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**Jesus in Christianity and Islam**   
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By:** [**Dr. Habib Siddiqui**](http://www.islamicity.com/articles/action.lasso.asp?-Search=search&-database=Services&-Table=Magazine&-noresultserror=error.asp&-Response=search.asp&-MaxRecords=10&-SortField=Pdate&-SortOrder=Descending&-op=eq&PFlag=X&-op=cn&S=I&-op=cn&search=Dr.%20Habib%20Siddiqui) **IslamiCity\* -**

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In his introduction to Muhammad Ata ur-Rahim's book, Jesus - Prophet of Islam, Shaykh Abd al Qadir wrote: "To the Muslims, Christianity is a historical reality based on a metaphysical fiction. Because its foundations are mythical and invented, as opposed to existential and revealed, it appears to us as a locked system of negation. Declaring a doctrine of love, it established inquisition. Preaching pacifism, it enacts the crusades. Calling to poverty, it constructs the vast edifice of wealth called the Church. Declaring mysteries,' it involves itself in politics. Reformation, far from resolving the contradictions, revealed them further. Declaring the priesthood of all believers, they established a priesthood, but with a shift of focus by which the inherent insanity in the Christian fiction began to emerge. Church and state are held to be separate. What we discover is that in fact they have been one É from the beginning of the Church's bloody history. Today Christianity as a body of metaphysics is frankly non-existent. No one is more aware of this than the Vatican."  
  
To appreciate the Shaykh's analysis one simply has to look at what Christianity has become and compare that with what might have been preached by Isa (Alayhis Salam: peace be upon him) a.k.a. Jesus himself. There is so much incongruity in this odd relationship that Isa (AS) has simply been metamorphosed or replaced into a new identity by Christian fathers, beginning with Paul of Tarsus, who may rightly be called the real founder of this new religion that we call Christianity today. For our purpose here, we shall analyze only the issues concerning Christmas, baptism and historicity of Jesus before we take a look at how the Qur'an describes Isa (AS) - the son of Maryam.  
  
**Christmas**  
  
Consider, for instance, the Christmas Day. Every year millions of Christians celebrate December 25 as the day Jesus, the son of Mary, was born. Jesus in believed to have been born in 1 C.E. (Common Era). However, the Christian gospel accounts don't support this common myth. So how did this celebration originate? Before we find that answer, it may be proper to discuss Jesus's year of birth.  
  
The year of Jesus's birth was determined by Dionysius Exiguus, a Scythian monk, abbot of a Roman monastery.[[1]](http://www.islamicity.com/articles/articles.asp?ref=IC0912-4017&p=3#[1]) His calculation in ca. 533 C.E. was based on the following information:  
  
a. In the pre-Christian Roman era years were counted from ab urbe condita ("the founding of the City" [Rome]). Thus 1 AUC signified the year Rome was founded.  
b. Dionysius received a tradition that the Roman emperor Augustus reigned 43 years, and was followed by the emperor Tiberius.  
c. Luke 3:1 and 3:23 indicate that when Jesus turned 30 years old, it was the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar's reign.  
d. If Jesus was 30 years old in Tiberius's reign, then he lived 15 years under Augustus (placing Jesus's birth in Augustus's 28th year of reign).  
e. Augustus took power in 727 AUC. Therefore, Dionysius put Jesus's birth in 754 AUC, which is commonly now equated as 1 C.E.   
  
Unfortunately, for Dionysius, Luke 1:5 places Jesus's birth in the days of Herod, and Herod died in 750 AUC (4 B.C.E.) - four years before the year in which Dionysius places Jesus birth. Such contradictions within the Gospel accounts about Jesus's birth year made Joseph A. Fitzmyer - Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at the Catholic University of America, member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, and former president of the Catholic Biblical Association - writing in the Catholic Church's official commentary on the New Testament, to comment about the date of Jesus' birth, "Though the year [of Jesus birth] is not reckoned with certainty, the birth did not occur in AD 1." According to Fitzmyer, Dionysius was wrong; he had miscalculated. Fitzmyer guesses that Jesus was probably born in 3 BCE.   
  
