

Explaining Jesus to Muslims

By Ross Jones

1. The Life of Jesus

His birth. The man Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem in Judea, a part of present day Israel about 2000 years ago. He is considered to be the most important person ever born and so the date of our year, for example 2002, means that there are 2002 years since the birth of Jesus. His mother's name was Mary. Her husband was called Joseph, but Joseph was not Jesus' father. Before they were married and while Mary was still a virgin, she became pregnant by the power of God's Spirit. For this reason Christians call Jesus the Son of God, while Muslims call Jesus the Son of Mary. Both titles testify to the fact that Jesus did not have a human father, his birth was unique. No other person has been born without a human father. (Luke 2:1-7)

His childhood. King Herod of Judea heard that a child was born who would be king of the Jews. Out of jealousy he planned to kill Jesus. Joseph was warned about this by an angel and so he took Mary and Jesus to Egypt where they stayed until they heard that King Herod had died. When they returned to Israel, they settled in a town called Nazareth where Jesus spent his childhood and early adult years. Joseph was a carpenter. The only story told about Jesus' boyhood in the Injil is about him going to Jerusalem at the age of 12. He talked to the religious leaders and amazed them with his intelligent questions and answers. (Luke 2:39-52)

His baptism and temptation. When Jesus was about 30 years of age he went to the prophet John (Yahaya) who was baptizing people in the Jordan river. When Jesus was baptized, he came up out of the water and the Holy Spirit descended upon him and gave him the power he needed to serve God. (Luke 3:21-22) After that the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness where he fasted for forty days and forty nights. The devil came and tempted him to do miracles which were not God's will for him to do, but Jesus did not sin. Satan said that if Jesus bowed down and worshipped him, he would give him all the kingdoms of the world. Jesus refused.

Jesus rejected by the people. Jesus taught in the Jewish synagogues and healed many people of all kinds of diseases. News about him spread throughout the region. Everyone was going to listen to his teaching or to be healed of their diseases. But when Jesus went to his home town Nazareth, he was rejected by them. Jesus said: "A prophet is never welcomed in his home town." They even tried to kill him, but he walked through the middle of the crowd and went on his way. He then continued his ministry of preaching to the people about the Kingdom of God, healing people of every sickness, casting demons out of people and performing miracles which were signs to help people believe in him. (Luke 4:40-44, 6:17-19)

Jesus' disciples Jesus traveled about in this way for three years. There were many people who followed him to hear his teaching and receive healing. Jesus chose twelve men to be his disciples. (Luke 6:12-16) These disciples traveled around with Jesus constantly and he taught them by word and example. They found some of his teaching hard to understand, but they were impressed by his holy life and his authority. These disciples later became the apostles who spread Christianity to the then known world.

The leaders oppose Jesus. Each year Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Jewish religious festivals. He taught there in the temple and performed healing miracles. The religious leaders did not agree with his teaching and were jealous of Jesus, because everyone was talking about him. So they became his enemies and plotted to kill him.

A man of prayer. Jesus prayed often to his Father in heaven. He used to rise very early in the morning and go and pray by himself in a quiet place. Sometimes he spent whole nights in prayer.

On one occasion when Jesus went to pray with three of his disciples, he was transformed. His face changed its appearance, his clothes became dazzling white and the prophets Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with him. Then God spoke to the three disciples from heaven and said: "This is my Son whom I have chosen, listen to him." (Luke 9:28-36)

Jesus' teaching. Everywhere Jesus went he taught the people. His main subject was the spiritual kingdom that God was establishing. He often spoke to them in parables, which made it difficult to understand, but he explained everything to his disciples. He also taught people about himself, calling himself the Son of Man. He taught much about true righteousness and true worship and he often criticized hypocrites and people who were thought they were good in God's sight.

