

Jumuah

Jesus, the Word : part 1

Every morning around 4:30 we hear the first call to pray of the day. In our neighborhood we also hear, after the second daily call to prayer mid-morning, the imam talking by loudspeaker for almost an hour. It's his daily teaching, broadcast for the benefit of Muslims in the area who don't walk to the mosque, and I suspect the imam also believes it is for the benefit of non-Muslims.

Muslims are worshippers in the other of the world's great "missionary" or "evangelistic" faith. Both Islam and Christianity have a vision of becoming the dominant faith in all the world. The differences between their vision and our vision of "dominance" – how it is attained and maintained – are radically different. But both involve the authoritative Word of God.

Today we resume our series on Christian Witness Among Muslims with this focus on Jesus, the Word of God. We start with what is their thinking, so we can understand better how to approach and present this topic:

Understanding your Muslim friend's mindset:

God is One and Most Great. Remember that the great sin in Islam is to worship other gods besides God. Do not be surprised if Muslims are suspicious of your testimony of Jesus, wondering whether you are making Him into a second god.

Also, although Muslims can think of God as "near," the main emphasis is that He is far above us, completely different and separate from people. So if you use such language as "God became man" or "Jesus is both man and God," Muslims may feel you are saying something impossible or meaningless.

God speaks. Islam teaches that God speaks to man-through angels and prophets. God's Word accomplishes anything that He wants. Most Muslim theologians say that the Word (kalam) of God is an eternal attribute or quality of God. It was never created, but has come into the world in the form of Holy Scriptures, especially the Qur'an. This is something like the idea of John 1:1, although not exactly the same. Roughly speaking, one can say that Muslims believe: "In the beginning was the Word of God ... and the Word became a book."

The Word of God (Kalimat-Ullah). This is a popular Muslim title for Jesus: "God's word which He conveyed unto Mary" (Qur'an 4:171). But, Muslims regard Jesus as a created being only. Therefore, they may not regard Jesus as the Word of God in the same way that the Gospel of John understands Jesus to be. Yet, there is a similarity, which makes it easier to use this title of Christ with Muslims.

What the Qur'an says about Jesus as *Kalimat-Ullah* acts as a great entry point in our Muslim friend's heart and thinking. Next week we'll start the steps for Christian Witness along this topic. Meanwhile, may the true Word of God bless you with an increasing measure of His Spirit, His burden and passion for lost Muslims, and anointed intercession for these millions for whom He died!

References: Taken and adapted from "Christian Witness Among Muslims" by Voice of the Martyrs, © 1994, pp. 69-70.



Will you join us in praying for "our" mosque and all Muslims across S.E. Asia today? You are God's prayer agents. Thank you for your faithful intercession with and for us and the 962 million Asian Muslims who need to hear the True Word, Jesus Christ!

Jumuah

Jesus, the Word: part 2

Last week we started looking at Jesus as Kalimat-Ullah, the Word of God. This builds on topics from last year showing the uniqueness of Jesus [To go back and review these topics, check out the Jumuah page at www.cmocanada.org]. He lived and died as a man, yet did and said things that made Him different from any other man. Then who is Jesus? We can agree with our Muslim friends that God speaks to mankind and we will also bear witness to them that the eternal Word of God came into the world as a human being, Jesus Christ.

Discussion With a Muslim Friend

Imagine with me sharing the following with your Muslim friend: I am happy that you already know much about Jesus the Messiah. The Qur'an says He was born of a woman, just as we have been, and "he and his mother both ate food." Yes, the Bible, too, teaches that Jesus lived a real human life among men. He grew up as our children do. He ate and drank and experienced joy, pain, suffering, and temptation—although never falling into sin. He became a great religious teacher and leader. Muslims call Him a messenger and prophet of God.

Yet there is something more about Jesus in the Bible. Things happened in His life that make Him different from any other prophet. These lead us to believe that Jesus was a man, yes, but also more than man.

