sharing the message and inviting people to accept that message. While Muslims, according to the Qur'an and traditions, are allowed to quell opposition to their message with

the sword (Sura 2:191-193; 2:217; 4:74-77, 84; 8:41; 9:29, 36, 29, 41, 111, 123; 47:4, 20; 48:15-16; 61:4) believers in Christ are not to do this but rather are to love their enemies (Matthew 5:43-48; 26:52; Luke 6:27-38; John 18:11).

Conclusion

As one can see, the differences between what Jesus said and did around 600 years before Muhammad, as well as what Jesus' apostles and those who followed Jesus' message said and did, is very different from what Muhammad and his early followers said and did.

Jesus offers salvation, assurance, and the most amazing relationship humans ever experience: a personal relationship with God our Creator! Muhammad did not offer these gifts and he could not. God our Creator is the One and Only God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The messages that He gave to the children of Israel, including to Moses, King David, through Isaiah and many others, point to Jesus. Jesus is our assurance with God.

As human beings we all like to have access to a life of peace and love. There can be no peace in our heart or between people unless we have peace between us and God. The real peace proceeds from God. He has sent Jesus into this world who grants us that eternal peace. Before, we even took the initiative to love him; God has loved us so much. He made us to love us, and we are made to love him! Love is not based on fear of being cast into hell and tortured forever if we do not. Rather, God freely gives us love first (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10). Through God's love, we can love him in return (Matthew 22:34-40; 1 John 4:7-8; 16-21)! True love comes through assurance, which Jesus gives!

Epilogue



The Qur'an is not the continuation of the Bible. Although it claims to be talking about the same God, the God of Abraham and the Hebrew prophets, it contradicts God's message and the information already available in the Bible. Muhammad claims to be the branch of the same tree as Jesus but contradicts him in many crucial areas, including in his message and in the purpose for which Jesus came.

Both the Bible and the Qur'an talk about God sending guidance through prophets. The Bible states that God revealed himself to us in Jesus. The Qur'an, however, denies that God ever reveals himself in person to human beings. It considers that God only offers guidance, not himself. In denial of the disclosure of God wanting a personal relationship with us, the Qur'an and Islamic traditions do not give any real assurance in this life of eternal salvation or life in paradise after death on earth.

Certainly, the Qur'an agrees with the Bible that we as human beings do not have hearts of gold. In this regard while the Qur'an blames our forgetfulness, the Bible declares that the human heart is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9) and desperately wicked. Elsewhere it states that we all have turned away (Isaiah 53:6). However, God still loves us and His plan is to bring us back to him (Isaiah 53:6-12).

The Qur'an emphasizes that a Muslim, by his good deeds or by being martyred in a war for God, can achieve the paradise of God. God's grace and mercy do not depend on people's actions, but on God alone. As to achieving paradise by fighting, a question one should ask is who decides that a particular war is not a geo-political war for greed or to conquer other people?

The Bible's message is simple. Human beings cannot save themselves. They need divine intervention. Because of his foreknowledge, God took care of it before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20; Rev 13:8; Ephesians 1:4). The intervention took place right away, from the time of Adam, the guidance began. A line of patriarchs and prophets followed God's leading and finally, at just the right time according to his plan, God sent his living word, who we know as Jesus (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Islam is not a continuation of the message from God to the children of Israel and to the world. Muhammad came up with some good messages (taken from the children of Israel), but grossly contradicted his 'good news' on important issues, including what God expects of us and concerning the assurance of eternal life. This assurance is available only through Jesus.

A recapitulation

Let us look back to remind ourselves of the main topics of each chapter in this book:

In Chapter 1, we saw how both Jesus and Muhammad claimed to be sent by God. We inquired into the claims of some people who do not see/understand the differences between their teachings. We raised the question of why, if Muhammad's Allah is the Father who Jesus proclaimed to his apostles, did he send them with two different messages for the 'last days'?

We had a cursory look at their early lives as they grew up and how they each started their mission. Since both Jesus and

Epilogue

Muhammad referred to the earlier Scriptures, known to us as the *Tanakh* (Old Testament of the Bible), we started a journey to compare its teaching with the message of the Qur'an as well as with the message of the New Testament. We began our investigation of the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) and the Qur'an in order to see whether we should follow Jesus or Muhammad.