The last week of Jesus' life. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey which symbolized his humility and his royalty. His followers proclaimed him to be the Messiah, the expected king of Israel. Jesus wept for Jerusalem, the city of God's temple, because the majority of the people did not believe him or recognize him to be the one who came to be their Saviour. (Luke 19:28-44) On the night before his death, he ate the Passover meal with his disciples. This meal was eaten to commemorate the escape of the Israelites from Pharaoh, king of Egypt. On that occasion a lamb was killed and its blood was a sign to the angel of death to "pass over" the house. In future the disciples would eat this meal in remembrance of Jesus' blood which would be shed for the forgiveness of their sins. (Luke 22:7-30)

Jesus' arrest and judgment. While Jesus was praying secretly with his disciples in a garden near Jerusalem, a disciple named Judas betrayed him and led a band of guards and soldiers to the place. They took Jesus to the house of the Jewish high priest to be judged. Jesus was judged by an illegal meeting of the Jewish leaders in the middle of the night. He was condemned for blasphemy, because he called himself the Messiah and the Son of God. The Jews then took him to Pilate, the Roman governor who alone had power to execute people. Pilate could not find that Jesus had done anything wrong, but fearing a riot, he handed him over to be crucified. (Luke 22:39 - 23:25)

Jesus' death and burial. Jesus was led out of Jerusalem and nailed to a cross which was then erected for him to hang there and die. His mother and some disciples were there, but many disciples ran away. People passing by mocked Jesus and said if he was the Son of God he should come down from the cross. At midday the sun stopped shining for three hours after which Jesus died. After Pilate made sure that Jesus was dead he gave permission for his body to be taken down from the cross. His corpse was laid in a tomb carved out of the rock. (Luke 23:26-56)

Jesus' resurrection and ascension to heaven. On Sunday morning Jesus rose from the dead. Angels announced the resurrection to women who came to the tomb to anoint his body. They looked in the tomb and saw that his body had gone. Later in the day Jesus appeared to two of his disciples as they were walking to a village. In the evening he appeared to the other disciples and showed them his hands where the nails had been driven in and his side where he was pierced with a spear while on the cross. He appeared to his disciples for forty days and then ascended to heaven while his disciples watched. (Luke 24:13-53)

2. Jesus' Miracles

Jesus performed many miracles. At least forty are recorded in the Injil. The apostle John said:

"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." (John 21:25)

Jesus was not just a cheap wonder worker. His miracles were only done in God's will and always with a purpose. They were signs to reveal his glory and majesty.

The Quran says: "We gave to Jesus, the son of Mary, manifest signs, and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit." (2:87)

The question arises: "Did Jesus do these miracles with his own power or by the power that God gave him?" The answer of course is that all power comes from God. Let us look at Jesus' own statement on this matter from John 5:19-24:

"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the father who sent him. I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned, he has crossed over from death to life."

Miracles of healing

There was no disease that Jesus couldn't heal. Even if people touched his clothes they would be healed. There are many detailed accounts in the Injil of how Jesus healed lepers, epileptics, the blind, the deaf and dumb, people with fevers, people who were swollen up, the paralyzed and the lame. In a summary statement the apostle Matthew says:

"Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them." (Matthew 4:23-24)

And the apostle Mark adds: "They ran throughout the whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went - into villages, towns or countryside - they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed." (Mark 6:55-56)

Miracles of exorcism

There were many people in Jesus' day who were demon possessed. The demons always

caused people to suffer in different ways. The demons, being supernatural beings, knew who Jesus was. One day when a demon possessed man saw Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum, he cried out: "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Are you here to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God." (Mark 1:24) And another demon screamed in a loud voice: "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me." (Mark 5:7)

Jesus gave seventy two of his disciples power to cast demons out of people. When they returned they said: "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." Jesus replied: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy, nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:17-20)

Miracles of raising people from the dead

There are only three accounts of Jesus raising people from the dead. The most interesting account is of a friend of Jesus called Lazarus. He had been dead for three days and buried in a tomb made of stone. Jesus asked the people to take away the stone from the entrance to the tomb then he prayed: "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." When Jesus had said this, he called out in a loud voice: "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them: "Take off the grave clothes and let him go." (John 11:41-44) Jesus said to Martha, the sister of Lazarus:

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.

And whoever lives and believes in me will never die." (John 11:25)

Nature miracles

Jesus helped people because his heart was filled with pity for them, because they were worried and helpless and like sheep without a shepherd. Now we come to the nature miracles and again it must be stressed that Jesus did nothing to show off his power. During his life he only did God's will and these nature miracles were in the plan of God because they are signs to all mankind.

