

## The Speaking God: Jesus the Christ is Lord

And a voice from heaven said,  
*“This is my Son, the Beloved,  
with whom I am well pleased.”*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature<sup>2</sup> God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,  
<sup>7</sup>but made himself nothing,  
taking the very nature<sup>3</sup> of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.  
<sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
and became obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!  
<sup>9</sup>Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,  
<sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
<sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.



### From the Qur’ān:

- 30 The Jews call Uzayr a son  
Of God, and the Christians  
Call Christ the Son of God.  
That is a saying from their mouth;  
(In this) they but imitate  
What the unbelievers of old  
Used to say. Allah’s<sup>4</sup> curse  
Be on them: how they are deluded  
Away from the truth!
- 31 They take their priests  
And their anchorites to be  
Their lords in derogation of  
Allah,

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 3:17, NRSV.

<sup>2</sup> Or “in the form of,” NIV.

<sup>3</sup> Or “the form,” NIV.

<sup>4</sup> “Allah” is the Arabic word for God (more literally, “the One who is God”).

And (they take as their lord)  
Christ, the Son of Mary;  
Yet they were commanded  
To worship but One God:  
There is no god but He.<sup>5</sup>  
Praise and Glory to Him:  
(Far is He) from having  
The partners they associate  
(With Him).

32 Fain would they extinguish  
Allah's Light with their mouths,<sup>6</sup>  
But Allah will not allow  
But that His Light should be  
Perfected, even though the  
Unbelievers  
May detest (it).

33 It is He who hath sent  
His Messenger with guidance  
And the Religion of Truth,  
To prevail it  
Over all religion,  
Even though the Pagans  
May detest (it).<sup>7</sup>



I make no apologies for my biases in this lesson. I am a conservative Christian and therefore believe, without hesitation, that Jesus is the Son of God, Savior of the world, and second person of the Holy Trinity. This is to say that I am in complete agreement regarding Jesus, and the Trinity, with the Nicene Creed.<sup>8</sup> *There is one more thing that needs to*

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<sup>5</sup> That is, there is no God but Allah. Here and in other places the Qur'ān speaks wisely. The Muslim God and the Christian God are miles apart. (Cf. Abdullah Yusuf ' not recognize either Jesus or the Holy Spirit as divine, as partakers of the divine nature. Jesus is at most a great prophet, in line with Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, as Islam teaches. Jesus is no Redeemer, which is central to the Christian understanding of God, and vicarious atonement (Christ dying for us) is a Christian myth. Consequently, Jesus did not die on the cross, but a Jesus look-a-like. Jesus is the son of Mary, not of God, because that concept, according Islam would mean that Allah would have sexual urges like the animals and procreate like the animals, which likewise has no part in Christian theological thought.

<sup>6</sup> The Unbelievers would like to blow out the light of Allah, much like an oil lamp would be blown out. Or perhaps the word "mouths" means false teachers who try to substitute false teaching for true.

<sup>7</sup> Ali, *Op. Cit* ,pp. 446-447.

<sup>8</sup> This creed was produced in 325 AD and emphasized, as did other creeds of its time, the divinity of Jesus and His Messiahship. For example, the creed confesses that Jesus is "from the essence [reality] of the Father"; He is "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God." This language is lofty, to say the

*be said before we begin.* Although I differ significantly with Islam on the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, I do so from the standpoint of unquestioning love for Islam<sup>9</sup> and appreciation for some of its religious insight. I enjoy reading the Qur’ān<sup>10</sup>, though I am mystified by its rewriting of Christian history. It is at this point that two major religions clash, in the past and sometimes in the present this notion of revelation has led to bloodshed. That is tragic! Both sides of this dispute are guilty of wanton murder on the other. That is very disturbing. If anything is obvious, it is that *Islam and Christianity* must be able to talk with each other, especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As a follower of Jesus’ teachings, I have learned that  
I am forbidden to force my faith on others,  
to defend myself on theological matters with weapons of any kind, and  
cannot perpetuate prejudices and untruths against those who differ with me.  
Within the context of their faith, I think this is also true of Islam.

