



## **Answers to Questions from a Christian**

Answered by *Mufti Taqi Usmani*

The University of Birmingham Islamic Society received the following email from a Christian:

**Hello, I am a Christian who is considering converting to Islam. I have a number of questions which I would like answered --- they are from a Christian perspective i.e. mainly dealing with Jesus and his position in the two faiths. I would very much appreciate your wisdom and help on these issues. Please find time to reply... Thank you.**

### **Questions & Answers:**

**Q.) 1. Allah - does He love everyone in the world, or only "good" people?**

A.) 'Allah's love' may have two different meanings: One that He likes the well being of every person. And second, that He likes him in all respects and will admit him into the Paradise. In the first meaning He loves everyone in the world because He likes the well being of all people, both here and in the Hereafter. Because of this love He gives sustenance to every one, regardless of his religion and his deeds, and it is because of this kind of love that He has sent a large number of messengers and revealed the divine books, so that every one may know the truth and after following His instructions becomes entitled to the reward in the Hereafter. But the second kind of love is applicable only to those people who believe in His Oneness and in all messengers sent and all books revealed by Him, and then act accordingly.

**Q.) 2. Did Muhammad understand the Trinity to include God, Jesus & Mary? If so, did that not influence his understanding of Christianity and his teachings?**

A.) Yes, the Holy prophet Muhammad peace be upon him knew well the concept of Trinity because it is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in specific words, and it is because of this knowledge that he had refuted the doctrines of Christianity.

**Q.) 3. Apparently, for "mild" sins Allah may punish us or demand penance. For "serious" sins there is no forgiveness. How do you ascertain what is a mild / serious sin? What happens to you if you commit a "serious" sin before you come to faith - is it too late?**

A.) It is not correct, according to the Islamic beliefs, that serious sins cannot be forgiven. The correct position enunciated by the Holy Qur'an is that Allah forgives any sin, major or minor, mild or serious for the one who truly repents to Him. This rule is applicable even to Shirk (ascribing partners to Allah) and Kufr (disbelief) in the sense that if a person repents from these beliefs and embraces Islam, his past beliefs of Shirk and Kufr are forgiven. It is also mentioned in the Holy Qur'an that Allah may forgive any sin that is short of Shirk and Kufr even without repentance by the relevant person, but He does not forgive Kufr and Shirk without repentance. The text of the holy Qur'an is as follows:

*"Surely Allah does not forgive the sin of ascribing partners to Him and He may forgive any sin short of that for whomsoever He wills." [An-Nisa 4:116]*

If someone has committed serious sins before he comes to faith, all such serious sins are forgiven as soon as he embraces Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him has said: "Surely Islam demolishes all sins committed before it."

**Q.) 4. Both Jews & Christians have historically claimed that Jesus died on the cross. Why then does the Qur'an deny the crucifixion?**

A.) It is true that Jews and Christians claim that Jesus Christ died on the cross, but there is no historical

evidence to prove this. The Holy Qur'an has specifically mentioned that the Jews were not able to crucify the Prophet 'Isa, alayhis salam, (Jesus Christ) rather they confused him with one of his companions, and Allah raised him up before his crucifixion could have taken place.

**Q.) 5. If Jesus was only a prophet like Muhammad, why was it necessary for him to be born miraculously without a Father and to be raised to Heaven without dying? Surely, this makes Jesus far more superior to the prophets, such as Muhammad, who did die on the 8th June 632 CE, and is still buried in a tomb in Medina to this day? If Jesus has not died (and never will), then the Muslim claim of Muhammad as the successor of Jesus is surely null & void?**

A.) Different miracles have been demonstrated by Allah through different prophets and no miracle can be held as superior to any other miracle. It was only on the basis of Allah's discretion and requirements of the relevant time that a particular miracle was chosen to be shown through a particular prophet. Miraculous birth of Jesus Christ and his being raised to the heaven are the miracles shown by Allah, but no miracle can prove the divinity of the prophet through whom it was shown. The Prophet Adam, alayhis salam, was also born without father, rather his birth was more miraculous because he was born even without a mother, but no body can argue that he was god. According to the Christian belief, St. Paul has mentioned about Melchizedekh that he was born without a father and mother. He says about him:

*"He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest for ever." (Hebrews: 7:3)*

He has expressly mentioned that Melchizedekh was like the Son of God in that he was born without father, rather he has no beginning or end of his life. Still, he has not been held by the Christians as god. This proves our assertion that the miraculous birth of the prophet 'Isa, alayhis salam, (Jesus Christ) cannot be held as evidence of his being god.