Still, the birth-year remains unsettled when we consider the Biblical tradition that Jesus was supposed to be no more than two years old when Herod ordered the slaughter of all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under (Matthew 2:16). Herod died before April 12, 4 BCE. So, if the Biblical story is to be believed, Jesus must have been born before 4 BCE. This has led some Christians to revise the birth year to 6 - 4 BCE. Even then, the problem is not settled when we notice that Jesus was supposed to have been born during the census of (Syrian Governor) Quirinius (Luke 2:2). This census took place after Herod's son Archelaus was deposed in 6 CE, ten years after Herod's death. So, one way to accommodate competing versions of Jesus's birth will be to place the year somewhere between 6 BCE and 6 CE or shortly thereafter.  
  
Now let's discuss the date of Jesus's birth. Interestingly, the DePascha Computus, an anonymous document believed to have been written in North Africa around 243 CE, placed Jesus's birth on March 28. Clement, a bishop of Alexandria (d. ca. 215 CE), thought that Jesus was born on November 18. Based on historical records, Fitzmyer, however, guessed that Jesus's birth occurred on September 11, 3 BCE, which is probably closer to the actual than any other Christian claims, especially when we recognize that in Luke 2:8 we are told that when Jesus was born "there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night". December is too cold for such shepherd activities in either Bethlehem or Nazareth of Palestine (places associated with birthplace of Jesus).[[2]](http://www.islamicity.com/articles/articles.asp?ref=IC0912-4017&p=3#[2]) By mid-October shepherds would bring their flocks from the mountainsides and fields to protect them from the cold, rainy season that followed. As can be seen from the above, none of these dates agrees with December 25. So, how did this date come to be celebrated later on as Jesus's birth date?  
  
For this answer we have to dig into the Roman history. In ancient Rome, the pagan Romans used to celebrate the Brumalia on December 25 following the Saturnalia midwinter festival in December 17-24 to mark the sun's new birth from its solstice. During this period, Roman courts were closed, and Roman law dictated that no one could be punished for any evil deed. The festival began when Roman authorities chose "an enemy of the Roman people" to represent the "Lord of Misrule." Each Roman community selected a victim whom they forced to indulge in food and other physical pleasures throughout the week. At the Saturnalia festival's conclusion, December 25th (Brumalia), Roman authorities believed that by sacrificing this person they were essentially destroying the forces of darkness. We are told by Lucian, the ancient Greek writer, poet and historian (in his dialogue entitled Saturnalia), that during this festival, in addition to human sacrifice, other customs included: widespread intoxication; going from house to house while singing naked; rape and other sexual license; and consuming human-shaped biscuits.   
  
In the 4th century when Roman emperors adopted Christianity as the state religion, the pagan festivals of Saturnalia and Brumalia were too deeply entrenched in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence. Since no particular date was mentioned in the gospel accounts, the date of Jesus's birth was set by the Church under Roman Emperor Justinian in 354 CE to coincide with the last day of the pagan midwinter festival (i.e., December 25). This was a clever move by the Church that allowed pagans to accept the new faith without making too much compromise. By then, Emperor Constantine had already recognized Sunday, which had been the day of pagan sun worship. The influence of the pagan Manichaeism, which identified the "Son of God" with the physical Sun, gave these pagans of the 4th century, now turning over wholesale to Christianity, their excuse for calling their pagan festival date of December 25 (birthday of the Sun-god) - the birthday of the "Son of God."

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From the above brief analysis, it is clear that today's Christians got their Christmas from the Roman Catholics who got it from the pagan Romans. The pagan Romans in turn got it from ancient Egypt where the cult of Osiris was vibrant. The Egyptian mythology tells us that Osiris, the king of ancient Egypt, was married to Queen Isis. The myth described Osiris as having been killed by his brother Set who wanted Osiris's throne. Isis briefly brought Osiris back to life by use of a spell that she learned from her father. This spell gave her time to become pregnant by Osiris before he again died. (In another version of the story, Isis is impregnated by divine fire.) Isis later gave birth to Horus. As such, since Horus was born after Osiris's resurrection, Horus came to be known as a representation of new beginnings and the vanquisher of the evil Set. This combination, Osiris-Horus, was therefore a life-death-rebirth deity, and thus associated with the new harvest each year. Afterward, Osiris became known as the Egyptian god of the dead, Isis became known as the Egyptian goddess of the children, and Horus became known as the Egyptian god of the sky or the "divine son of the heaven".   
  