Jesus changed water into wine. (Read John 2:1-11) This miracle was a sign to the Jews that just as wine is superior to water, so Jesus' teaching was superior to that of Moses.

The miraculous catch of fish. (Read John 21:1-14) This was a reminder to Jesus' disciples that he had called them to be fishers of men, that is to win men for God.

Jesus calms a storm. (Read Mark 4:35-41) While in a boat with his disciples on a lake a fierce storm arose. The disciples were afraid and thought the boat would sink. Jesus stood up and rebuked the wind and the water and immediately all was still. He was showing his disciples who he was. The disciples asked each other: "Who is this man? Even the wind and the waves obey him."

"O Lord God Almighty, who is like you?

You are mighty, O Lord, and your faithfulness surrounds you.

You rule over the surging sea, when its waves mount up, you still them." (Psalm 89:8-9)

Jesus walks on the lake. (Read Mark 6:45-52) Jesus' disciples were in a boat on the lake at night. There was a strong wind and they were not able to move forward. Before daybreak Jesus came to them, walking on the water. They were terrified, thinking it was a ghost. Jesus said: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." When he entered the boat the wind died down. Jesus was again teaching his disciples just who he was.

"God alone stretches out the heavens, and treads on the waves of the sea." (Job 9:8)

Jesus feeds 5,000 men. (Read Mark 6:30-44) Thousands of people had been listening to Jesus' teaching in the wilderness. They were hungry and may not have enough strength to walk home. Jesus asked his disciples what food they had. They could only find five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus blessed the food and it was miraculously multiplied so that the 5,000 men plus women and children all ate and were satisfied. Jesus was illustrating this eternal truth:

Then Jesus declared: "I am the bread of life,
he who comes to me will never go hungry,
and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35)

Jesus curses a fig tree. (Read Mark 11:12-14, 20-21) This miracle occurred during the last week of Jesus' life. Jesus was hungry. He went to a fig tree to find fruit, but didn't find any, so he said that no one would ever eat fruit from it again.. The next day the tree was dead. The fig tree is symbolic of Israel. Jesus came to teach them and save them, but they did not respond. They did not bear the fruit of godly living that God required from them. Forty years after Jesus' death, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans and the Jews were dispersed among the nations of the world until they returned to the land of Israel this century.

Miracles concerning Jesus' person. As well as doing many miracles, Jesus was a miraculous person in many ways, for example:

his virgin birth, his sinless life,
his resurrection, his ascension to heaven.

"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,
and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31-31)

3. Jesus' Teaching

To learn what Jesus taught you need to read the four accounts of Jesus' life in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Here we will look at the gospel according to Matthew, chapters 5-7. You should find a Bible or New Testament and read the relevant verses as you do this study. In this passage Jesus teaches about true righteousness, that is, how to live in the way that God requires. He talks about true blessedness, the law, anger, adultery, divorce, vows, revenge, enemies, giving of alms, prayer, fasting, wealth, worry, criticism and hypocrisy. Jesus speaks with authority, claiming to have a superior message than the law of Moses. The law of Moses was given as the law for the theocratic state of Israel. Jesus teaching is more personal. It is not taught as a law to keep so that we will be accepted by God, because it is impossible for the natural man to obey Jesus' teaching. What is taught here is the ideal. Only those who have come into a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ can hope to live by this standard. Without the Holy Spirit it is impossible. Jesus encourages God's people to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

Jesus' teaching is based on God's own character - love, justice and holiness. Right and wrong are unchangeable absolutes related to God's nature which never changes. It should be stressed that this teaching is not law. On the one hand a Christian is set free from all law and rules, but on the other hand, out of love for God he becomes his bond slave. Everyone will be directly responsible to God for his actions on judgment day.

Matthew Chapter 5-7

True Blessing (5:1-12)

For unbelievers blessing means riches, pleasure, pride, good food, power, lust and superiority. Jesus taught that true blessing was just the opposite. It is found through poverty, mourning, humility, hunger, being merciful, being pure in heart and in working for peace. People who are looking for prestige and power and money and pleasure in the world don't find God or know his blessings.