In Chapter 2, we found how both the Bible and the Qur'an stand for the Creation by God. The Bible mentions the pre-existence of Jesus and how God created everything through him. In the case of Muhammad, it is not the Qur'an but secondary later sources, namely the traditions, which state that God first created the light of Muhammad and then the universe. Nowhere do we find that God created the universe through Muhammad.

While the Qur'an, the first hand authority for Muslims, does not refer to a miraculous birth in the case of Muhammad, both the Bible and the Qur'an refer to the miraculous birth of Jesus. The Qur'an declares Jesus as the word from God (Sura 4:171), but it does not mention God creating all things through Jesus. This aspect of Jesus is very important to know because the restoration and reinstatement of people back to God is through him. This subject is the theme of the Bible but is missing from the Qur'an.

In chapter 3, we checked on Adam and Eve. Both the Bible and the Qur'an refer to their disobedience against God, the fall. Both the Bible and the Qur'an, in different ways, agree that the state we are in on this earth, is because of the exit from the Garden of Eden and only God through his grace and mercy can rescue us.

While the Qur'an and Muhammad refer to the rescue being just the guidance (the dos and don'ts), the Bible makes it clear that God has sent Jesus as the second Adam, to be the restorer of the covenant and the source of the gift of eternal life for you and me. By believing in him, we can have the gift of eternal life (John 3:13-21; Romans 5:15).

Chapter 4 studies Abraham, Isaac, and Ishmael. It also addresses the claim that the Ka'ba was built by Abraham and Ishmael. The Bible is clear that Ishmael was born in Canaan near Beersheba. Ishmael and his mother Hagar, after being sent away due to Sarah's urging, resided in the 'wilderness of Paran' in southern Canaan, not in the Arabian Peninsula in an area known today as Mecca. It stands to reason that if the God of the Bible and of the Qur'an were the same God, he would not leave such information out of the Torah he revealed to Moses concerning the narratives of Abraham's life.

Both the Bible and the Qur'an accept Abraham as a prophet of God and as his *Khalil* (friend). However, the Bible and the Qur'an disagree concerning the question of Ishmael: his whereabouts, the promise of God, and other details which blatantly show through the rift between the descendants of Ishmael (the son of Abraham and Hagar) and Isaac (the child of the promise: the son of Abraham and Sarah, through whom God fulfilled his covenant, later passing it down to Isaac's son Jacob/Israel). We studied the case of why God repeatedly asserted that ONLY Isaac is deemed the divinely elect son and NOT Ishmael.

When we look at the whole matter with a Biblical perspective, we see God's interaction and covenant with Abraham as a promise leading up to the coming of Jesus. The Qur'an states that God ransomed Abraham with a great sacrifice. It is not Muhammad but Jesus, the great sacrifice, which Abraham saw. Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56).

Chapter 5 focuses on Moses and his leading the Israelites out of Egypt. The details of the Qur'an, compared with the Torah about the events that took place, are drastically different and incomplete. One of the key events or signs that was given to the Israelites and was a lesson to the Egyptians was the Passover. We find that not only does the Qur'an ignore the Passover; it also avoids naming Jesus as the fulfillment. The Qur'an does not talk about how the Israelites were given rules and regulations in offering sacrifices to God. Instead, the

Epilogue

Qur'an has dwelt more on the commandment of the Sabbath and how God supposedly punished some of the disobeying Jews who were not following what was in the Torah. For believers in Jesus, it is so important to look at Moses and the Torah the way Jesus does. Jesus claimed to be the fulfillment of what the Torah presents (Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:44).

A long time before Muhammad, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel) had taken great care to preserve the historical records of their people. Unmoved by subjectivity, they did not take the bad and the ugly out of the history of their people. Through His guidance, they recorded their ancestors' interactions with the One and Only God. However, the Qur'anic and traditional narratives in Islam are drastically different from the Bible in many details.

In chapter 6, we discussed how some of these stories originated with Muhammad himself. Others came from Arabic legends or Jewish folktales based on rabbinical Talmudic traditions (and not on the *Tanakh*). Although Muhammad claimed to be a descendant of Ishmael and not of the children of Israel, he seems to have a great desire to associate himself with the great prophets and kings of the descendants of Jacob. Muhammad tried his best to place himself as the greatest and final prophet, of the same God as the prophets of the descendants of Jacob (Israel) so as to persuade Jews and Christians of his claims. He mostly desired to secure credibility with his own people in Arabia.

