

Jesus, the Messenger of Allah

Both the Christians and the Jews exceeded the limits with regards to Prophet Jesus by uttering grave false charges about him. The Jews not only denied him as a Prophet, but also accused him –May God forgive– of being an illegitimate son! The Christians on the other hand, exaggerated about Jesus and believed in his deity and son–ship to God!

The dogma of the Trinity and the crucifixion of Jesus as a ransom are the bedrocks of Christian ideology. All other concepts in Christianity stem from, and rotate around, these two doctrines.

To this end, the main emphasis in the Quran is given to verification, clarification and correction of these two dogmas. The holy Quran places blame on both groups for their blasphemous dogmas. Therefore, a good understanding of the Ayaat regarding Prophet Jesus requires a good understanding of the Judo–Christian doctrines with regards to the personality of Jesus.

Jesus son of Marry was no different than other Prophets and Messengers of Allah. He was selected by the Almighty God as His Messenger to the Israelites. Jesus is one of the five law–giving and great Prophets and Messengers. The Almighty God revealed a Scripture to him called '*Injil*' or Gospel.

Jesus' Appellations in the Quran

The first approach of the Quran for correction of the false Jewish and Christian doctrines about Jesus is about the appellations given to him.

1. Son of Mary

The most commonly used title for Jesus is '*Son of Mary*'. Of the 25 places in the Quran where Jesus is mentioned, in 16 of them he is called '*Son of Mary*'. In the present Gospels, however, only in one place is Jesus referred to as '*The son of May*' (Mark 6:3) although not with favour. The reason why this appellation is added to his name in the Quran is a hint that he was not son of God!

2. Al-Maseeh (The Messiah)

The second most common appellation of Jesus in the Quran is 'Al-Maseeh'. Prophet Jesus is eleven times referred to as al-Maseeh in the holy Quran. Commentators of the Quran and Muslim lexicographers have given various etymological explanations of the word 'Al-Maseeh'. Some suggested that the name is given for Jesus when he was travelling in the earth as he was a mobile preacher.

Others say that Jesus was the Messiah because he healed the ill by touching their bodies. With all respect to these explanations, I believe none of them are reflecting on the purpose of the usage of the term 'Al-Maseeh' in the Quran. The title of 'The Messiah' is very important to the Jews and the Christians.

We need to bear in mind that the term al-Maseeh is the Arabic form of the Hebrew word mîa (Mashiach). The Greek equivalent is Christ. Thus, the etymology of the term must be sought in its original language, i.e. Hebrew not Arabic. 'Al-Maseeh' in Hebrew means 'Anointed one'. In the Jewish tradition, the term was a dignified title. Al-Maseeh was used for the ceremonial induction into leadership. Three types of leaders were anointed:

- 1) Prophets; representing God among people as in the case of Abelmeholah to be the prophet in place of Eliha. (1 King 19:15–17)
- 2) Priests; representing the people before God through sacrifices and prayers. (Ex. 28:40–41)
- 3) Kings; to defend and rule over the people on God's behalf. (1 King 19:15)

In general, the anointing meant that someone was authorized to serve God in a position of honour and responsibility. Although many people in the Old Testament were called Messiah, there was only one referred to as 'The Messiah', who's coming. The Israelites were both hoping for and expecting as "The Deliverer" of the Jewish people". (Daniel 9:25)

The term 'Al' in Arabic is a definite article like 'The'. 'Al-Maseeh' therefore is equivalent to 'The Messiah, the Anointed one' as used in the Hebrew language. It seems when Almighty Allah states:

"Indeed, the Messiah; Jesus son of Mary, was a Messenger of Allah" (4: 171)

He thus refers to this belief of the Messiah that the Jewish people were expecting, confirming that this was, indeed, Jesus son of Mary; The Messenger of God.

In short, both the Jews and the Christians exceeded the limits with regards to Christ. The Jews went astray by denying Jesus as 'The promised Messiah and the Prophet of God', and the Christians of later centuries also erred in misinterpreting Jesus as the Messiah who forgives their sin. It is regarding this explanation that Almighty Allah states:

“O people of the Book (Jews and the Christians) do not exceed the limits in your religion, nor say of Allah aught but the truth. The Messiah; Jesus son of Mary, was a Messenger of Allah.” (4:171)

3. The Messenger of Allah

The third appellation used in the Quran for Jesus is *‘The Messenger of Allah’*.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, an apostle or a prophet meant no more than an upright spiritual leader. Paul was regarded an apostle and so was Barnabas. In the Acts of the Apostles (21:8–9) four girls are mentioned who prophesied. Thus, for the Christians it is not a very impressive title to call Jesus a prophet. Nonetheless, even according with the present Gospels Jesus has called himself a prophet. (Mark 6:4, Luke 13:33)

In Islam, however, prophethood is a divine position. Prophets are sinless and divinely protected from any error or sin. They are empowered by the will of God to conduct miracles as proof of their position.

A Messenger of Allah is one who also came with a new Scripture. Thus, every Messenger was also a Prophet, although not all prophets were Messengers. It is to this effect that the holy Quran introduces Jesus as ***‘A Prophet’ (19:30)*** as well as ***‘A Messenger of Allah’ (4:171, 61:6)***

4. The ‘Word’ of Allah

John, the alleged author of the fourth Gospel of the present Bible, contrary to the synoptic Gospels and under the influence of the Alexandrian school of ancient Greek philosophy, declares Jesus to be the *‘Word’* (Logos) who in the beginning was with God and was God, by whom all things were made.

