

Creator entered creation!

**Moses heard
God in fire**

Confirmed by Quran and Torah
Surah 28:30, Exo 3:4-6

**Jesus is
God in flesh**

John 1:1,14, Phil 2:5-11

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Happy Christmas!

1. INTRODUCTION

The birth of Jesus Christ is celebrated on Christmas day.¹ The Bible teaches that he is God in the flesh.² What does that mean? The incident when Moses heard God speak from within the fire³ helps to answer this crucial question. It is described similarly in both, the Bible and the Quran.⁴ It is clear that the fire itself is not God. To believe so would be blasphemy. However, God chose to speak from within the fire to Moses. Similarly, Christians believe that the physical body of Jesus itself is not God. That would be blasphemy, since God is invisible, does not grow weary or hungry, or has limited knowledge like Jesus had while on earth. However, God chose to speak to the world and live within the sinless human nature, the body of Jesus. In that way the Creator entered His creation without becoming part of it.

One of the titles of Jesus is 'the word of God.'⁵ God's word, while distinct from God, cannot be separated from God Himself. God does not change. However, the Injeel teaches⁶ that God, besides (not instead of) His unchanging Being, took upon Himself the nature of a perfect, sinless human being (Jesus Christ) by hiding His glorious Being. He did this to save us from our sins by paying the penalty for it on our behalf.

Muslim objections

Ahmadiyya Muslims are told to believe their caliphs interpretation that Moses' encounter of God in the fire did only take place in a vision, not in reality.⁷ They are told that passages which contain miracles could likely describe a vision. However, three points need to be made in reply: Firstly, neither the Quran

¹ This article is not going to address the following issues which can be studied by clicking on the relevant links:

Is Christmas a Pagan festival: christianaction.org.za/index.php/articles/biblical-worldview/820-was-jesus-really-born-on-25-december answering-islam.org/pagan/christmas.html (all links were accessed on 24 December 2019)

Was Jesus born on 25th December: christianityexplained.net/to/atheists/science-confirms-bible/ christianaction.org.za/index.php/articles/biblical-worldview/821-but-jesus-wasn-t-born-on-december-25th-was-he

Should Muslims celebrate Christmas: answering-islam.org/authors/oskar/merry_christmas.html

² coldcasechristianity.com/writings/christmas-is-christmas-because-jesus-is-god/

³ It is found in the Torah, Exodus 3 and in these places in the Quran: Surah 28, Al-Qasas, verses 29-30 (see verse 30, called from inside the tree = "I-shajarati," Surah 37:146 "shajaraten" = plant), Surah 20, Ta-Ha, verses 10-48 (see verse 14), Surah 27, An-Naml, verses 7-11 (see verse 8, "at fire and around it", verse 10 "in my presence")

⁴ Here is proof from the Quran that the Bible has not changed: christianityexplained.net/to/muslims/muslims-read-tawrat-zabur-injeel/ christianityexplained.net/to/muslims/quran-confirms-injil-unchanged/ Here is proof that the Quran has changed. Since all truth belongs to God one can also cite truth found in the Quran without believing that all of the Quran is God's word: christianityexplained.net/?s=unchanged

⁵ John 1:1-14

⁶ Philippians 2:6-7

⁷ alislam.org/quran/view/?page=2442®ion=E54

nor the Bible mention that it was just a vision or a dream as they usually do when that is the case.⁸ Secondly, to hold such a view opens a dangerous door to classify many other stories as not having taken place in reality. Thirdly, Ahmadiyyas are told to believe, 'A miracle does not break any law. A miracle is the operation of an unseen law.'⁹ That means it can still have taken place in reality, not just in a vision. Perhaps the present caliph will get new directions about this matter.

