

The Reality of Jesus Christ in Islamic Worldview (Quranic Approach)

Tijani Ahmad Ashimi

Associate Professor, Dr., Department of Fundamental and Inter- Disciplinary Studies Studies, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2024.1110072>

Received: 19 October 2024; Accepted: 11 November 2024; Published: 23 November 2024

ABSTRACT

Jesus in Islamic worldview (Quranic approach)

The more people have tried to discover who Jesus really was, the more it has been found how little is known about him. Because there are limited records of his teachings and some of his actions. As a matter of fact, very little is known about how he actually lived his life from moment to moment, and how he conducted his everyday transaction with other people. Yet, the worldview of Islam, which derives its authenticity from the holy Qur'an respects and venerates Jesus Christ. It considers him to be one of God's greatest messengers to humankind. As such, The Qur'an (as the last of the divine books, revealed by God to the last of messenger), is undoubtedly a source of knowledge about Jesus which not generally known to some of adherents of Christianity and Judaism respectively. Indeed, the Qur'an not only leads us towards a better understanding of who he was, but also through that understanding, it increases our respect and love for him. It re-affirms his miraculous birth and his miraculous abilities. Furthermore, his mother Mary is regarded as one of the most pure and exalted women of all creations. Based on the above fact, this academic paper aims to explore the reality of Jesus Christ in Islamic worldview. Yet, the Quranic methodology is applied, that is by analyzing Quranic verses that related to Jesus Christ, the son of Mary. Finally, a brief conclusion followed

Keywords: Jesus, Mary, Qur'an, Islam, Christianity

INTRODUCTION

Islam honors all the prophets who were sent to mankind. As such, Muslims do respect all prophets in general, and Jesus in particular, because he was one of the prophets who foretold the coming of Muhammad (p.b.u.h). In fact, Muslims, also await the second coming of Jesus. They consider him one of the greatest of Allah's prophets to mankind. Therefore, a Muslim does not refer to him simply as "Jesus," but normally adds the phrase "peace be upon him" as a sign of respect.

As a matter of fact, there's no any religion in the world that respects and dignifies Jesus as Islam does. The Quran confirms his virgin birth in a special chapter called Mariam (Mary the mother of Jesus) and Mary is considered to have been one of the purest women in all creations.

Certainly, the pictures many people have given to Jesus of who he was, and what he did, are distorted ones. Indeed, the Qur'an does not cover the life of Jesus in any great detail as regards specific events. The miracles and powers which he was given are referred to, but mostly in general terms. Similarly, the book he was given by Allah, the Ingeel, is mentioned several times, but its exact contents are not indicated. However, the Qur'an is very specific as to his Purpose, how he appeared on earth, who he was and, equally important, who he was not and how his mission ended. Therefore, this humble paper will attempt to disclose the reality of Jesus based on various Quranic verses.

Brief Biography of Jesus

Who is Jesus in Islam?

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2008) Jesus in Islam is known as Isa Ibn Maryam (Arabic: **عيسى بن مريم**, translit.: 'Īsā ibn Maryām; English: Jesus, son of Mary), or Jesus in the New Testament, is considered to be a Messenger of God and al-Masih (the Messiah) who was sent to guide the Children of Israel (banī isrā'īl) with a new scripture, al-Injīl (the Gospel). The belief that Jesus is a prophet is required in Islam. This is reflected in the fact that he is clearly a significant figure in the Quran, appearing in 93 ayaat (or verses), though Noah, Adam and Moses appear with even greater frequency. It states that Jesus was born to Mary (Arabic: Maryam) as the result of virginal conception, a miraculous event which occurred by the decree of God. As a matter of fact, Islam affirms that Jesus was given the ability to perform miracles (such as healing the blind, bringing the dead back to life, etc.) which no any prophet has ever been credited with, though, these miracles are actualized by the permission of God rather than of his own power.

What is Jesus's original name?

