

Muslim's Perspective on Jesus and Christian's Claim

There are different kinds of religion found in the world. Christianity is said to be the major religious group to be found, and next to it is Islam then Hinduism. Christians can be split into three branches: Roman Catholics, Protestants, Eastern Orthodox, and further subdivided into denominations or split into independent units. As a whole, Christians believe that there is one God, who is consisted of the Godhead (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), and their faith centers on the belief of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As for Islam, which means the “submission to the will of God” (HISTORY.com Editors, 2019), their followers are called Muslims. They view and worship God who is called in Arabic as “Allah”, and also believes Muhammad was his prophet. Muslims do share some common ground with Christians such as Jesus’ miracles and that He was born of a Virgin (Cumming, 2012, p. 133). Regarding their view on the person of Jesus and the cross, they differ: Christians believe Jesus is the Son of God who was crucified and resurrected, whereas Muslims believe Jesus is only a prophet of God who was lifted up to heaven before dying on the cross.

Islam, being the second largest religion found in the world, has its roots back in the 7th century (HISTORY.com Editors, 2019). It started in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, through the time of Muhammad’s life. The followers of Islam, which are Muslims, are monotheistic and they are worshipping only one, all-knowing God, called Allah. They teach about Allah’s word being revealed to the prophet Muhammad, who is the final prophet.

Muhammad considers himself as the bearer of the message from God and the last prophet. He is convinced that he was acknowledged by Jesus to be the last prophet and no other prophets will come after him. In his pre-existence, he is referred to as the “light” (Bearcup, 2019, p.62). Bearcup (2019, p.62) cites the Qur’an wherein it refers to Muhammad as a light, such as

Sura 5:15, “O People of the Book! Our Messenger has come to you, clarifying for you much of what you kept hidden of the Book, and overlooking much. A light from God has come to you, and a clear Book.” Muslims are called to love Muhammad and to reduce him to a lower level of importance or to have strong emotions toward him would be a failing for Muslims.

Christians commend Muhammad as someone who is a religious genius that provided some change in the course of human history under the severing rule of God. Although he was a man who has great prophetic inspiration, when in view through the light of Christ and the gospel, his prophethood is reduced by the ambiguities of temporal power (Kerr, 1984, p.114). In the view of Christian and to consider Muhammad as a prophet, Christians may not see eye to eye and join the Muslim’s view of Muhammad, rather both Christians and Muslims can still work together in seeking to realize God’s rule on earth (Kerr, 1984, p.116).

Furthermore, the Christian and Muslim dialogue remains to have issues on the view of Jesus, but there is also some mutual understanding in some aspects. Peter Ford (2012, p. 16) provides some common ground between the two religious groups in their understanding of Jesus. There are four Qur’anic claims that are also found to be accepted by the New Testament: 1. Jesus was born in a miraculous way to Mary, a virgin; 2. Jesus was a prophet sent by God; 3. Jesus was given titles unique to him because he is a special prophet of God; 4. Jesus performed miracles through the means of God’s power.

Despite the commonality of who Jesus is—the person and His mission, – there are still major points of disagreements between the Muslims and the Christians. One point in which there is a difference of opinion lies in the understanding of Jesus as being the Son of God, who is both human and divine. This claim is anchored in the Bible and in historical Christian theology. In regard to Muslims, most reject the notion based on their reading of the Qur’an. Muslims

praise Christians in the Qur'an because of the close relation to Muslims when in relation to matters of faith and how they also were given Scripture from God. But because of how Christians provide statements about Jesus that goes further than theology, Christians are faulted in a disapproving way the Qur'an. The other disagreement is on the belief of Jesus' crucifixion, wherein Muslims do not believe in the crucified and risen Christ of the Gospels.

Prophets, according to Easton (1897), are those who proclaim the message that was given to him through the vision of God. They are spokesmen for God—a mouthpiece through which God can speak to men (Jeremiah 1:9 NIV, Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "I have put my words in your mouth."). What they say are not of human, but of God as what 2 Peter 1:21 (NIV) says, "For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Muslims view Jesus as just a prophet. Their tradition also acknowledges Jesus' figure as the "Isa", which is the Arabic term for Jesus, and procures its understanding of His life and identity from Qur'an and other traditional narratives (Howard, 2015, p.302). Muslims' perspective on Christ is pictured as a prophet who is heralding the way for the arrival of Muhammad (Tennent, 2018). As it said in Sura 61:6, "And [mention] when Jesus, the son of Mary, said, 'O Children of Israel, indeed I am the messenger of Allah to you confirming what came before me of the Torah and bringing good tidings of a messenger to come after me, whose name is Aḥmad.' But when he came to them with clear evidences, they said, 'This is obvious magic.'"

Christianity claims Jesus to be more than just a man, a great teacher, even more than just a great prophet. He is the Son of God. What does the "Son of God" mean in the context of the

Bible? According to Cumming (2012, p.137), its most common meaning is in the Gospel, having the messianic title of “Messiah,” “Son of David,” or “King of Israel.” These meanings can be found in the Scriptures of Matthew 26:63, John 1:49, John 11:27, and John 20:31. For example, John 11:27 (NIV) says, “‘Yes, Lord,’ she replied, ‘I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.’” Jesus was indeed a man, but he was also the Son of God—the Savior of the world. Yes, Jesus is a prophet, but He is also more than a prophet for He is the God Himself (Matthew 16:13-17). The prophets that came before Jesus died just like any other humans did, but Jesus died and was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, which no other prophets could do, even today.

Muslims do not believe that Jesus was crucified; He only appeared to be. The Qur’an rejects the notion of the death on the cross. Muslims believe that the cross would not be fitting for a prophet like Jesus, and so they think Jesus died a natural death. Also, the Qur’an teaches them that Jesus was not crucified, and instead, Muhammad teaches that Jesus was replaced by another person to take place on the cross. In Sura 4:157-158, it is written, “And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but [another] was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it except the following of assumption. And they did not kill him, for certain. Rather, Allah raised him to Himself.”

Christians, on the other hand, believe that Jesus, as taught in the Bible, was crucified and resurrected from the dead. His crucifixion is foretold in the books of the Old Testament such as in Isaiah 53:5-6 (NIV), wherein it says, “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” It speaks of how Jesus is crucified for man’s

sins. The New Testament's four Gospels, even throughout the whole New Testament, also lays out the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Luke 24:6-7 (NIV), "He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" provides the picture of Christ being risen.

Even with the differing views in understanding who Jesus is and his mission, it is still crucial to go about the conversation with each other, whether one is a Christian or a Muslim, in a loving and respectful way. Still as Christians, it is to be acknowledge that Jesus Christ is a prophet, but most importantly He is God's Son, both divine and human. But besides knowing Christ of the Scriptures, Christians should also understand who Jesus is in the Islamic view because it will aid in how to be in dialogue with Muslims. Christians can find common ground and similarities through the understanding of the Jesus of Islam and of Christianity.

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