We discussed how different versions of the stories of the first three Israelite kings (Saul, David, and Solomon) were embedded into the Qur'anic narrative to motivate Muslims to stand with Muhammad, choosing him as the leader ordained by God himself already and obeying him as their leader against non-believers.

In chapter 7, we examined passages scattered throughout the Qur'an that referred to some Biblical figures, including Job, Noah, Joseph and Jonah. We find that the Qur'an, to suit its own agenda, at times puts words into the mouths of these men, words that conveniently suit Muhammad's own mission.

In some places, we find that the Qur'an has ignored key facts. Most importantly, it completely ignores the passages containing events that refer to the central theme and purpose of God's plan of salvation: salvation through one special person - Jesus, through whom a new covenant fulfills (not abrogates) all previous ones. The Qur'an instead takes just one corner of a story from the Bible and builds a whole different account on it - with the attention being given to Muhammad instead of to Jesus.

In chapter 8, we discussed how through the ages, Muslims in their writings have misquoted passages from the Bible in an attempt to prove that Muhammad and his message is from the same source as the Bible. We showed from some of the key prophecies and passages they quote there is a contradiction of the context. Many of these prophecies are really about the coming of Jesus, not Muhammad!

Chapter 9 gives an analysis of the Qur'anic and traditional Islamic portrayal of Jesus. The portrayal of Jesus in the Qur'an is basically an attempt to say that Jesus follows Muhammad, whereas the Jesus who his mother Mary and his apostles knew taught that he (Jesus) is the fulfillment of the promises and the Law God gives (Matthew 5:17) and is the only way to the Father (John 14:6).

According to Islam, the guidance trail did not end with Jesus. Muhammad taught that he was the final prophet. To 'prove' this, the Qur'an and Islamic traditions even attribute some sayings of Jesus to Muhammad's coming, completely ignoring the true meaning of Jesus' words but rather bending them to try to fit Muhammad. Islam presents Jesus as a Muslim who, during his second coming, will fight *Dajjal* (the anti-Christ), and help Muslims to change the world into an Islamic abode. This is vastly different from the Bible. Thus we see that the Islamic gospel is foreign and its jigsaw pieces do not fit or are on par with Jesus.

According to the Bible and Islam, we see the mission of Jesus in two phases. However, they disagree not only on the status Jesus has but also on the purpose for which he came

Epilogue

and why he will come again. The Bible presents him in his first coming not only a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15-19; John 1:45; Luke 24:19-27) and servant (Isaiah 42:1-16; Isaiah 49:1-15; Matthew 12:15-21) but also as the great Sacrifice (Genesis 22:8; John 1:29). He gave his life for us as a ransom. In the second phase he will come as the Judge and King (Psalm 2:1-12, Psalm 110:1-7, Matthew 24:4; 25:31-36).

In chapter 10, we discussed that although Muslims recognize Jesus as one being 'par excellence', according to Islam Jesus is not the ultimate hope. Rather, Muhammad presents himself as the final messenger and as mercy (*rahmatul-Alamin*) for the world (Sura 21:107).

Some Muslims in the West play the card of inclusivism, thus sharing at interfaith gatherings only part of the message of Islam - from the early teachings of Muhammad. They claim that Muslims, Christians, and Jews are all united in the Abrahamic heritage and are accepted by God. We discussed this issue and saw how such a view is in contradiction with the rest of the Qur'an, the life of Muhammad, and traditions that teach 'exclusivism.'

We considered how Muhammad is presented in the Qur'anic text as the seal of the message and the final messenger from God. To prove this point, some Muslims quote from the New Testament to substantiate this issue. We saw how, according to the Bible, it is not Muhammad but Jesus who is the seal of the message and the messengers.

In this chapter we also compared the character, teachings and the mission of Jesus with Muhammad. We clearly understand how Jesus is the best model, since the time he came till today and until he comes back again. The emphasis of Jesus' teachings are on God's grace and love for us (John 3:16), as well as our love for God our Father and for people - including enemies (Matthew 22:37-40; Luke 6:27-37) whereas Muhammad taught salvation only depends on our own efforts and did not teach love for those who did not follow him.