There is a remarkable similarity between the myths of Osiris and Jesus. Osiris, the god of the afterlife, was reborn as Horus, the son of Isis. Egyptologist E.A. Wallis Budge finds possible parallels in Osiris's resurrection story with those found in Christianity: "In Osiris the Christian Egyptians found the prototype of Christ, and in the pictures and statues of Isis suckling her son Horus, they perceived the prototypes of the Virgin Mary and her child.[[3]](http://www.islamicity.com/articles/articles.asp?ref=IC0912-4017&p=3#[3])" Biblical scholar Professor George Albert Wells asserts that Osiris dies and is mourned on the first day and that his resurrection is celebrated on the third day with the joyful cry "Osiris has been found".[[4]](http://www.islamicity.com/articles/articles.asp?ref=IC0912-4017&p=3#[4]) In his book - Human Sacrifices, anthropologist and historian Nigel Davies asserts that "the agony of Osiris was a sacrifice with a universal message. As the one who died to save the many, and who rose from the dead, he was the first of a long line that has deeply affected man's view of this world and the next." He further argues that the passion and sacrifice of Jesus Christ is linked conceptually to Osirian and other traditions in the Ancient world.[[5]](http://www.islamicity.com/articles/articles.asp?ref=IC0912-4017&p=3#[5])

After the death of Osiris, Isis propagated the doctrine of the survival of Osiris as a sprit being. She claimed that a full-grown evergreen tree had sprung from a dead tree stump, thus symbolizing the springing forth of the dead Osiris unto new life. She claimed that on each anniversary of his birth, Osiris would visit the evergreen tree and leave gifts upon it. December 25 was the birthday of Osiris, reborn as the son Horus. That explains how Christmas got its origin. Over the generations Osiris came to be known as Baal, the Sun-god, amongst the Phoenicians, and as Jupiter in ancient Rome. The names varied in different countries and languages, but the worship of this false god continued.   
  
According to Stephen Nissenbaum, professor history at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, "In return for ensuring massive observance of the anniversary of the Savior's birth by assigning it to this resonant date, the Church for its part tacitly agreed to allow the holiday to be celebrated more or less the way it had always been." The earliest Christmas holidays were celebrated by drinking, sexual indulgence, singing naked in the streets (a precursor of modern caroling), etc. Since Jews were identified as Christ-killers, for amusement of the public, Jews were forced by the Catholic Church to race naked through the streets of Rome. An eyewitness account from Pope Paul II's reign in 1466 reports, "Before they were to run, the Jews were richly fed, so as to make the race more difficult for them and at the same time more amusing for spectators. They ranÉ amid Rome's taunting shrieks and peals of laughter, while the Holy Father stood upon a richly ornamented balcony and laughed heartily.[[6]](http://www.islamicity.com/articles/articles.asp?ref=IC0912-4017&p=3#[6])" As part of the Christmas carnival throughout the 18th and 19th centuries CE, rabbis of the ghetto in Rome were forced to wear clownish outfits and march through the city streets to the jeers of the crowd, pelted by a variety of missiles. When in1836 the Jewish community of Rome sent a petition to Pope Gregory XVI begging him to stop the annual Saturnalia abuse of the Jewish community, he responded, "It is not opportune to make any innovation.[[7]](http://www.islamicity.com/articles/articles.asp?ref=IC0912-4017&p=3#[7])" On December 25, 1881, Christian leaders whipped the Polish masses into Anti-Jewish frenzies that led to riots across the country. In Warsaw twelve Jews were brutally murdered, huge numbers maimed, and many Jewish women were raped. Two million rubles worth of property was destroyed by frenzied Christians.[[8]](http://www.islamicity.com/articles/articles.asp?ref=IC0912-4017&p=3#[8])

Because of its known pagan origin, Christmas was banned by the Puritans and its observance was illegal in Massachusetts between 1659 and 1681. But nowadays the festivity is widely celebrated wherever Christian community lives. In Egypt, the Coptic Christians celebrate the Christmas day on the 7th of January, corresponding to the 29th of "Kiahk" - a Coptic month.[[9]](http://www.islamicity.com/articles/articles.asp?ref=IC0912-4017&p=3#[9]) December 25 - Christmas Day - has been a federal holiday in the United States since 1870. Popular customs include exchanging gifts, decorating Christmas trees, attending church, sharing meals with family and friends and, of course, waiting for Santa Claus to come. Christmas around the world has become more of a cultural and commercial phenomenon than a sacred religious one.   
  
