



## Jesus (pbuh)<sup>1</sup> in Islam

### PROPHETHOOD – ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Prophethood is the highest rank and honor that a man can receive from God. We need a prophet to learn why we were created, where we came from, where we are going to end up, and how to worship our Creator properly. God sent prophets to teach their people the meaning of creation and the truth of things, to unveil the mysteries behind historical and natural events, and to inform about our relationship with the universe. All prophets were human. They had the same human qualities like eating, sleeping, finding a partner in marriage, and falling ill.

#### Common Features of Prophets

According to Islam, all prophets shared the following common features:

- Truthfulness (sidq)
- Trustworthiness (amana)
- Intellect (fatana)
- Communicating the message (tabligh)
- Infallibility (isma)

They were supported by miracles to prove that they were not impostors. The miracles created by God were usually in the field in which the community they were sent to excelled. Prophets confirmed what was revealed before and what would be revealed after them. They are essentially human beings and, although they are protected from sin, they can make minor mistakes. Islam rejects the concept of the “divinity” of any of the prophets.

Muslims believe in and respect all the messengers of God, with no exceptions. Muslims believe in all of the prophets and do not make distinction among them:

*“The Messenger believes in what has been sent onto him by his lord, and so do the believers. They all believe in God and his angels, His Scriptures and His Messengers: ‘We make no distinction between any of His Messengers’ — and they say: ‘We hear and obey. Grant us your forgiveness, our Lord; to You is the journeying.’” (2:285)*

### THE BIRTH OF JESUS

#### Family of Imran

Mary, Jesus’ mother, belonged to the family of Imran, one of the noblest lineages mentioned in the Qur’an. Mary’s father, Imran, was from the line of the Prophets David and Solomon (pbuh). The third chapter of Qur’an was named as ‘Family of

Imran’. Imran died before Mary was born. Her mother dedicated her child-to-be to the service of God:

*“I dedicate to You what is in my womb for Your special service: so accept this of me: for You hear and know all things.” (3:35)*

#### Mary

Mary’s mother had expected a son, but she gave birth to a daughter:

*“O my Lord! I am delivered of a female child!” — And God knew best what she brought forth — the male is not like the female. I have named her Mary, and I beg Your protection for her and her offspring from Satan the accursed.” (3:36)*

The 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Qur’an is named after Mary. According to Islam, Mary (pbuh) is the purest and noblest woman of all times. Mary was favored by God with nobility and virtue. She was constant in prayer and remembrance of God, guarded her chastity, kept company with the righteous, and so attained moral perfection.

God protected Mary through her uncle, Prophet Zachariah:

*“Most graciously did her Lord accept her: He made her grow in purity and beauty: she was assigned to the care of Zachariah.” (3:37)*

Moreover, God provided her with food:

*“Whenever Zachariah entered the sanctuary to see her, he found her provided with food. ‘Mary’, He asked, ‘How does this come to you?’ ‘From God’ She answered. Truly God provided to whomever He wills without reckoning. (3:37)*

#### Zachariah and John

Mary’s answer inspired Zachariah to pray to God for the child he had so long desired. His prayer was answered with the promise of the birth of Prophet John (Yahya).

In view of Zachariah’s being very old and his wife infertile, the birth of a son was a miracle of Divine power. There is a close parallel (not identical) in the words of the Qur’an about the births of John and Jesus:

*“He (Zachariah) said: ‘My Lord! How can I have a son when age has quite overtaken me and my wife is barren?’ He (the angel) said: ‘Just so. God does what He wills.’” (3:40)*

*“She (Mary) said: ‘My Lord! How can I have a child when no man has touched me?’ He (the angel) said: ‘Just so. God creates what he wills; when He decrees a thing, He does but say to it ‘Be!’ and it is.” (3:47)*

#### Birth of Jesus

The angels reminded Mary of God’s favor to her and called her to obedient worship:

<sup>1</sup> Muslims are obligated to say “Peace be upon him.” after all prophets.