Other Muslims hold the view that God's spirit, his presence, is in every person, at the highest level in his main prophets. While this is true in some ways, He is present in a most unique way in Jesus Christ as can be seen in the following passages from the Injeel:

'For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him (Christ)...' (Colossians 1:19)

'For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,...' (Colossians 2:9)

'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son ('monogenes', unique) that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' (John 3:16)

The word 'Son' of course is not to be understood in a physical but in metaphorical sense, like a well travelled man is called a 'son of the road'¹⁰, (waibni alssabeeli) in the Quran. Jesus' uniqueness is also shown in the virgin birth of Mary. Adam and Eve were created without a father and a mother because they were the very first humans. At the time of Jesus, however, God could have brought his birth about in the normal way, but he did not. Christians believe that there are a number of intellectual reasons why God wanted the virgin birth to happen:

Firstly, it highlights the supernatural, heavenly origin of Jesus. On one end of Jesus' life lies his supernatural conception and birth; on the other, his supernatural resurrection and his ascension to God's right hand. The first and the last are also believed by Muslims.

Secondly, the virgin birth shows that humanity needs saving that it can't bring about for itself. The fact that the human race couldn't produce its own saviour implies that its sin and guilt are profound and that its saviour must come from outside. Both, the Quran and the Bible tell us that God gave him the name 'Jesus' (= 'God saves', not 'we save').

Thirdly, in the virgin birth, God's initiative is on display. The angel did not ask Mary about her willingness. He announced, "*Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus*" (Luke 1:31). God didn't ask Mary for permission. He acted—gently but decisively—to save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

Fourthly, this virgin birth hints at the fully human and fully divine natures united in Jesus' one person. The entry of the eternal Word into the world didn't have to happen this way. But it did. Wayne Grudem writes, "God, in his wisdom, ordained a combination of human and divine influence in the birth of Christ, so that his full humanity would be evident to us from the fact of his ordinary human birth from a human mother, and his full deity would be evident from the fact of his conception in Mary's womb by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit."¹¹

Fifthly, the virgin birth is necessary for Jesus' sinless nature. Had he been born in the normal way, he would have been weak and prone to sin like we all are.

⁸ Surah 12:5, 8:43, Matthew 1:20-21; 2:13, etc.

⁹ alislam.org/question-answer/miracles-and-the-law-of-nature/

¹⁰ Surah 2:177

¹¹ Systematic Theology, page 530

Sixthly, the virgin conception was also necessary for Jesus to be the perfect, final sacrifice, provided by God himself.¹² In the past God started to make people right with him by giving a sacrifice himself:

Adam and Eve: Genesis 3:21, Surah 7:19-27; God provided clothing after they sinned, were naked and ashamed.

Abraham: Genesis 22, Surah 37:107: God provided himself with a mighty sacrifice, through which he ransomed Abraham's son.

Moses: Numbers 19:1-10, Surah 2:67-74: God commanded a sacrifice for the benefit of his people.

God is pure and holy. Sin brought death, guilt, fear and shame. Forgiveness and honour does not come through religion with 'good' deeds, only through a relationship with Jesus. Good deeds then follow as a sign of thankfulness.

Muslims are saying that God is strictly one. However, Jesus is uniquely called 'the Word of God', in both, the Bible and the Quran. There he is also called 'the Spirit of God'.¹³ Christians believe that the Word of God, even though distinct from God, cannot be separated from God Himself because God is and has always been with his Word. God does not change. The same is true about the Spirit of God, who is different from God, yet of the same essence. While we believe that God is one, there is diversity in the way described above in his unity. Similarly, God is believed by Muslims to have made himself known through the Quran, his allegedly eternal, uncreated word.

The Muslim understanding of the concept of Allah being one in the strict numerical sense of the word raises three questions:

i) 'How could Allah have been self sufficient and loving before the creation of angels and of the earth?' Since true love is always giving and Allah according to Islam is a lone God, according to logic there must have been a time where he was incomplete, where he could not have had the attribute of love. However, according to both the Quran and the Bible, God has always been and always will be perfect.

ii) 'Is Allah selfish?' Since love is described as having '*...no envy;...no high opinion of itself,....no pride;...no thought for itself...*' (1 Cor 13: 4-5) some people like sceptic John Stuart Mill, Mark Twain or Pablo Picasso have come to the conclusion that God is utterly selfish. They say that by asking us to worship nobody else but God, he himself commits the sin of seeking glory for himself only for which he condemns man. While some Muslims would say that Allah, the creator can be selfish if he wants, Bible believing Christians find the answer to this apparent contradiction in the Trinitarian nature of God. He shares his glory among himself.