In spite of its pagan origin and associated make-beliefs and customs, Christmas is observed by faithful Christians around the world as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, a spiritual leader whose teachings form the basis of their religion.

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**Baptism and historicity of Jesus**   
  
Jesus was supposed to have been baptized by John the Baptist in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius, the Roman emperor (i.e., in 28-29 CE), when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea (26-36 CE). According to Luke, this also happened when Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene and Annas and Caiaphas were high priests (Luke 3:1-2). Oddly again, Lysanias ruled Abilene from ca. 40 BCE until he was executed in 36 BCE by Mark Antony, more than six decades before Tiberius ruled and nearly three decades before Jesus was born!   
What are we to make of such flaws in narratives about Jesus, written by people who supposedly were inspired by the Holy Ghost? What part of Jesus are we to accept and what part to reject? The Biblical narratives on Jesus confuse so many historical periods that there is no way of reconciling them with history. Truly, much of Jesus's words preserved in the gospels reflect more the theology of the early Church rather than the historical Jesus himself.   
  
There is even a debate within academia about the historicity of Jesus. For surely, outside the Christian Bible, esp. the canonical Gospels and other Letters or Epistles, which now comprise the so-called New Testament (NT), there is hardly any historical proof of his mere existence. The so-called canonical gospels -- all pseudepigraphical works -- disappointingly, are not even eyewitness accounts. The two narrators - Mark and Luke - never met Jesus. The Matthewan gospel is recognized to have been mostly borrowed or copied from the Markan gospel. As such, the real disciple Matthew could not have been its original writer. The Johnian gospel could not have been written by the beloved disciple John, for dead man cannot write. [John the disciple was martyred during the reign of King Agrippa (d. 44 CE), while the gospel bearing his name was written after 98 CE.] There are, however, documents or books, which form the Christian Apocrypha (or forbidden books), that describe Jesus differently. The description there is so much at odds with what has become Christianity today that the Trinitarian Church considers these Apocryphal documents (e.g., the Gospel of Barnabas) as being forged.   
  
Outside the Christian sources, often the Jewish Talmud is cited as a source for Jesus's historicity. However, in the Talmud (esp. information from Tosefta and Baraitas writings) a closer scrutiny suggests two individuals with some resemblance. They are Yeishu ha-Notzri (also known as Yeishu ben Pandeira), the sorcerer and ben-Stada (also called ben-Sotera or ben-Sitera), the bastard. These two persons are considered to have been born ca. 100 BCE, during the Hashmonean dynasty [ha-Notzri was a contemporary of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perachyah (c. 100 BCE)], while the NT portrays a Jesus that was born either before 4 BC (Herod died) or around 6 CE (census of Quirinus).

Apart from pre-Islamic religious writings, Jesus's historicity is attributed to the writings of Josephus (The Jewish Antiquities) and the Annals of Tacitus. There is serious doubt that Josephus (37-100 CE) mentioned anything about Jesus himself. Many modern scholars of the Bible consider such inclusions to be a Christian forgery of the early centuries (ca. 320 CE) since Josephus fails to mention Jesus in the other book - Jewish War. The first church historian to attribute Jesus's existence in Josephus's writing was Eusebius of Caesaria (ca. 260-339 CE). He is considered unreliable, esp. since none of his predecessors including Papias and Origen (ca. 185 - 254 CE) mentioned anything about Jesus's existence in Josephus's works.

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The Roman historian Tacitus (56-117 CE) in his Annals described how Nero blamed Christians for the fire of Rome in 64 CE. Tacitus mentioned that the word "Christians" originated from "christos", who was executed by Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius. But he was not an eyewitness to the event, neither did he ever present his sources for such information; his statement was merely based on the unconfirmed claims being made by the Pauline Christians themselves Among all the Roman historians he is considered the least reliable. As such, modern scholarship has serious problem on authenticity of his narration regarding Jesus.