*“And when the angels said: ‘O Mary! God has chosen you and purified you, and preferred you above the women of all nations.*

*O Mary! worship your Lord devoutly: prostrate yourself, and bow down (in worship) with those who bow down.*

*And when the angels said: ‘O Mary! God gives you glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name is the Messiah Jesus son of Mary, honored in this world and in the Hereafter, and among those nearest (to God).’ (3:42-45)*

The birth of a child without a father, as announced to Mary, was an event never yet witnessed. Therefore, she exclaimed:

*“O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man has touched me?” (3:47)*

The answer was short and absolute:

*“Just so. God creates what He wills. When He has decreed a matter, He but says to it, “Be!” and it is.” (3:47)*

The Qur’an continues the narrative:

*“So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree.*

*She cried out (in her pain): ‘Would that I had died before this! Would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight.’*

*But (a voice) called to her from her beneath her: ‘Do not grieve! Your Lord has set a rivulet at your feet; and shake the trunk of the palm-tree towards you: it will drop fresh, ripe dates upon you.’*

*‘So eat and drink, and be comforted. If you should see some person, say (through gesture): ‘I have vowed a fast of silence to All-Gracious, so I cannot speak to any human being today.’” (19:22-26)*

The majority of the commentators thinks that this is infant Jesus’ voice.

### Reaction to the Birth of Jesus

When Mary came back to her people with the baby in her arms, she was met with words that accused her by implication of the gravest misconduct.

*“Then she brought him to her people carrying him. They said: O Mary! truly, you have brought an amazing thing! O sister of Aaron!<sup>2</sup> Your father was not an evil man, nor was your mother unchaste!’ Then she pointed to him (the infant). They said: ‘How can we talk to one who is in the cradle, an infant boy?’*

*He (the infant) spoke: ‘Surely I am a servant of God: He has given me Revelation and made me a Prophet; and He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and has enjoined on me prayer and charity as long as I live. And (He has made me)*

*dutiful to my mother who carried me, and neither overbearing nor wretched. Peace is on me the day I was born, the day I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life!’*

*Such (was) Jesus the son of Mary: (this is) a statement of truth about that of which they (the Jews and Christians) are in doubt.” (19:30-34)*

## MESSAGE AND MIRACLES OF JESUS

### Prophethood of Jesus

According to Quran:

- Jesus knew the Scriptures and was literate (3:48).
- He was a righteous and pious man (6:85) and blessed by God (5:113).
- Jesus is referred to as “the Messiah son of Mary”, as “a Messenger from God and His word”, and as “a spirit from God” (4:171), but he is never referred to as “the son of God”.
- Jesus was the Messiah whom Jews were waiting for.

Jesus announced his Prophethood to the Israelites after it had been revealed to him:

*“(I have come to you) to attest the Law which was before me. And to make lawful to you part of what used to be forbidden to you with a sign from your Lord. So fear God, and obey me. It is God who is my Lord and your Lord; then worship Him. This is a Way that is straight.” (3:50-51)*

The Israelites, against this invitation to faith, tried to defend the Torah and they did not believe him. Then Jesus showed them some miracles and said:

*“I have come to you with a sign from your Lord in that I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by God’s leave: and I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I quicken the dead, by God’s leave; and I declare to you what you have eaten, and what you store in your houses. Surely therein is a sign for you if you believe.” (3:49)*

The Israelites rejected the miracles as sorcery or illusion (5:113). The miracles of Prophet Jesus, like his creation, were different from those of other Prophets. They can be regarded as reflections in his prophethood of his extraordinary creation.

### His Disciples

In the face of the Israelites’ persistence against the true faith, Jesus called for helpers. Those who stepped forward were his disciples:

*“When Jesus found unbelief on their part, he said: ‘Who will be my helpers toward God?’ Said the disciples: ‘We are*

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<sup>2</sup> Jews often refer to people with somebody famous in their ancestors.