According to Luke, one of the four Christian reliable bible, stated that, the historically correct answer can only be that it is the name that he was given at his "naming ceremony" (Luke 2:21), the name by which he was called by his mother, his foster-father, his siblings and other relatives, his neighbors, his friends and his disciples during his life on earth. There is no disagreement said Luke, about the fact that Jesus was not an Arab but a Jew who lived in Israel and was born into a family of pious Jews. He had without question a Hebrew name. His original name is neither European nor Arabic, so it was neither Jesus nor Yasu' nor Esa. A close phonetic transliteration of Jesus' Hebrew name into modern English would be Yeshua'. This opinion was also supported by Matthew, who stated that, in fact, the choice of his name receives considerable attention in the Gospels. His name was not arbitrarily chosen by his parents, but he received his name based on God's direct command (Matthew 1:21, Luke 1:31) because the meaning of this name expresses the purpose for which he was born (Matthew 1:21).

Based on above fact, Yeshua which is Hebrew in nature was probably transliterated into Latin and Greek word which is Jesus, and which is commonly used by English speakers nowadays.

However, Jalal Abualrub (2012) claims that Christians do not even have the correct name for God and for Jesus. He stated that:

... Christian Arabs do not even call Esa by his European name 'Jesus', but by his Arab and true name "Esa", or by another name they invented: 'Yasu'; they do not use the word 'god' to describe the Creator, but the Creator's true name 'Allah'. ...¹

As far as Jesus in Islamic worldview is concerned, and as far as the holy Quran (as the main source of Islamic worldview) is also important, Isa is the name repeatedly mentioned in the holy Quran, as such, it is the name recognized by Islam and Muslims in reference to the son of Mariyam.

In short, either, Jews, Christians, Greek or Muslims's pronunciation of this prophet of Allah(Isa, a,s) the fact remains that, they all refer to the prophet Isa a.s. therefore, this paper will unequivocally explore the reality of this prophet based on the Qur'an (the seal of revelation of Allah).

Jesus in the Qur'an

It will be worthwhile if we can shed little light on the mother of Jesus according to the holy Qur'an. First of all and foremost, according to wikipedia free encyclopedia, Mary (Arabic: **مريم** Maryām), the mother of Jesus (Isa), is considered one of the most righteous women in the Islamic religion. She is mentioned in the Quran²

¹ Jalal Abualrub, Muslim-Christian Dialogue: Islamic Monotheism vs Trinity Paperback 2012

² Esposito, John. What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam. New York: University Press, 2002. P31.

more than in the entire New Testament and is also the only woman mentioned by name in the Quran.³ According to the Quran, Jesus was born miraculously by the will of God without a father. His mother is regarded as a chaste and virtuous woman, and is said to have been a virgin. The Quran states clearly that Jesus was the result of a virgin birth, but that neither Mary nor her son were divine. In the Quran, no other woman is given more attention than Mary and the Quran states that Mary was chosen above all women:

“Behold! the angels said: "O Mary! Allah hath chosen thee and purified thee – chosen thee above the women of all nations”. Al-Imran (4:42)⁴

Furthermore, the uniqueness of Mary in Islam is obvious, when nineteenth chapter of the holy Quran, Surah Maryam is named after her and her life was to some extent explored in this chapter. In fact, Out of the Quran's 114 surahs, she is among only eight people who have a chapter named after them. Mary is specifically mentioned in the Quran, alongside Asiya, as an exemplar for all believers⁵ Mary plays an important role in Islamic culture and religious tradition, and verses from the Quran relating to Mary are frequently inscribed on the mihrab of various mosques, including in the Hagia Sophia⁶. Thus, the following, are some verses in the Qur'an about Mariyam (mother of Jesus)

Her Birth.

"When the wife of Imran said: 'O my Lord! I have vowed to You what is in my womb [my child] to be dedicated to Your services, so accept this [my vow] from me. Verily, You are the All-Hearer and the All-Knowing.' (Qur'an:3: 35) Then when she delivered her she said:

'O my Lord! I have delivered a female child' - and Allah knew better what she delivered - 'And the male is not like the female, and I have named her Maryam and I seek refuge with You for her and for her offspring from Satan, the outcast.' “(Quran, 3:36)

Her Upbringing.