The worst problem with Jesus's historicity is the lack of cohesion among the so-called inspired writers of the 29 books that now form the canon of the NT..[[10]](http://www.islamicity.com/articles/articles.asp?ref=IC0912-4017&p=3#[10])There is no agreement between the writers of the pseudepigraphic gospels as to when 'Isa (AS) was born, who were his forefathers, who comprised his twelve disciples, what he truly preached, and what really had happened in the end.

It is in this light (something that Muslim scholars have always maintained) that real Jesus - his life and mission - could only be understood from the Islamic sources. To them, it is the sole vantage point, from which it can be surveyed, because Islam is, after all, the inheritor of Christianity. In Islam, he is revered as a Prophet and mighty Messenger of God.[[11]](http://www.islamicity.com/articles/articles.asp?ref=IC0912-4017&p=3#[11])

**'Isa in the Qur'an**  
  
Let us now look at what the Qur'an says about this mysterious personality, 'Isa (AS), the son of Maryam (Mary).  
  
**Birth:**  
  
And make mention of Maryam in the Scripture, when she had withdrawn from her people to a chamber looking East, and had chosen seclusion from them. Then We sent unto her Our Spirit and it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man. She said: Lo! I seek refuge in the Beneficent One from you, if you are God fearing. He said: I am only a messenger of your Lord, that I may bestow on you a faultless son. She said: How can I have a son when no mortal has touched me, neither have I been unchaste? He said, So (it will be). Your Lord says, ÒIt is easy for Me. And (it will be) that We may make of him a revelation for mankind and a mercy from Us, and it is a thing ordained. And she conceived him, and withdrew with him to a far place. And the pangs of childbirth drove her unto the trunk of a palm tree. She said: Oh, would that I had died before this and had become a thing of nothing, forgotten! Then (one) cried unto her from below her, saying: Grieve not! Your Lord has placed a rivulet beneath you. And shake the trunk of the palm tree toward you; you will cause ripe dates to fall upon you. So eat and drink and be consoled. And if you meet any mortal, say: Lo! I have vowed a fast unto the Beneficent, and may not speak this day to any mortal. Then she brought him to her own folk, carrying him. They said: O Maryam! You have come with an amazing thing. Oh sister of Harun! Your father was not a wicked man nor was your mother a harlot. Then she pointed to him. They said: How can we talk to one who is in the cradle, a young boy? He spoke: Lo! I am the slave of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and has appointed me a Prophet. And has made me blessed wheresoever I may be, and has enjoined upon me prayer and almsgiving so long as I remain alive. And (has made me) dutiful toward her who bore me, and has not made me arrogant, unblest. Peace on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive. Such was 'Isa, son of Maryam, (this is) a statement of truth concerning which they doubt. (Surah Maryam, 19:16-34)  
(And remember) when the angels said: O Mary! Allah gives you glad tidings of a word from Him, whose name is the Messiah, 'Isa, son of Maryam, illustrious in the world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near (unto Allah). He will speak unto mankind in his cradle and in his manhood, and he is of the righteous. She said: My Lord! How can I have a child when no mortal has touched me? He said: So (it will be). Allah creates what He wills. If he decrees a thing, He says unto it only: Be! And it is. (Surah Al-e-Imran, 3:45-47)  
His likeness:  
Lo! The likeness of 'Isa with Allah is as the likeness of Adam. He created him of dust, and He said unto him: Be! And he is. This is the truth from your Lord (O Muhammad), so be not you of those who waver. And whoso disputes with you concerning him, after the knowledge which has come unto you, say (unto him): Come! We will summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves, then will pray humbly (to our Lord) and (solemnly) invoke the curse of Allah upon who lie! (Surah al-e-Imran, 3:59-61) [Note: The challenge of Mubahala (solemn meeting) was issued by Prophet Muhammad (S) against Christians from Najran in 10 AH. They opted to pay jizya, instead.]  
  