God's helpers. We believe in God, and bear you witness that we are Muslims. Our Lord! we believe in what You have revealed, and we follow the Messenger. Then, write us down among those who bear witness.' " (3:52)

The faith and support of the Apostles was a gift of God to Jesus as stated in the following verse:

"I (God) inspired the disciples to have faith in Me and My Apostle. They said: 'We have faith, and do you bear witness that we surrender to God as Muslims.' " (5:114)

### Holy Spirit

Quran mentions that Prophet Jesus was supported with the Holy Spirit (Ruh Al-Quds):

"We granted Jesus son of Mary the clear proofs of the truth, and confirmed him with the Spirit of Holiness." (2:87)

Different views have been put forward about the Spirit of Holiness (or The Holy Spirit). Literally, it means the spirit of extraordinary purity, cleanliness, and blessing. Some scholars indicated that it can be Archangel Gabriel whom Qur'an calls the Spirit of Holiness (16:102) and One Trustworthy (81:21).

### Injil (Evangel, The Gospel)

In Islam, we believe four divine books revealed to humanity:

- Original Torah revealed to Moses
- Original Psalms revealed to David
- Injil (The Gospel) revealed to Jesus
- Qur'an revealed to Muhammad

Qur'an states that God sent down the Gospel to Jesus:

"We sent Jesus son of Mary, confirming (the truth of) the Torah revealed before him, and We granted to him Injil (the Gospel), in which there was guidance and light, confirming what was revealed before it in the Torah, and serving as a guidance and instruction for the God-revering, pious." (2:46)

We believe that Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John may contain some fragments from original Gospel, however we cannot distinguish which fragments are from original Gospel.

## ASCENSION OF JESUS TO HEAVENS

The Israelites were resolute in their unbelief in Jesus and planned to have him assassinated. But God prevented their plans:

"And they (the unbelievers) schemed (against Jesus), but God put His will into effect (and brought their scheme to nothing)." (3:54)

"An their saying 'We killed the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God' – whereas they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but so it was made to appear to them. Those who differ about this matter and about Jesus are indeed confused; they have no definite knowledge thereof, following mere conjecture; and of a certainty, they did not kill him." (4:157)

"But God raised him to Himself. God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise." (4:158)

Based on these verses, many Islamic scholars hold the idea of Jesus being substituted with somebody else, and that person was really crucified. Some suggested that this person was Judas Iscariot, but some believe that Jesus told his disciples in advance that whoever volunteered would go to heaven. There are also other Islamic scholars opposing the substitution theory.

### Trinity

In Quran, the concept of Trinity is rejected in several places:

"The Messiah, son of Mary, was but a Messenger; Messengers had passed away before him; and his mother was an upright one wholly devoted to God; both of them ate food (as do all mortals)." (5:75)

"O People of the Book! Do not go beyond the bounds in your religion, and do not say anything of God but the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was but Messenger of God, and a Word of His (Power) which He conveyed to Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God, and His Messengers; and do not say God is one of a trinity." (4:171)

Qur'an clearly denies the Jesus being a son of God:

"It is not for God to take to Himself a child. All-Glorified is He. When he decrees a thing, He does but say to it "Be!" and it is." (19:35)

### The Messenger foretold by Jesus

Jesus announced the Messenger of God to come after him:

"O Children of Israel! I am the Messenger of God to you, confirming the Law before me, and giving glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad." (61:6)

Ahmad is another name of Prophet Muhammad.

Also, the Prophet Muhammad said about Jesus:

"I am the closest person to Jesus, son of Mary, both on earth and in the Hereafter." (Bukhari).

"There is no Prophet between me and Jesus." (Bukhari).

## RETURN OF JESUS

### From Qur'an

There is no verse in the Qur'an that has an obvious reference to return of Jesus. However, some prominent scholars, like Kashmiri of India, who compiled Traditions related with this issue, selects four verses that are considered to indicate the descent of the Messiah toward the end of time:

"He shall speak to the people in the cradle and in manhood. And he shall be of the righteous." (3:46)

"And there is none of the People of the Book but will believe in him before his death." (4:159)

*“And peace on me on the day I was born, and on the day I die, and on the day I will be raised to life.” (19:33)*

*“And (Jesus) shall be a Sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment).” (43:61)*

### From Hadith (Sayings of Prophet Muhammad)

There are almost a hundred Traditions of the Prophet which point to the return of the Jesus at the end of time and how this return will take place.