His miraculous birth was a "sign to all mankind." John the Baptist, himself a prophet, pointed to Jesus as someone far greater than himself. Jesus announced, "The Kingdom of God is at hand." With His coming a new age had dawned.

This new age was the fulfillment of all that God had promised through the prophets of Israel. Through Jesus, blind people received their sight, lepers were healed, the dead were raised to life, sinners were forgiven and converted, and the poor, despised people heard the good news of God's love. Jesus revealed that God is our loving Father. A person's first duty is not to observe many religious rules, but to repent: that is, to turn from evil to God, to love God and love one's neighbor.

But men rejected Jesus Christ. They seized Him and killed Him. Yet that was not the end. Jesus' death did not mean He was defeated. God made His death to be a sacrifice by which Jesus took away our sins and gave us peace with God. God also raised Jesus from the dead in victory over all the powers of evil. Jesus lives! To those who trust Him He gives a share in His victory over evil.

After His resurrection, Jesus said these astonishing words: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me ...And remember, I am with you always, to the close of the age." On the Last Day, the Lord Jesus Christ will be the judge [Matthew 28:18-20]. He will tread all evil under His feet and will fully establish the Kingdom of God the Father [Matthew 25:31-46; I Corinthians 15:24-28].



Much of New Testament biblical witness is one on one and small group sharing, not large group and/or formal times of preaching. Are you taking time (making time?) to intentionally befriend, love and share with those who are not yet believers (especially Muslims) in your life? Is this a life change the Holy Spirit is leading you in? You will be challenged and blessed as you do!

All of this is the clear testimony of our Bible, setting Jesus on a different level from the rest of humanity. But the Bible says just as clearly that God is one and no other is to be worshipped besides Him. How then shall we describe Jesus?

Many, both Christians and Muslims, have found the answer in the first verses of John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." So when we read in the Bible about "the Word of God," it does not mean another thing besides God. "The Word" means God Himself in action, God expressing Himself.

The Gospel according to John goes on to explain who Jesus Christ actually is. The eternal Word came into the world, was born and lived as a human being, humbling Himself by coming to our level, showing us the glory of God and bringing us salvation. "And the Word became flesh (human being) and lived among us ... full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Jesus the Messiah is the Word of God. This thought is not strange to Muslims.

We should add: We are sorry if we Christians have sometimes given you the false impression that we make Jesus into another god besides God. This is not what we mean. We mean that God's eternal Word came to live a human life among people, as the Messiah Jesus. God so revealed Himself in His Word, Jesus Christ, that we know God as our Heavenly Father and pray to Him "through Jesus Christ our Lord." By believing in Jesus, we put our trust in God. By honoring Jesus, we honor God's Word and we honor God [John 12:44,45].

How do you think your Muslim friend will respond to what is shared above?

While there is some of this they know [starting from where they're at in their understanding], there is much that is new and will challenge their thinking, too. And that's good; we need to challenge their thinking with new, Biblical information. That's what witness is all about—sharing about Jesus with those who don't know.

I'm sure it will lead to rich conversations with your friend. Next week we'll look at the practical hints based on this conversation that will help you and your Muslim friend as you explore this topic together.

Meanwhile, never forget or neglect praying for your Muslim friend. It is the Holy Spirit who will convict and convince them of the Truth. Our role is to love and witness. His is to touch the heart where we cannot. We simply partner with Him!

References: Taken and adapted from "Christian Witness Among Muslims" by Voice of the Martyrs, © 1994, pp. 70-72.



Like a refreshing drink after a long hard journey, so your prayer support and encouragements have been to us through this year. Thank you for being our prayer and support team. You are vital team members with us in God's calling, and *greatly* appreciated.

Jumuah Friday Prayer Network is a weekly prayer catalyst & equipping newsletter. It serves to build bridges of love and understanding between Christians and Muslims. To join or to cancel your subscription, please email us at: jumuah.prayer@swissmail.org

Jumuah

Jesus, the Word : part 3

Have you ever watched with dismay someone in the news utilize legal processes to get out of upholding their word? Doesn't it just gall you? It does me.