The Law (5:17-20)

Jesus did not cancel the law of Moses and the teaching of the prophets, he fulfilled them. The teaching found in them is eternal, but much of the ritual and symbolism was fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Although Christianity is based on Judaism, it is very different. They have the same God, prophets and Scripture, but whereas Judaism was largely external ritual, Christianity is a religion of the heart in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Jews said that Jerusalem was the centre for worship, Jesus said that true worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth. True worship is sincere, without hypocrisy and comes from the heart, not in outward ritual.

Anger (5:21-26)

The law forbids murder, but Jesus said that any anger is sin. Jesus said that we should make reconciliation with people as soon as possible and that we should not attempt to worship God if there is anger in our hearts.

Adultery (5:27-30)

The law forbids a person to sleep with another man's wife, but Jesus goes deeper to the root of the problem. He said that even adulterous thoughts or lust are sin. It is sin in the heart that leads a person to hell. Any sexual relationship with a woman who is not your

wife is sin. Adulterers will not enter paradise unless they are saved through repentance and faith.

Divorce (5:31-32)

Moses allowed divorce, because he knew the weakness of man, but Jesus says that divorce is as serious a sin as adultery. In Matthew 19:1-9 Jesus says that since creation it was God's will for marriage to be permanent until the death of one partner.

Vows (5:33-37)

Moses said that vows made in God's name should not be broken. Jesus says that we should not make vows at all, but only say Yes! or No! Using God's name in vows comes from Satan, because often vows are lies so God's name is misused.

Revenge (5:38-42)

Moses said: "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Jesus says that we should not take revenge, we should leave the matter with God. Rather than wanting revenge we should be prepared to let people do double. Some people see that as weakness, but Jesus teaches love. What a lot of evil and suffering would be avoided if we left revenge to God.

Enemies (5:43-48)

Moses said that we should love our friends and hate our enemies. Jesus says that we should love our enemies and pray for them and treat them as friends, just as God blesses us in many ways even when we are bad and in fact his enemies.

Alms (6:1-4)

Religious duties should not be done in public for people to see. If done before God in secret, he will reward you. If done to be thought well of by men, the action is hypocritical and there will be no reward from God.

Prayer (6:5-15)

Jesus gives us a model prayer to pray. The first half of the prayer is seeking after God's glory. The second half deals with our basic needs of food, forgiveness and protection from evil. Prayers are not to be done in public for the same reason as stated above and we should not just say words without thinking what we are saying. God is not interested in vain repetitions, he wants prayers from the heart.

Fasting (6:16-18)

Fasting is good, especially if done to enforce our prayers. It should also be done in secret, because it is a matter between you and God, not you and other people. None of these acts make a person righteous before God. They are done out of devotion to God.

Wealth (6:19-24)

Wealth should not be our ambition in life, because wealth is never secure and life is transitory. We should concentrate on storing up wealth in heaven by doing God's will. Earthly wealth often causes people to turn their back on God. Your life cannot be motivated by wealth and God at the same time.

Worry (6:25-33)

The Christian has no need to worry about the basic needs of life like food and clothing, because if he trusts in God, God will provide all these things for him as he does for the animals and birds. Christians should be concerned about God's will being done and how they contribute to God's plan for the world.

Criticism (7:1-6)

God will judge us with the same severity with which we judge others. We should concentrate on getting our lives straight and being tolerant of others.

Prayer (7:7-11)

We should come to God confidently in prayer believing that he loves us and wants to bless us. This requires faith, faith in God and his promises. He is our heavenly Father. He loves us as his children and is waiting for us to ask him for his blessings.

Meaning of the law of Moses (7:12)

Do to others what you would have them do to you.

The True Path (7:13-14)

The true path to God is narrow and difficult and there are few people taking it. The way of the world is wide and easy and most people are on that road, but it leads to hell.

Hypocrisy (7:15-23)

Religious hypocrites are people who say that they are doing God's will, but their actions prove that they aren't. If you are religious and at the same time you are an adulterer or a thief or take bribes or practice black magic or sacrifice to spirits or get drunk, you are a hypocrite. If your heart is not right with good, your actions will show it, no matter what you say with your mouth. Not all who call on God belong to him. The Lord knows those who belong to him and all will be revealed on the Day of Judgment.