The followers of Islam, like every Christian (including me), must answer ultimately to God and Jesus on the matters we are discussing here. I can say that following Jesus, it is my mission to live in peace with all people and to do what I can to see that peace reigns, which includes proclaiming the Gospel of God’s love in Jesus. I also believe that this is what all Christians must do—and *all* Christians must do. If we Christians do not like what Muslims believe, we must pray for them and ourselves, remembering all the while that followers of Islam are creatures of God, as we are. I should also say that this brief article cannot plum the depths of either Islam’s or Christianity’s understanding of Jesus. If you are interested in reading more of my concerns regarding Islam and Christianity on the nature and mission of Jesus, see my article at this site, “Jesus in Christian and Islamic Thought: A Christian View,” under the general title of “[Christology](#).” (cf. website for **Centenary United Methodist Church, Lexington**)



It was a dangerous thing to be known as a follower of Jesus in the Apostolic Age. The disciples did not realize how soon Jesus’ words would prove true when He told them prior to His crucifixion<sup>11</sup> that they would be persecuted, even killed, when they bore witness to Him in Roman territory. I am amazed at the apostles’ stability in the Book of Acts as they endured persecution and imprisonment for merely mentioning the Redeemer’s name. One way the early church had to counter false accusation, which they often faced, was to craft creeds stating their belief in the Lord. I shared one from St. Paul

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least. I have no difficulty seeing affinity between biblical and Nicene creedal language regarding Jesus. John H. Leith (ed.), Creeds of the Churches (Chicago: Adine Publishing Company, 1963), p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> In Arabic, Islam means submission, obedience, or peace.

<sup>10</sup> The Qur’ān is the holy book of Islam, supposedly a series of revelations to the prophet Mohammed over a period of about twenty years. In its Arabic form it is regarded as the absolute, infallible, divine Word of God in written form.. It is the final and corrected form of divine revelation, having supremacy over the Torah and the Christian Bible. One must read the Qur’ān in Arabic in order to read the Word of God.

<sup>11</sup> “All but the most skeptical of historians affirm the historical reality of the crucifixion of Jesus under Pontius Pilate.” Joel B. Green, The Way of the Cross: Following Jesus in the Gospel of Mark (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1991), p. vii.

with you at the beginning of this article. The creed in Philippians affirms Jesus' pre-existence, His God-like character and personality, the mystery of His divinity, His humility and willingness to die on a cross for humankind, His resurrection to an exalted place at the Father's side, and His having that Name before which all men and women will "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

There was no question that the apostles believed that Jesus was both human and divine, a declaration that has caused preachers of the Gospel trouble from Jesus' day to ours. In fact, while teaching a course on "The Theology of the Creeds" I found that the Christian affirmation of the uniqueness of Jesus<sup>12</sup> to be the single greatest obstacle to talks of unity between Christians and members of other major religious groups. Call Jesus a prophet, a good man, a visionary, or almost any other kind of person you can think of and we can get down to business, but confess Him as Son of God, Savior, that is, divine/ human, and all bets are off! We Christians, however soft we speak about the Lord, are often considered judgmental, ungracious, and thinking we are "better than others." Hence, we are by this measure full of pride, divisiveness, and unwillingness to compromise for the sake of peace. There have been times in church history when this description of Christians was true, but they did not represent a fair reading of the New Testament nor did they give evidence of "loving others as they love themselves, a clear teaching of the Lord Christ.

I picked Islam as one way of seeing how others view Jesus because it is the #2 religion in size in the world and because of America's uncertainty about what Muslim's believe in the light of terrorists who kidnap, torture, and murder in the name of Allah, Islam's deity. I urge Christians, especially Christian leaders, to read the Qur'an carefully, Islam's holy book, to get a first-hand look at what Muslims, peaceful or not, think of Jesus; it is a crucial topic these days.



Paragraph 30 above, from the Qur'an, gives us a nice summary, repeated in different ways throughout the Qur'an, concerning Jesus. Jesus, as the Qur'an teaches, is not the Son of God; that name was given to Him by "unbelievers" long ago. There is a punishment waiting for those who deliberately continue this distortion. Who, then, is Jesus? The Qur'an says He is a prophet, related historically to Abraham, who receives His commission from Allah. He is born of Mary, and the Qur'an consistently refers to Jesus as the "son of Mary," for whom Muslims have great respect. Their holy book teaches that there is no such thing as the Trinity<sup>13</sup> (which Muslims tend to think of as a combination of Father, Son, and Mary). Jesus is no Redeemer and hence Jesus did not need to die for human sin. In (Muslim) fact, Jesus did not die on the cross at all. [In 33 above, the "Messenger" is Mohammed, not Jesus.] Because Islam is the "truth", it is destined to

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<sup>12</sup> Consisting of His miraculous birth, God-given ability to forgive sins, death for human sin on the cross, resurrection from death in a human body, ascension into heaven, and promise to return to earth as judge and king.

