

# Explaining Christ to Muslims

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | January 21, 2011



*I live in an Arab country and I'm often asked questions regarding Christ. There are a few things that I am unable to answer. They claim that Christ was only a prophet*

*and since they don't have any verses that support Jesus' divinity I find it hard to explain to them the nature and the purpose of Christ. I would greatly appreciate if you help me out as to how I can approach this topic with my Muslim friends. Thank you. Keeping your class in my prayer.*

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Blessings to you and your ministry as you work to spread the truth about God as Jesus revealed to God's children in the Middle East.

Let me start by acknowledging I am no expert on Islam. Therefore, I will share with you what I understand might be helpful and leave it with you to determine if this can be useful in your situation.

In your situation I would recommend starting by getting to know your Muslim neighbors and building common ground, such as your belief in the Bible, God as Creator, the avoidance of alcohol, pork, drugs, tobacco and the principles of healthy living. You can share your vision to be a blessing to others and a

representative of God's kingdom on earth and your opposition to evil. By building common ground and by living a healthy lifestyle you are establishing a basis for credibility with which your Muslim friends can resonate.

Then I would begin inquiry. Let them explain to you what Islam means to them, how is it a blessing to their life? What principles do they find helpful? Inevitably, there will arise questions of life for which they are still trying to explain or understand in harmony with their belief system. These areas would be opportunities to explore and offer explanations that you have from your understanding of the Great Controversy between God and Satan. Use this knowledge to gently lead them to an understanding of God in the setting of the conflict with Satan. And then in that setting I would inquire as to their understanding of Jesus. You will most likely get the typical response of Jesus being a prophet - and one could take the approach, that many have tried, to compare Jesus' sayings about Himself in the New Testament with their belief that He is a prophet. The problem, of course, is that they will assert the Bible translations have been corrupted and cannot be trusted so the New Testament statements of Christ's divinity are not reliable to them.

With that in mind I would turn to the Koran and ask them questions about how they understand Jesus in light of Sura XIX verses 16-22 and 28-38:

And make mention in the Book, of Mary, when she went apart from her family, eastward, And took a veil to shroud herself from them: and We sent Our spirit to her, and he took before her the form of a perfect man. She said, "I fly for refuge from thee to the God of Mercy! If thou fearest Him, begone from me."

He said: "I am only a messenger of the Lord, that I may bestow on thee a holy son."

She said: "How shall I have a son, when a man hath never touched me? and I am not unchaste."

He said: "So shall it be. Thy Lord hath said: 'Easy is this with me;' and: 'We will make him a sign to mankind, and a mercy from Us. For it is a thing decreed.'" And she conceived him, and retired to a far off place...

Then came she with the babe to her people, bearing him. They said, "O Mary! Now has thou done a strange thing! O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a man of wickedness, nor unchaste thy mother."

And she made a sign to them, pointing toward the babe. They said, "How shall we speak with him who is in the cradle, an infant?"

It said, "Verily, I am the servant of God; He hath given me the Book, and He hath made me a prophet; And He hath made me blessed wherever I may be, and hath enjoined me prayer and almsgiving so long as I shall live; And to be dutiful to her that bare me; and he hath not made me proud, depraved. And the peace of God was on me the day I was born, and will be the day I shall die, and the day I shall be raised to life."

This is Jesus, the son of Mary; this is a statement of the truth concerning which they doubt. It becometh not God to beget a son. Glory be to Him! When He decreeth a thing, He only saith to it, "Be," and it is. And verily, God is my Lord and your Lord; adore Him then. This is the right way. But the sects have fallen to variance among themselves about Jesus: but woe, because of the

assembly of the great day, to those who believe not!

You will notice the Koran teaches the virgin birth of Jesus and that Jesus is God's son a gift to man. You could ask, if Jesus was "only" a prophet what other prophet did not have a human father? Also, this child was so different from other humans (including other prophets) that he was able (according to the Koran) to speak as an infant. You could ask, what other prophet could do this? You could also point out that the Koran draws attention to the fact that people will fall based on coming to wrong conclusions about Jesus.

This will open up some very interesting dialogue. Think of the questions you could ask them about this, including what was the purpose of Jesus, this special gift from God to man? How did Jesus come into the world? What does it mean to us that He had no human father? What would that mean for who He is? Again think in terms of the Great Controversy, why it was necessary that God come in human form and lead them to think on this plane. I would explore the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Messiah - Abraham's "Seed" and Isaiah 53 etc. and the New Testament fulfillment and Jesus' mission in the setting of the Great Controversy between God and Satan over God's character.

The way I would approach the Great Controversy is by starting with God's character of love and then taking them through the law of love as revealed in nature, as the design template for life. I would then walk them through how when we believe lies it breaks the law of love, connecting this with Satan as the father of lies. I would bring in the idea that we are estranged from God and that God is trying to reunite us to Himself by revealing Himself to us. In this Jesus was His agency to reveal God, the "gift" to man as the Koran says. And in this revelation of the truth about God, Satan's lies are destroyed, we are won back to trust in God and the circle of love is rejoined in our relationship to Him. In this trust relationship with God our fear and need to "protect self" is removed and we are enabled to love others and become givers instead of takers. And as life originates in God it is only by this restored union with Him that we are able to have eternal life.

If they question the issue of the trinity, while I believe Jesus to be God, I wouldn't make this a major stumbling point as there are Christians who have accepted Jesus as God's Son and Messiah but who have not embraced the trinity concept. People can only handle so much new truth at one time, allow them to progress at their own pace. But, you can turn their mind toward passages in the Koran in which God is a plurality rather than a singularity. In addition to the passages above where God references Himself as "Us, We, Our" there are numerous such passages, such as:

And remember when We rescued you from the people of Pharaoh, who had laid on you a cruel chastisement. They slew your male children, and let only your females live: and in this was a great trial from your Lord. And when We parted the sea for you, and saved you, and drowned the people of Pharaoh, while ye were looking on: and When We were in treaty with Moses forty nights: then during his absence took ye the calf and acted wickedly: Yet after this We forgave you, that ye might be grateful: and when We gave Moses the Book and the Illuminations in order to guide you...." Sura II 46 - 50

Once you have started the dialogue be patient, ask many questions, allow them to explain their faith to you, validate all you can and continue to point to the grand principles of God's character of love as revealed in Jesus! If you are dealing with someone who is honestly seeking truth, the conversation will unfold on its own as the Holy Spirit guides in the discussion and dialogue. Blessings as you share the truth about God!