A strong foundation (7:24-27)

Build a house on sand and the walls will crack and it will fall down. Build it on rock and it will be stable and strong. Those who hear these words of Jesus and obey them have a strong foundation. They will be secure in this world and the next. Those who do not obey these teachings will fall and be destroyed.

Ritual defilement (Mark 7:14-23)

Jesus' disciples were criticized by the religious leaders because they did not wash their hands in the traditional way before eating. Jesus told the crowd that it is not what goes into a man that makes him ritually unclean, but what comes out of his heart. For this reason Christians have no taboos on food and drink. Neither is it the excretions of the body that make a person ritually unclean or interrupt fellowship with God. It is the evil thoughts that come from the heart - murder, adultery, stealing, lying and slander. God is not concerned with defilement of the body, he is concerned about defilement of the mind. That is the sin that separates us from God. It is not water that makes a person clean before God, only the blood of Jesus Christ which was shed on the cross as an atonement for our sin.

If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another,
and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

4. The Sinless Jesus

The Testimony of the Quran

According to the Quran when Jesus' grandmother bore her daughter Mary, she said: "My Lord! Lo! I am delivered of a female...and lo! I have named her Mary, and lo! I crave thy protection for her and for her offspring from Satan the outcast." (Imram 3:36)

According to Muslim tradition Satan used to pierce every human being in the side at the time of his birth, except for Isa and his mother. A screen was placed between them and the thrust was aimed at the screen and did not reach them at all. The two of them were never effected by sin as the rest of mankind.(Tha'alabi - Lives of the Prophets)

The Testimony of the Bible

Jesus was born holy (Luke 1:21-45)

The angel Gabriel appeared to a young girl, a virgin named Mary, and said: "Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you." Mary did not understand this word and the angel said: "Do not be afraid Mary. God has been gracious to you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord will make him a king, as his descendant David was, and he will be king of the descendants of Jacob forever, his kingdom will never end." Then Mary said: "I am a virgin, how can this be?" The angel answered: "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and God's power will rest upon you. For this reason the holy child will be called the Son of God."

How did Mary conceive? She was a virgin. We are told that the Spirit of God would come on her, and God's power would rest on her. There is no suggestion of any crude union between God and woman here. God is spirit and does not have a physical body like we do. The conclusion is that the Holy Spirit created the male seed which united with an ovum in Mary's womb. The result was a holy embryo which grew into a holy fetus and was born a holy child.

Adam and the human race

God created the first man, Adam, perfect, but when he disobeyed God in the garden and ate the forbidden fruit, he became a sinner. Sin became a part of his nature and this passed on from generation to generation. The prophet Job (Ayuba) spoke about man's birth and said: "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. ... Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!" (Job 14:1,4) And the prophet David (Dauda) said: "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." (Psalm 51:5) And the apostle Paul says: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) As all men and women are born sinners, it is even more remarkable that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born without sin.

Jesus sinless life

As a child we are told that Jesus was obedient to his parents. He grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men. Before he began his work of teaching and healing, he went to the Jordan river where he was baptized by John the Baptist. (Yahaya) When he came out of the water, a voice came from heaven and said: "You are my own

dear Son, I am pleased with you." (Luke 3:22) Then he was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness where he was tempted by Satan for 40 days. During that time he fasted day and night and the Devil could not make him sin. (Luke 4:1-13)

Jesus testified to his own sinlessness when speaking to his enemies, the Jewish religious authorities. He said: "Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If you are telling the truth, why don't you believe me? (John 8:46)

When Jesus was judged before his crucifixion, neither the Jews nor the Romans could find any fault with him.. The Roman governor Pilate said: "I find no basis for a charge against him." The Jews condemned him for blasphemy, because he claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God.

Jesus lived a selfless life, he was always interested in the welfare of others. He healed them and taught them God's word. He was not proud and he was not interested in wealth or women. He spent his life serving God and doing his will.

The testimony of Jesus' apostles.