Similarly his being raised to the heavens cannot prove his divinity, neither from Islamic point of view, nor according to the Christian principles. The Islamic belief is that he was raised up by Allah Almighty. Had he been a god, he never needed someone to raise him up. As for Christian principles, it is claimed by the Bible that the prophet Elia or Elijah was raised to heaven long before Jesus Christ. The Bible says:

*"And as they still went on and talked, beheld, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it and cried.....and he saw him no more." (2 Kings, 2:11)*

Not only this, the Israelites believed that Elijah will descend down from the heaven at a particular time. That is why when the prophet Yahya, alayhis salam, (John the Baptist) appeared, they asked him, "Are you Elijah"? (See Gospel of John, 1:21).

So, despite the belief that Elijah was raised to heaven, the Christians do not believe that he was god.

Similarly, according to the Bible, prophet Enoch was also raised up to the heaven. The bible has said:

*"Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." (Genesis: 05:24)*

But no body has ever claimed that Enoch was god. This is another evidence that some one's being raised up to the heavens does not prove that he is god. Therefore, if the Muslims believe that 'Isa, alayhis salam, (the Jesus Christ) was raised to heaven, how can it be argued that this is an evidence of his being a god.

So far as the question of succession is concerned, no Muslim has ever claimed that the Holy Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him was a successor of Jesus Christ. He was the last in the chain of prophets that starts from the Holy Prophet Adam, alayhis salam, and ends on the Holy Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him. All of them preached the same fundamental beliefs of Allah's Oneness and the messengership of the prophets and the life after death. If someone from among them was raised to heaven, it cannot stop the following prophets from preaching these beliefs.

**Q.) 6. Because Muhammad was a mortal man, he was prone to sin and needed to repent of his sins to Allah. The Qur'an teaches that even the prophets of God, such as Abraham, Moses, David, etc. were guilty of sin. However, both the Qur'an and the Bible testify to the sinlessness of Jesus and teach that Jesus was faultless and holy and an example for all mankind. Surely this makes Jesus far superior to the other prophets, including Muhammad?**

A.) According to the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet all prophets are immune from committing sins. No prophet has ever committed a sinful act in the correct sense of the term. However, at times these prophets have done some acts that, though not included in the definition of sin in its exact sense, were not held by Allah as befitting the high station of prophet-hood. Such acts may be termed as slips and not sins. Being on a very high level of religious integrity, they took such slips also as their sins because of which they turned to Allah to repent. According to the Islamic belief based on the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah, this principle applies to all the prophets right from Adam, alayhis salam, upto the Holy Prophet Muhammad . The Holy prophet 'Isa, alayhis salam, (Jesus Christ) is no exception to this rule. Even according to the Bible, he refused to be called as 'good' or 'righteous'. The Gospel of Mark states:

*"And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me 'good'?" No one is 'good' but God alone." (Mark, 10:17,18)*

The event is also reported by Luke in his Gospel 18:18. Not only this, St. Paul has used for Jesus Christ the words that no Muslim can imagine about him. St. Paul says:

*"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us - for it is written. "Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree." (Galatians, 3:13)*

Hence, the comparison mentioned in your question is not valid, neither according to the Islamic beliefs nor on the basis of some Biblical texts.

**Q.) 7. Why do Muslims acknowledge Jesus' miraculous birth and sinless life, (something that they cannot attribute to any other prophet, including Muhammed) and yet they still deny the divinity of Christ?**

A.) Answer to this question has already been given in our answer to Question No.5. To sum up, neither the miraculous birth can prove the divinity of a person such as in the case of the Holy Prophet Adam, alayhis salam,, nor being faultless can prove the divinity of a person because, as explained earlier, all the prophets were immune from sins but no body can take them as God.

**Q.) 8. If Muslims believe that Islam is rooted in the Jewish and Christian religions, then why do they deny belief in a propitiatory sacrifice, when such prophets as Noah, Abraham, Jacob and Moses practiced sacrifice? Id-ulAdha...is it not an annual reminder to all Muslims of how Allah provided a ram as an innocent substitute in order to be sacrificed as a ransom, for Abraham's son?**

A.) Islam does not deny the propitiatory sacrifice as a form of worship. However, this is restricted to three days on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha during which period sacrifice has been held as the most favorable form of worship. It is true that it is a reminder of the sacrifice offered by the Prophet Ibrahim, alayhis salam. Therefore, whoever wishes to offer such a sacrifice, he can do it during these three days. Since every form of worship must conform to the rules prescribed for it by Allah it must be performed only on the times specified by Him. The sacrifice recognized by Islam is restricted to these three days on the basis of Allah's command.

**Q.) 9. Did Muhammad have the assurance that he was going to go to heaven?**

A.) Yes, the Holy prophet Muhammad peace be upon him has been assured by Allah Sabhanahu Taala that he would go to heaven. This is proved by many verses of the Holy Qur'an as well as through other revelations received by him and mentioned in different Ahadith.

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