Quran verses 3:37 continue..

"So her Lord accepted her with good acceptance. He made her grow in a good manner and put her under the care of Zachariya. Every time he entered Al-Mihrab (the praying place) to visit her, he found her supplied with sustenance [food]. He said:

“O Maryam! From where have you got this?” She said:

'This is from Allah. Verily, Allah provides sustenance who He wills, without limit.' "(Qur'an, 3:37)

So Mary was accepted by God, and was brought up in a good manner after she was put under the care of Zachary. Through her devotion and righteous upbringing and the prayer from her mother, Mary became the best woman to ever live as depicted in the Qur'an in the verses 3:42:

"And (remember) when the angels said: 'O Maryam (Mary)! Verily, Allah (God) has chosen you, purified you (from polytheism and disbelief), and chosen you above the women of the world (of her lifetime).' " (Qur'an, 3:42)

Jesus in the holy Qur'an

Based on miraculous birth of Mary and her uniqueness in Islamic worldview, the omnipotence of God has also similarly appeared on her miraculous baby (Jesus). As such, Jesus was born of a virgin, and that fact is clear in the holy Qur'an, when Allah said that:

³ Mary" in Glasse, Cyril, Concise Encyclopedia of Islam. Stacey International, 3rd edition, 2008.

⁴ Qur'an, 3:42

⁵ .Qur'an, 66:11-12

⁶ Schuon F. Dimensions of Islam; Wisdom of the Virgin, New York Press, 1998

"Nay, I am only a messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a holy son. She said: "How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?" He said: "So (it will be): Thy Lord saith, 'that is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us': It is a matter (so) decreed." (Qur'an, 19:19-21)

"And (remember) her who guarded her chastity: We breathed into her of Our spirit, and We made her and her son a sign for all peoples". (Qur'an, 21:91) .

The followings are the Quranic verses about the characteristics of Jesus in Islam.

Jesus strengthened with the Holy Spirit

"We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of messengers; we gave Jesus the son of Mary Clear (Signs) and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit. Is it that whenever there comes to you a messenger with what ye yourselves desire not, ye are puffed up with pride? - Some ye called impostors, and others ye slay!" (Qur'an, 2:87)

Jesus was given revelation by Allah

He said: "I am indeed a servant of Allah: He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet". (Qur'an 19:30)

Jesus taken bodily into Heaven

"Behold! Allah said: "O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to myself and clear thee (of the falsehoods) of those who blaspheme; I will make those who follow thee superior to those who reject faith, to the Day of Resurrection: Then shall ye all return unto me, and I will judge between you of the matters wherein ye dispute". (Qur'an, 3:55)

Jesus was created

"The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: "Be". And he was". (Qur'an, 3:59)

Qur'an denies Jesus' Crucifixion

"That they said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah";- 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 doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not". (Qur'an, 4:157)

Jesus is no more than a messenger of Allah

"O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His messengers. Say not "Trinity" : desist: it will be better for you: for Allah is one Allah: Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs". (Qur'an, 4:171)

"Christ the son of Mary was no more than a messenger; many were the messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their (daily) food. See how Allah doth make His signs clear to them; yet see in what ways they are deluded away from the truth!" (Qur'an, 5:75)

Jesus was a miracle worker

"We have made some of these messengers to excel the others among them are they to whom Allah spoke, and some of them He exalted by (many degrees of) rank; and We gave clear miracles to Isa1 the son of Marium,

and strengthened him with the holy spirit. And if Allah had pleased, those after them would not have fought one with another after clear arguments had come to them, but they disagreed; so there were some of them who believed and others who denied; and if Allah had pleased they would not have fought one with another, but Allah brings about what He intends". (Qur'an, 2:253)

Jesus, Son of Mary, did not say to worship himself or Mary

"And behold! Allah will say: "O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah'?" He will say: "Glory to Thee! never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my heart, Thou I know not what is in Thine. For Thou knowest in full all that is hidden". (Qur'an, 5:116)