<sup>13</sup> Commenting on the Christian concept of Trinity, a Muslim commentator remarks, "Christ's teaching was simple, like his life, but the Christians have made it crooked." He is speaking of what he calls "metaphysical sophistries" required by Christians to explain the concept of Trinity. Ali, Op. cit., p. 751, note 2488.

“prevail” over all religions, whether the pagans like it or not! And who are the pagans? Whatever else they are, pagans are those who knowingly perpetuate the notion that Jesus is God’s (Allah’s) Son, crucified and risen for the salvation of those who trust Him as their Lord and Redeemer.

In Sūrah 19, verse 30, Jesus is reported to have said:

“I am indeed  
A servant of Allah:  
He hath given me  
Revelation and made me  
A prophet.”

In Sūrah 3, verse 52, the following conversation occurs between Jesus the Muslim and the Disciples:

“When Jesus found  
Unbelief on their part  
He said: “Who will be  
My helpers to (the work  
Of) Allah?” Said the Disciples:  
“We are Allah’s helpers:  
We believe in Allah,  
And do thou bear witness  
That we are Muslims.”

The note following this verse reads in part. “It was the one Religion—the Religion of Allah, which was in essence the religion of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. The argument runs: who do ye then now make divisions and reject the living Teacher? Islam is: bowing to the will of Allah. All who have faith should bow to the will of Allah and be Muslims.”<sup>14</sup>

The Qur’ān sets forth the life of the righteous before the justice and love of Allah. It is a book of those moral precepts sanctioned by Allah, the keeping of which, along with belief in the hereafter, lead one to heaven. Mohammed is the last of the Lord’s prophets to be expected, and in this sense greater than Jesus; the Qur’ān the last revelation, and in this sense more reliable than the Bible. Islam is monotheistic to the core. Islam has the same problem with Christianity that other main religions have: that in Jesus one has the ultimate and eternal revelation of the mystery of God, as shown forth in the Old and New Testaments. Islam has to find Christianity wanting, of course, in order to validate its own religious commitments. According to the Qur’ān, Judaism and Christianity are the major stumbling blocks that Islam faces. Generally speaking, Mohammed was more lenient with Christians than Jews, although Muslims could live peaceably with Jews and Christians if they practiced peaceful ways.

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<sup>14</sup> Ali, *Op Cit.*, p. 141, note 392. Every person born into the world is born Muslim. This is to say that being human is being Muslim. What happens is that those born Muslims stray away from the faith as they age.



At the beginning of this paper, I have quoted from God's approval of Jesus, uttered at His baptism.

And a voice from heaven said,  
*"This is my Son, the Beloved,  
with whom I am well pleased."*

As we have seen, in an abbreviated treatment, this divine approval of Jesus of Nazareth is *the heartbeat of Christianity* and the main threat to Islam. As we saw in the lesson before this one, number 10, "The Speaking God: The Word of God," The Old Testament is the precursor of God's final Word to the human race. We are to repent and believe in Jesus, God's Son, Messiah, and Redeemer. If we had time in this series to seriously consider the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, we would note that our Father God continued to use dreams, visions, unusual events with an interpreter, and the authority of the Sacred Word (the Old Testament), and preaching the Word of God as ways to communicate God's will to humankind. Yet, all of this will revolve around Jesus in the New Testament, the Son of God and Savior of the world.

The Old Testament chronicled events that would eventually take us to the babe in the manger...the cross...the empty tomb...the coming of the Holy Spirit...and the mission of the church. We have seen that from "the beginning" the Creator God has had a personal concern for this world, the vastness of the universe, and the life of humankind. Thus, God has attempted to appeal to men and women in many and various ways. Because of our sinfulness we have not always been able to hear God, and so He sent His Son. Through Him the Lord God speaks of love, peace, and forgiveness, and with clarity to those who yearn for the reality of God in their lives. This is the Christian message, the central point in our creeds, the focal point of our joy and our hope.

It has been a joy for me to bring these eleven brief studies on how God communicates to us to you who visit my writings from time to time. As is true of any research into the meaning of the Bible, I have learned much myself over these past months. My appreciation goes especially to Bob Morgan, Webmaster, whose encouragement and expertise has made this series possible. In the first article in this series I said I was on a quest, a quest to discover God more deeply. I hoped you would come along with me. I have learned much; I hope you have. Is the quest completed? No, not by a long shot. In the future I need to pick my concern up again and carry on. Perhaps one day....

*My life is a listening,  
his is a speaking.  
My salvation is to hear and respond.*

--Jerry Mercer  
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