A similar doctrine was laid down by Paul in his epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians and Philippians. This pagan Greek concept laid a foundation for the heretical concept of Trinity according with which Jesus was allegedly the son of God! This false doctrine is corrected and clarified in the holy Quran. Prophet Jesus is twice referred to in the Quran as ***‘A Word from Allah’ (3:45)***, and ***‘His Word’ (4:171)***.

The term *‘Word’* in the Quran is commonly used for a ***‘Divine Decree’ (10:33, 11: 119)*** as well as ***‘The creatures’*** of God. (18:109, 31:27) All the creatures of God are *‘The words of God’* and the most perfect of them all are ***‘The complete words of God’***.

The miraculous creation and birth of Jesus was brought about by the divine decree, *‘BE’*. It is to this effect that when Mary surprisingly asked her Lord as how she could conceive a child whilst she was unmarried, Almighty Allah answered her:

“So (it will be) for Allah creates what He whilst. When He has decreed something, He says to it only: ‘Be’ and it is.” (3:47)

Thus, the Quranic expression, *‘The Word of God’* is a confirmation of the creation of Jesus, not his

divinity as portrayed by Christians.

5. A 'Spirit' from Allah

Another appellation used for Jesus in the Quran is that he is 'A spirit from Him (Allah)'.

"Indeed, the Messiah; Jesus son of Mary, is the Messenger of Allah and His Word which He bestowed upon Mary and a spirit from Him." (4: 171)

"And Mary, the daughter of Imran, who guarded her chastity. And We breathed into it from Our Spirit." (66: 12)

Christian theologians quote the above Ayaat to support their dogma of Trinity, to allege that even Qur`anically Jesus is part of God and from God and God!

The Arabic term 'MIN' which is generally translated to 'From' has fifteen different meanings. In this context 'MIN' is used to explain the source of its creation not to be part of something. Therefore, the meaning of 'A spirit from Him' is a spirit that is created by God and He is the source of it. A similar usage of the term 'MIN' can be noted in Ayah 13 of Chapter 45:

"And He has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth from Him." (45: 13)

If Jesus is literally from God and part of God, then according with the above Ayah, all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth must also be part of God!

Also, the holy Quran refers to the she-Camel at the time of prophet Saleh '***The She-Camel of God'*** (91: 13) does it mean that God has a camel or she is part of God?! Moreover, the expression of '***A Spirit from God'*** is used in the Quran regarding the creation of Adam.

"So, I have fashioned him and breathed into him from My Spirit, then you fall down prostrate to him." (38:72)

Similarly, regarding the believers, the Almighty Allah states:

"For such people, He has written faith in their hearts, and strengthened them with a Spirit from Him." (58:22)

Thus, one should also claim that Adam, the believers and the whole of humanity are all part of God! The expression of 'A spirit from Allah' therefore is meant to explain that God is the source of the life of Jesus and all other creatures.

6. Supported by 'The Holy Spirit'

Of the appellations of Jesus in the Quran is that God has supported and protected him by the Holy Spirit. In Christian theology, the Holy Spirit is regarded as part of the Godhead, or the third person of the Trinity, and hence is regarded as synonymous with God!

Even though the "*Holy Spirit*" has been referred to in earlier writings, as at the time of the baptism of Jesus, and has been spoken of in the New Testament as being in previous times: "*Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers, did, so do ye*" (Acts 7:51)

It is generally accepted that the work of the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost came into play after Jesus was taken up into heaven (Acts 11:28). Therefore, while it may appear to be logical that the Holy Spirit in Christian theology is the angel Gabriel or another of the Messenger angels, this is not in keeping with today's dogma of Christianity.

There are two famous meanings for 'the Holy Spirit' from the Islamic point of view.

One is that it's meant for Gabriel; An angel whose main task –though surely not the only one– is to bring the revelations to the Prophets. This meaning is supported by Ayah 102 in Chapter 16 wherein the Almighty Allah states:

"Say: The Holy Spirit (Gabriel) has brought it (the Quran) down from your Lord with truth."
(16: 102)

Gabriel is called '*The Spirit*' for as an angel he is not physical and is '*Holy*' in his purity and infallibility. Another suggestion for the meaning of '*The Holy Spirit*' is that it is a spirit greater than Gabriel by whom Almighty Allah supported His Messengers and their successors.

It is by possessing this spirit that they are safeguarded from any sin or error and can gain an intuitive knowledge of the reality of the universe. The Messenger of Islam (S) was bestowed with this spirit.

"And thus, We have sent to you a Spirit of Our Command." (42:52)

Jabir al-Jo'fi asked Imam Baqir (a.s) about the knowledge of the Imams. The Imam explained: "*O Jabir! Verily there are five types of spirits in the Prophets and their successors; The holy spirit, the spirit of faith, the spirit of life, the spirit of power, and the spirit of desire. It is by the Holy Spirit that they know what is in the kingdom of God. O Jabir! All the other four spirits can be afflicted, but the Holy Spirit will not amuse or entertain.*"

Thus, it is explained that the Holy Spirit is accorded the nature which Almighty God has bestowed upon His Messengers and their successors to protect them against sinning. We should however bear in mind that whatever the meaning of the Holy Spirit may be, it is undoubtedly a creature of God subjugated by

His will.

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