It seems often today we've lost the integrity of the days in which a man (or woman) was "a man of his word," and "my handshake is my bond." Now if the second sayings meaning is not familiar, it was from the era before written contracts. If a man (or woman) shook hands upon making a verbal agreement, it was as good as a written contract. And your reputation was built upon the notoriety of your faithfulness to uphold (or not) your word.

Just think about it—if you said it aloud, it was as if your words were the same as your very person.

I trust this will set the stage for your thinking as we continue looking at Jesus, *Kallimat-Ullah—the Word of God*.

Practical Hints on this Discussion

■ Take a simple illustration from human speech. Where was my word before it came out of my mouth? You may say it was in my heart or brain. But if I call a doctor to cut open my heart or my head, can he find my word in there? It seems, mysteriously, that I and my word are the same and cannot be separated. I am in my word and my word is in me. Whatever my word does (for example, it may please or annoy you), it is I who am doing it by my word. So whatever the Word of God does, God Himself is doing it.

Apply this to mark 2:1-12. How could the Son of Man (Jesus) have authority to forgive sins (verses 5, 7, 10)? How can the Son of Man be judge on the Last Day (Matthew 25:31-33)? This is possible because Jesus is the Word of God. What He does is the action of God Himself.

■ Muslims call Jesus "the spirit of God." We are glad that they want to give Him such honour. But what do they mean by calling Jesus by this name? The Bible clearly states that Jesus is a human being, flesh and blood. It also clearly indicates that God's Spirit was with Jesus and filled Him (Mark 1:1-10; Luke 4:1-19).

■ Do not jump into controversies about Christian doctrine. First introduce the life and teachings of Jesus, with prayer that God Himself will show your friends who Jesus is.

When asked the direct question, "Who is this Jesus?", answer in the language of the Bible rather than in the language of Church creeds or the popular Christian terminology of today. The creeds were written to instruct Christians and to warn them against heresies. They are less suitable for explaining the Gospel to non-Christians initially. Moreover, since many Muslims feel that the Bible (especially the Gospel accounts) has authority, they may respect what you say even more, if it is clearly based on the Bible.

Language such as "second person of the Trinity," "being of one substance with the Father," and "divine and human natures of Christ" will seldom help you explain your beliefs to Muslims.



Can you and your spoken word really be separated? Are they not something sent out from your heart and mind as an essential expression of who you are? Is this not God's wisdom in calling Jesus the Word?! Share the Word with your Muslim friends and let Him touch their hearts and minds!

■ So far in these discussions we have presented Christ without once calling Him the Son of God. This does not mean that we are concealing or compromising on Christ's Sonship—we'll get into that in our next topical segment. It simply means that, in love for our friends, we want to start our witness with the language that they will more readily understand.

This is the Biblical method of witness! Different books of the New Testament present Christ in different ways. Some books speak repeatedly of Jesus as the Son of God; other books (Acts and Revelation) rarely use the title, and still others use it not at all (Timothy, Titus, 1 Peter).

■ Practice telling who Jesus is along the lines of these practical hints. For the moment, don't call him "Son of God" or "God."

■ As we think of the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us remember His warning: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

As we progress through these topics and you begin or continue speaking to your Muslim friends, I think the need for lots of prayer becomes more and more evident. We are dependent on the Holy Spirit, and He has decided to wait on us for our involvement. We are the ones who turn the door knob and open the door. The Holy Spirit goes through the open door of our intercession and accomplishes His will—the drawing, revelation and loving conviction that brings our Muslim friends into faith in *Isa, Kallimat-Ullah*—Jesus, the Word of God! God bless you as you pray!

References: Taken and adapted from "Christian Witness Among Muslims" by Voice of the Martyrs, © 1994, pp. 73-75.