At least forty of these Traditions are authenticated according to the criteria determined in hadith studies; they are considered to be reliable by experts.

It is reported in Bukhari, Tirmidhi, and Musnad that the Messenger of God said,

*“By God in Whose Hand of Power my soul is, the descent of Jesus, son of Mary, who was a just sovereign, among you, is soon. He will destroy the cross, kill the swine, revoke the capitation tax, and distribute goods in abundance. Property will be so vast that no one will accept it as charity.”*

In another hadith, reported in Muslim and Abu Dawud, the Prophet said,

*“When Jesus, son of Mary, descends the ruler of the Muslims will ask him, ‘Come and lead the prayer for us.’ Jesus will say, ‘No, you are rulers to each other; this is a blessing of God to the Muslim community.’”*

From Muslim:

*“Certainly, the time of prayer will come and then Jesus (peace be upon him), son of Mary, descend and will lead them in prayer. When the enemy of God see him, he will (disappear) just as salt dissolves in water.”*

*“He will lead as you for 40 years according to the Book of your Lord and the sunnah (tradition) of your Apostle, and then die.”*

There is a hadith in Musnad of Ahmad b. Hanbal:

*“No Prophet shall come during the period between me (Muhammad) and Jesus. And Jesus shall descend. Recognize him when you see him: A man of medium height and of a ruddy, fair complexion. He will be dressed in two pieces of a yellow garment. The hair of his head will appear as if water is trickling out of it, although his hair will not be wet.*

*He will fight for the cause of Islam and Jesus will kill the Anti-Christ (Dajjal). He will live on this Earth for a period of 40 years and, at the end of this period, will pass away. The Muslims will offer the funeral prayers of Jesus.*

There is a definite, sound narration which says:

*“Jesus will kill the Great Dajjal (Anti-Christ).” (Muslim, Abu Davud, Tirmidhi, Ibn Maja)*

It says in a narration in connection with Jesus killing the Dajjal:

*“The Dajjal will have a colossal form, he will be extraordinarily big and taller than a minaret, while Jesus will be very small in comparison.” (Ibn Kathir, Suyuti)*

### Opinions

There are several opinions put forward regarding the descent of Jesus by the end of time. According to literal understanding, Jesus will return in a human form. However, some Islamic scholars consider that the descent of Jesus as a person would be contrary to the divine wisdom of God Almighty. They rather think that it will take place as a descent of a “collective spiritual personality.”

Bediüzzaman, famous 20<sup>th</sup> century Islamic scholar, stresses the spiritual personality more, and interprets Jesus’ descent as the renewal of Christianity and a return to the original message of Jesus. Bediüzzaman also believes that Christians and Muslims will collaborate to bring justice and peace to the world.

Muhammad Abduh, a 20th century modernist, stated that

*“The descent of Jesus and his ruling on earth can be interpreted as the dominance of his spirit and his enigmatic message to the people. This is what dominates Jesus’ teachings of commanding mercy, love and peace.”*

### Summary

- The birth of Jesus was a miracle. Mary was virgin when she gave birth to him.
- Mary is one of the noblest and purest women of all times.
- Quran states that Jesus (son of Mary), like the prophet Adam, did not have a biological father and was supported by the Holy Spirit.
- We cannot be called Muslims if we don’t accept Jesus as a prophet of God.
- Jesus was the Messiah whom Jews were waiting for.
- Jesus was one of six greatest prophets mentioned in the Quran; however, we don’t believe that Jesus had divine nature.
- Jesus, like all other prophets of God, had prophetic miracles.
- He was betrayed by one of his followers. He did not die on the cross and he was ascended by Allah to a different level of life.
- According to the prophetic traditions, Jesus will return to this world by the end of time.

### References

All numbered references are from the Qur’an. (The Qur’an with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal)

Named references are from authentic Hadith books. A hadith is a saying or tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).