Life in paradise according to Jesus is very different from that which the Qur'an and Muhammad teach (Matthew

29:22-32; John 14:1-4). Eternal life does not consist of a man possessing many women or heavenly creatures, but rather eternal life is God's people dwelling forever in His divine presence (Revelation 7:9-17; 21:1-7)!

In **chapter 11** we examined how indeed Islam has a vocabulary similar to that of the Bible. Judgment, hell, paradise, love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness are all familiar words. We observed how Islam, although it adopts Biblical vocabulary, has its own dictionary. We checked how the concepts of Judgment, hell, and paradise are different from the Bible. In Islam, the attribute of God loving people is only conditional, based first on the initiative of the candidate. Yes, God is merciful and forgives but such attributes of him are quite unclear in the Qur'an. The Qur'an states that he may forgive but then again he may not. We will only know on the Day of Judgment according to the Qur'an, whereas according to the Bible, believers in Jesus have assurance of salvation because of God's love through Jesus and his faithfulness in keeping his promise through Jesus.

We discussed how Jesus is the only hope of assurance. Muhammad does not give a Muslim assurance in this life about the hereafter whereas Jesus does. Muhammad does not know about what will happen. Jesus knows, "I know where I come from and where I am going" (John 8:14). Unlike Muhammad, Jesus promised the leading of the Holy Spirit for his believers (John 14-16). Yes, it is costly to become a believer in Jesus but the fact is the following: if we lose him, we lose eternal life.

Key observation: Ideology and the ideal

I see believers in Muhammad and the Qur'an are told to fulfill their duties and responsibilities they owe to Allah. For this purpose, when they go back to the Qur'an and what Muhammad said and did, they become remarkably 'Fundamentalist.' This includes exclusivism, in loving and dealing with Muslims only - only those Muslims of their same school of thought.

Epilogue

They become bold not only in sharing their beliefs with others but also they do not hesitate in using 'all means' to shut down and in some cases eliminate what they perceive to be blasphemy. This often includes killing the 'blasphemer' or apostate.

On the other hand, I see believers in Jesus are called to live in the world, but not to be of it. How? They go back again and again to Jesus! They learn from him and his apostles. The Bible reminds them concerning living in the world, yet not of it and shows them how to fulfill the purpose God gave them. God's Holy Spirit, which Jesus promises, guides them and gives them the ability to live for God, even to endure persecution (but not to persecute!) for God. The result becomes obvious.

These believers too, like Muslim friends, become remarkably 'Fundamentalist' but different! They become loving, forbearing in their dealings and forgiving because of God's forgiveness and love. At the same time, they are bold enough, in the face of all opposition, to tell the truth about Jesus being their only assurance. They do not threaten the lives of other people, but rather serve and help people for God's glory.

Major Point considered: Assurance

I did not write this book to show that Christians are better than Muslims. Christians have been and are as fallible as anyone else, including Muslims. My consideration and thoughts are on Jesus and Muhammad and what they taught. All things considered, I find that Jesus (not Muhammad) broke for us the barrier between God and us, as well as conquered eternal death. Jesus brings us the assurance of eternal life in the fellowship of the kingdom of God. Through him, we are secure in our standing with God.

It is not Muhammad but Jesus who came to serve (Matthew 20:25-28) and is our wonderful teacher and role model (John 13:1-17) as well as our friend (John 15:15), our brother (Luke 8:21), our Savior (Isaiah 62:11; Luke 2:10-14) our Lord/Master

Jesus or Muhammad?

(Luke 8:40-48), our spiritual food (John 6:32-69), our Good Shepherd (John 10:1-18), our lamb for the ultimate offering (Genesis 22:8; John 1:29), our King (Psalm 2:6-9; John 18:36), our High Priest (Psalm 110:1-4; Hebrews 4:14-16) and the one and only way to the Father (John 14:6)! Jesus is the only one coming back. It is Jesus who promised his disciples and all who follow him assurance of eternity in the fellowship of our creator:

Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (Revelation 22:12,13 also John 14:1-6).

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