iii) 'Is God limited?' Of course that cannot be, but he who thinks of God as an absolute unity where there is no room for multiplicity at all, is forced to believe in a god who does not know himself. Self-knowledge demands a distinction, a multiplicity, between knower and known. Self-consciousness, the recognition of a creature by itself as a 'self' can only exist in contrast with an 'other', a something which is not the self. Only a Trinitarian concept of God allows for such a vital distinction.¹⁴

¹² see desiringgod.org/articles/the-virgin-birth#fnref4

¹³ John 1 and Surah 4:171, 'Kalimat Allah'

¹⁴ christianityexplained.net/to/muslims/trinity-explained-muslims/

2. MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Indeed, they are disbelievers who say, 'Surely, Allah is none but the Messiah, son of Mary,....'
(Surah 5, Al-Ma'ida, verse 73a)

'Messiah' is one of the titles of Jesus. The Quran is right to speak out against this false teaching which Christians also condemn. The view described in that verse was held by a heretical group called the 'Patripassionists' during the early days of Christianity. They identified God with Jesus to the extent that they spoke of the sufferings of the Father at the cross.

Whereas Christians say the Messiah is God they do not say that God is the Messiah. It may be asked, 'What difference does it make?' This will become clear through the following illustration: It is all right for some to say that all Ahmadiyyas are Muslims but you would encounter great opposition if you were to say that all Muslims are Ahmadiyyas.

The words 'God' and 'Muslims' are more comprehensive, including more than the words 'Jesus' and 'Ahmadiyyas'. The teachings of Muslims in general and of Ahmadiyyas are essentially the same. Both believe in the five pillars of Islam. However, some aspects of their doctrines are different. Ahmadiyyas would also say that their role within Islam is different from the rest. They understand themselves to be a renewal movement that is very mission minded. In a similar way God and Jesus are essentially the same. However their roles are different as is explained in the doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁵

'How is it possible for God to die on the cross like Jesus did?'

The essence of God resides in all three aspects of the Trinity. When Jesus died on the cross, the essence of God did not cease to exist or operate during the time between his death and his resurrection. 'Furthermore, the spiritual nature of God is such that it does not become less by assuming a human nature in Jesus. In their doctrine of unity, the Muslims tend to conceive of unity as a mathematical unity. According to such thinking one orange plus one orange equals two oranges, etc. That is the order of mathematical and material unity. However, the order of spiritual unity when it comes to the nature (essence, form) of God is different. God's love does not become less because it is given to people. His essence is not reduced or divided when it abides in the Son and in the Holy Spirit along with the Father.

The question, therefore, of what happened to the Godhead while Jesus was in the grave is based on a wrong conception of the Trinity and the nature of God.'¹⁶

And when Allah will say, 'O Jesus, son of Mary, didst thou say to men, 'Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah, and he will answer, 'Holy art Thou. I could never say that to which I had nor right...'
(Surah 5, Al Ma'ida, verse 117)

Again, the Christians would wholeheartedly support the Quranic outcry against this heresy that was falsely promoted by some Christians during the first few centuries of Christianity. There is not one single verses in the Bible that would support the view that Mary is God! When reading Quranic verses as quoted before, one easily gets the false impression that a mere man has been made into God and worshipped as such. However, the Biblical teaching speaks about the very opposite.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ 'The Ahmadiyya Doctrine of God' by Henry J. Otten, Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies, Hyderabad, page 99

3. BELIEF THAT GOD APPEARED IN FLESH NOT ILLOGICAL

To prove the point let us think about an illustration. Nobody has ever seen a square circle. Since both belong to the same world of shapes it is logical that they are mutually exclusive. One can only have either a circle or a square but not a combination of both. However, it is perfectly reasonable to believe that a green circle exists since the combination is made up of a part belonging to the world of colours and of a part belonging to a completely different world of shapes.

Similarly God and man come from different worlds and therefore it is not against logic to say that Jesus is both God and man. The Creator can become part of his creation and yet still be above it since nothing is impossible to him. Therefore, according to Philippians 2:6-8 it is true to say that Christ was 100% God and 100% man at the same time. You ask, 'how can this be? Is that not a contradiction?'