Allah sent the Gospel to Jesus

"And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah". (Quran, 5:46)

"Then, in their wake, "We followed them up with (others of) our messengers: We sent after them Jesus the son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel; and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him Compassion and Mercy. But the Monasticism which they invented for themselves, We did not prescribe for them: (We commanded) only the seeking for the Good Pleasure of Allah; but that they did not foster as they should have done. Yet We bestowed, on those among them who believed, their (due) reward, but many of them are rebellious transgressors". (Qur'an, 57:27)

You are cursed if you say Jesus is God's son

"The Jews call 'Uzair a son of Allah, and the Christians call Christ the son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. Allah's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth! (Qur'an, 9:30)

Jesus spoke as a child

"But she pointed to the babe. They said: "How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle? He said: "I am indeed a servant of God: He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet" (Qur'an, 19:29-30)

Qur'an denies Jesus as Son of God

"**Such** (was) Jesus the son of Mary: (it is) a statement of truth, about which they (vainly) dispute. It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! when He determines a matter, He only says to it, "Be", and it is. (Qur'an,19:34-35)

Jesus is the Son of Mary

"And remember We took from the prophets their covenant: As (We did) from thee: from Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary: We took from them a solemn covenant". (Qur'an, 33:7)

Jesus was no more than a Servant

"When (Jesus) the son of Mary is held up as an example, behold, thy people raise a clamour thereat (in ridicule)! And they say, "Are our gods best, or he?" This they set forth to thee, only by way of disputation: yea, they are a contentious people. 59 He was no more than a servant: We granted Our favour to him, and We made him an example to the Children of Israel". (Qur'an, 43:57-59)

Jesus said to obey him

“When Jesus came with Clear Signs, he said: "Now have I come to you with Wisdom, and in order to make clear to you some of the (points) on which ye dispute: therefore fear Allah and obey me". (Qur'an, 43:63) ⁷

CONCLUSION

Islam respects and reveres Jesus (peace be upon him). It considers him one of the greatest of God's messengers to mankind. The Quran confirms his virgin birth, and a chapter of the Quran is entitled 'Maryam' (Mary). Was named after his mother. In Islamic worldview, Jesus was born miraculously by the command of God, the same command that had brought Adam into being with neither a father nor a mother. During his prophetic mission, Jesus performed many miracles. While Christianity insists of crucification of Jesus, Islam strongly rejects such claim, and it instead affirms that he was not crucified. According to Islamic worldview, It was the plan of Jesus' enemies to crucify him, but God saved him and raised him up to Him. And the likeness of Jesus was put over another man. Jesus' enemies took this man and crucified him, thinking that he was Jesus. In short, it is easy to say that, either, Jesus or Muhammad or other prophets are sharing the common goal i.e none of them came to change the basic doctrine of the belief in one God, but rather to confirm and convey it to their respective people. This fact is clear in the holy Qur'an when Allah said that:

Say ye: "We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to Allah (in Islam)." Al Baqarah: 2:132

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

1. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, (1938) The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary, by Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, Lahore
2. Esposito, John. (2002) What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam. New York: University Press
3. Guthrie, D., (1970) A Shorter Life of Christ, London Press
4. John Broughton (2008). Wikipedia Reader's Guide: The Missing Manual. O'Reilly Media, Inc. ISBN 978-0-596-55387-6
5. Miller, F. The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ. N.D
6. Muhammad Aatur-Rahim. (1979), Jesus, A prophet of Islam, MWH London Publisher
7. Parrinder, Geoffrey (1996). Jesus in the Quran. Oxford One world
8. Robson, R. J, Christ in Islam, (1929) Oxford Press
9. Schuon F. (1998) Dimensions of Islam; Wisdom of the Virgin, New York Press
10. Smith, Cyril Glassé ; (2001). The new encyclopedia of Islam (Édition révisée. ed.). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.
11. Vos, J, G. (1965) A Christian Introduction to Religions of the World, New York Press.

⁷ Isa is the Quranic word for Jesus as we mentioned earlier& Mariam is the Quranic word for Mary.