**Mission and Miracles:**  
  
And He (God) will teach him the Scripture and wisdom, and the Taurat and the Injil. And will make him a messenger unto the children of Israel, (saying): Lo! I come unto you with a sign from your Lord. Lo! I fashion for you out of clay the likeness of a bird, and I breathe into it and it is a bird, by Allah's permission. I heal him who was born blind, and the leper, and I raise the dead, by Allah's permission. And I announce unto you what you eat and what you store up in your houses. Lo! Herein verily is a portent for you, if you are to be believers. And (I come) confirming that which was before me of the Taurat, and to make lawful some of that which was forbidden unto you. I come unto you with a sign from your Lord, so keep your duty to Allah and obey me. Lo! Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is a straight path. (Surah Al-e-Imran, 3:48-51)  
When Allah said: O 'Isa, son of Maryam! Remember My favor unto you and unto your mother; how I strengthened you with the holy Spirit (Ruhil Qudus), so that you spoke unto mankind in the cradle as in maturity; and how I taught you the Scripture and Wisdom and the Taurat and the Injil; and how you did shape of clay as it were the likeness of a bird by My permission, and did blow upon it and it was a bird by My permission, and you did heal him who was born blind and the leper by My permission; and how did you raise the dead, by My permission; and how I restrained the Children of Israel from (harming) you when you came unto them with clear proofs, and those of them who disbelieved exclaimed: This is nothing else than mere magic. And when I inspired the disciples, (saying): Believe in Me and in My messenger, they said: We believe. Bear witness that we have surrendered (as Muslims). When the disciples said: O 'Isa, son of Maryam! Is your Lord able to send down for us a table spread with food from heaven? He said: Observe your duty to Allah, if you are true believers. (They said): We wish to eat thereof, that we may satisfy our hearts and know that you have spoken truth to us, and thereof we may be witnesses. 'Isa, son of Maryam, said: O Allah, Lord of us! Send down for us a table spread with food from heaven, that it may be a feast for us, for the first of us and for the last of us, and a sign from You. Give us sustenance, for You are the Best of Sustainers. Allah said: Lo! I send it down for you. And whoso disbelieves of you afterward, him surely will I punish with a punishment wherewith I have not punished any of (My) creatures. (Surah al-Ma'idah 5:110-115)  
When 'Isa came with clear proofs (of Allah's sovereignty), he said: I have come unto you with wisdom, and to make plain some of that concerning which you differ. So keep your duty to Allah, and obey me. Lo! Allah is my Lord and your Lord. So worship Him. This is the right path. (Surah al-Zukhruf, 43:63-4)  
And when 'Isa son of Maryam said: O Children of Israel Lo! I am the messenger of Allah unto you, confirming that which was (revealed) before me in the Taurat, and bringing good tidings of a messenger who comes after me, whose name is Ahmad. Yet when he (Muhammad) has come unto them with clear proofs, they say: This is mere magic. (Surah as-Saff, 61:6)  
  
**His identity:**  
  
O People of the Scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter anything concerning Allah save the truth. The Messiah (Christ) 'Isa, son of Maryam, was only a messenger of Allah, and His word which He conveyed unto Maryam, and a spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers, and say not ÒThree (Trinity)Ó - Cease! (it is) better for you! - Allah is only one God. Far it is removed from His transcendent majesty that He should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allah is sufficient as Defender. The Messiah will never scorn to be a slave unto Allah, nor will the favored angels. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:171-2)

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The Messiah, son of Maryam, was no other than a messenger, messengers (the like of whom) had passed away before him. And his mother was a saintly woman. And they both used to eat (earthly) food. See how we make the revelation clear for them, and see how they turned away. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:75)  
Plot to kill him but Allah saved him:  
And they (the disbelievers) schemed, and Allah schemed (against them): and Allah is the best of schemers. (And remember) when Allah said: O 'Isa! Lo! I am gathering you and causing you to ascend unto Me, and am cleansing you of those who disbelieve and am setting those who follow you above those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection. Then unto Me you will (all) return, and I shall judge between you as to wherein you used to differ. (Surah al-e-Imran, 3:54-55)  
And because of their (Israelites) saying: We slew the Messiah 'Isa, son of Maryam, Allah's messenger - They slew him not nor crucified, but it appeared so unto them; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof except pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain. But Allah took him up unto Himself. Allah was ever Mighty, Wise. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:157-8)  
When Allah said, O 'Isa, son of Maryam! Remember My favor unto you and unto your mother; how I strengthened you with the holy Spirit (Ruhil Qudus), Éand how I restrained the Children of Israel from (harming) you when you came unto them with clear proofs, and those of them who disbelieved exclaimed: This is nothing else than a mere magic. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5: 110)  
  