The following illustration may help: I am the father of a very lively young boy. He loves to wrestle with me. It is quite a fun game. In order not to hurt him I deliberately do not use the 100% strength I have as an adult. I put myself on his level by taking on the 100% strength of a little boy his age. In other words, I am still fully me but I choose not to use my capacities for my little boys sake. After all, I love him and that is the only way I can show it to him in these circumstances.

Similarly God too has become a man in Jesus because he loves us. Article VIII of the 'Formula of Concord' takes up the same subject. Henry Otten summarizes it as follows: 'The essence of this Article is that Christ has both a human nature and a divine nature with each nature having the special attributes or characteristics of that nature. The two natures are combined in one person, the person of Jesus, in such a way that the attributes of each nature are not the property of that nature alone, but belong to the entire person.'

Whenever Jesus performed any action, it was not just one of the natures which acted, but the whole person. Thus it can be said that the person of Jesus was hungry, became weary, and slept, while it can also be said that the person of Jesus knew what was in man and stilled the storm on the lake (Joh 2:25; Mat 8:26)

Others may say that God becoming a man in Jesus would somehow be degrading to God. Athanasius, one of the early church fathers answered: 'Does not the mind of man pervade his entire being, and yet find expression through one part only, namely, the tongue? Does any say on that account that the mind has degraded itself?'

Athanasius continued: 'Some then may ask, why did He not manifest Himself by means of other and nobler parts of creation, and use some nobler instrument, such as sun, or moon or stars or fire or air, instead of mere man? The answer is this. The Lord did not come to make a display. He came to heal and to teach suffering men. For one who wanted to make a display the thing would have been just to appear and dazzle the beholders.'

But for Him who came to heal and to teach the way was not merely to dwell here, but to put Himself at the disposal of those who needed Him, and to be manifested according as they could bear it, not vitiating the value of the Divine appearing by exceeding their capacity to receive it.¹⁷

As seen so far reason is not against the thought that Jesus is God in human flesh!

Among all the founders of the main religions in this world Jesus is the only one that claimed to be God in human flesh! In other religions the teachings, not the teacher are most important. However, when it comes to Christianity we find Jesus Christ, the teacher, at its very centre!

¹⁷ 'The Incarnation of the Word of God', Mac Millan, New York, 1946, page 78

Whereas others teach about the way that leads to truth and life, Jesus does more and makes this incredible statement:

Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.' (John 14:6-7)

Why is Christianity so unique? Because Jesus Christ is the only teacher that demonstrated all his teachings in a perfect way. Naturally, if Jesus is God in human flesh it follows that he is sinless. The Bible¹⁸, the Quran¹⁹ and the Hadith²⁰ confirm this truth. It is universally accepted by Christians and all Muslims except the Ahmadiyyas.

Furthermore Christianity is unique among all religions because it teaches, based on the Jewish Old Testament scriptures, that all men are sinners by nature. He does not just become a sinner if and when he commits a sinful act.

'The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.' (Gen 6:5, also 8:21, Psalm 51:5, 58:3, Jeremiah 17:9, Eph. 2:3-5)

The doctrine of original sin does not mean that human beings are incapable of doing anything good (Romans 2:14 and Acts 10:31). However, it means that we commit wrong things inevitably, unavoidably, because it is our nature to do wrong. From the polluted spring of our hearts flow streams of contaminated behaviour.

4. CONCLUSION

The objections to the fact that Jesus is indeed God who became a human being are based on misunderstandings. It has been shown that this important Christian doctrine is not outside the realm of logic. Moreover, the Bible clearly teaches the profound truth that God entered humanity. Jesus said:

'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.' (Matthew 11:28-30)

Will you accept his invitation and come to him in prayer? Will you confess your sins to him and ask him for forgiveness? Your eternal life in heaven depends on it!

For questions/ comments or a free Bible contact:

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¹⁸ 1 Peter 1:19, 2:22; 1 John 2:1; 2 Cor. 5:21; Hebrews 4:15

¹⁹ Surah 19, Maryam, verse 20

²⁰ Mishkat, book XXIII, chapter XII