

## Jesus in Islam

Muslims respect and venerate Jesus Christ. They consider him to be one of God's greatest messengers to humankind. The Qur'an re-affirms his miraculous birth and his miraculous abilities. Furthermore, his mother Mary is regarded as one of the most pure and exalted women of all creation. As the Qur'an says:

"Behold! the angel said: 'God has chosen you and purified you and has chosen you above the women of all nations. O Mary! God gives you the good news of a word from Him, whose name shall be Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, honored in this world and the hereafter, and one of those brought near to God" (3:42).

Islam regards its teachings to be a re-affirmation and culmination of the teachings of previous monotheistic religions like Judaism and Christianity. Hence, all Muslims believe in Moses and Jesus as Prophets of God. Prophet Muhammad was commanded to recite in the Qur'an:

"Say, we believe in God  
and that which was revealed unto us,  
and that which was revealed unto Abraham and Ishmael  
and Isaac and Jacob, and the tribes  
and that which was entrusted unto Moses and Jesus  
and the Prophets from their Lord  
We make no distinction between any of them  
and unto Him we have submitted" (3:84).

Islam is the final religion revealed to human beings through the last Prophet who was called Muhammad. He was born in Mecca (in Saudi Arabia) in the year 570 A.D. Muhammad was a very truthful and honest person. He was also very pious and detested the moral decadence of his society. At the age of forty, God asked him, through the angel Gabriel, to proclaim the religion of Islam publicly. God's message to humanity was delivered in the Qur'an which was revealed to Muhammad. The Qur'an, which is the holy book for Muslims, contains 114 chapters (called Suras). Muslims believe that it is the pure word of God, unadulterated over 14 centuries. It deals with issues which affect human beings in their earthly lives; issues like piety, upright human conduct, worship, the creation of a just and virtuous society and the practice of ethics.

Islam has two major schools of thought - the Shi'i and the Sunni. The Sunnis believe that the community selected its own leader after Prophet Muhammad's death whereas the Shi'as believe that the Prophet had, by divine will, appointed 'Ali to be his successor. Leadership is thus divinely designated. It is to be noted that both the Sunnis and the Shi'as are united in their

major beliefs i.e., they believe in the same God, the same book, the same Prophets and pray in the same direction. The differences are mainly theological and jurisprudential.