**His second coming:**  
  
There is not one of the People of the Scripture but will believe in him before his ('Isa's) death, and on the Day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:159)  
He ('Isa) is nothing but a slave on whom We bestowed favor, and We made him a pattern for the Children of Israel. É And lo! he ('Isa) shall verily be a Sign for the coming of the Hour. So doubt you not concerning it, but follow Me. This is the right path. (Surah al-Zukhruf, 43:59,61)  
  
**Christian doctrine:**  
  
They surely have disbelieved who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Maryam. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:17)  
They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Maryam. The Messiah (himself) said: O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Lo! Whoso ascribes partners unto Allah, for him Allah has forbidden Paradise. His abode is the Fire. For evil-doers there will be no helpers. They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the third of Trinity; when there is no God save the One God. If they desist not from so saying a painful doom will fall on those of them who disbelieve. Will they not rather turn unto Allah and seek forgiveness of Him? For Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. The Messiah, son of Maryam, was no other than a messenger, messengers (the like of whom) had passed away before him. And his mother was a saintly woman. And they both used to eat (earthly) food. See how we make the revelations clear for them, and see how they are turned away! (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:72-5)  
And when Allah will say: O 'Isa, son of Maryam! Did you say unto mankind: Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah? He will say: Be glorified! It was not mine to utter that which I had no right. É I spoke unto them only that which You commanded me, (saying): Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. I was a witness of them while I dwelt among them, and when You took me You were the Watcher over them. You are Witness over all things. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:116-7)  
It befits not (the Majesty of) Allah that He should take unto Himself a son. Glory be to Him! When He decrees a thing, He says unto it only: Be! And it is. (Surah Maryam, 19:35)  
  
**Last Words:**  
  
As can be seen from the brief analysis above, the Qur'an portrays 'Isa (AS) as a major prophet or messenger who performed miracles by Allah's leave. He is a human being and not a divine entity. He was a precursor to Muhammad (S) - the Prophet of Islam. His mother Maryam was a saintly lady who gave birth to 'Isa miraculously. He taught pure monotheism and not trinity. Thus, in spite of many similarities between the two narratives, there are some major differences between what Christianity makes of Jesus and how the Qur'an presents him. Such theological differences should not, however, be major obstacles to finding common grounds between these two communities towards a peaceful coexistence in our world.

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[1] For discussion around Jesus's birth, see, e.g., Addison G. Wright, Roland E. Murphy, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, ÒA History of IsraelÓ in The Jerome Biblical Commentary, (Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1990), p. 1247; <http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/Christmas_TheRealStory.htm>[2] See the article by John F. Loftus, ÒWas Jesus born in Bethlehem ?Ó that discusses controversies surrounding Jesus's birthplace <http://debunkingchristianity.blogspot.com/2006/12/was-jesus-born-in-bethlehem.html>  . See also: <http://www.religioustolerance.org/xmaswwjb.htm>;  <http://www.archaeology.org/0511/abstracts/jesus.html> ;  
[3] E.A Wallis Budge, "Egyptian Religion",Ch2.  
[4] "Can we trust the New Testament?: thoughts on the reliability of early Christian testimony", George Albert Wells, p. 18, Open Court Publishing, 2004.  
[5] "Human Sacrifice",Davies, Nigel. William Morrow & Sons, p. 37 & p. 66-67, 1981.  
[6] David I. Kertzer, The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism, New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 2001, p. 74.  
[7] Ibid., pp. 33, 74-5.  
[8] <http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/Christmas_TheRealStory.htm#_ftnref6>   
[9] See, an explanation for the difference: <http://www.christmasarchives.com/christmas_in_egypt.html>   
[10] Shaykh Rahmatullah Kiranwi in his monumental work, Izharul Haq (Truth Revealed), cites hundreds of errors and contradictions within the Bible.  
[11] The latter section is based on author's article: Isa' - His life and mission, Media Monitors Network, Dec. 31, 2005: <http://asiapacific.mediamonitors.net/layout/set/print/content/view/full/24656>