Jesus' own disciples knew him best. What did they say about him? Peter said: "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." (1 Peter 2:22) John said: "You know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin." (1 John 3:5) The apostle Paul said: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21) The writer of the book of Hebrews spoke about Jesus as our high priest and said: "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way as we are - yet was without sin." (4:15) and "Such a high priest meets our need - one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens." (7:26)

The Significance of Jesus' sinlessness

If Jesus was the Son of God, he had to be sinless, because we know that God is holy and sinless. It is common belief in Islam that all the prophets were sinless, at least after the time that they became prophets. In fact all prophets were sinners, even after their call to serve God. Adam sinned in the garden and ate the forbidden fruit, Noah (Nuhu) became drunk after the flood, Moses (Musa) displeased God in the wilderness and God said: "Because you did not trust in me enough to honour me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them." (Numbers 20:12) David was guilty of murder and adultery (Sura 38:23, 2 Samuel 11:4,14-15) Solomon (Sulemanu) was guilty of lust and idolatry. "He had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God." (1 Kings 11:3-4) The Quran says that Mohammed was forgiven for his faults. Jesus on the other hand never sinned or committed the slightest fault and so he never had to ask God for forgiveness.

In the justice of God, for someone to atone for the sins of mankind, it is necessary for that person to be sinless. This is illustrated by the fact that animals used in sacrifice to forgive sins under the law of Moses had to be without defect or flaw. So Yahaya said about Jesus: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29)

And Peter said: "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

What is sin?

Sin is anything in thinking, speaking or acting that is contrary to the holy will of God. To understand what sin is, we need an understanding of the holiness of God. God is holy because he never sins. Because of his perfection and holiness he is set apart from sinful men.

"But your iniquities have separated you from your God,
your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear." (Isaiah 59:2)

The word sin has two meanings. It means disobedience to God's law, but it also means that tendency to sin that is part of man's nature. No matter how good a person may be, he is born with this tendency to sin in him and even his motives for doing good are suspect. The prophet Isaiah says: "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags." (64:6) Because God is holy, sin arouses his anger and because God is just, every sinner must be punished for every sin that he has committed. As all men are sinners, we all come under God's wrath. Because of our sin we don't have fellowship with God now and we will be separated from him for all eternity.

But God is love. Because he loves man who he created, he has provided a way of salvation through the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The person who believes in Jesus has his sins forgiven here and now, because Jesus has already paid the penalty. When a sinner asks forgiveness at the foot of the cross of Jesus, the Holy Spirit enters the body and transforms the sinner's mind and heart, producing true repentance. The redeemed sinner is now forgiven by God and will spend eternity with him.

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins,
and purify us from all wrongdoing." (1 John 1:9)

5. Jesus, God's Servant

His poverty

Jesus Christ was born in a stable and a feeding trough was his first bed. This was just the beginning of his life of poverty. As the apostle Paul said: "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." It is the poor people who know their need of God rather than the rich, so Jesus' work was directed toward them. When preaching at Nazareth, Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah and said:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come
when the Lord will save his people."

The crowds that followed Jesus day after day were mostly poor people. His own family was poor. During his three years of teaching and healing people he had no place to call his home. He was often healing lepers, epileptics and demon possessed people, many of whom were in a pitiful state. Jesus was constantly on the move, preaching the gospel and healing people.

Read Matthew 4:23-25, 8:14-17 and 9:35-36 to get an idea of how Jesus was always helping people. People came to him with every sort of disease and he healed them all. They crowded around him, they touched him and never gave him any rest. He never took any payment for healing people. Some women who followed him used to prepare his food and care for his needs. Jesus identified himself with the poor and had pity on their miserable existence.

His Humility

(Read John 13:5-15 and Matthew 20:25-28)

Jesus Christ came into the world to be a servant, not to be served. He came to give us the example of a perfect man, and the perfect man is a servant, not a lord, because a perfect man is motivated by love for other people and not by selfish ambition. He came also as a servant because of his love for you and me, so that he could give his life for us. He said to his disciples: "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." And Jesus did just that on the cross. Jesus was the humble servant of whom the prophet Isaiah said:

"The Lord says,
Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight.
I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.
He will not shout or cry out or raise his voice in the streets.
A bruised reed he will not break and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice,
he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth.
In his law the islands will put their trust.
I, The Lord, have called you in righteousness, I will take hold of your hand.

I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,
to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison
and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness."

His suffering

There are many facets to the suffering that Jesus bore. We should not think of prophets as people who were victorious and welcomed by everybody. They were often sent by God with an unpopular message of judgment. Men are basically selfish and evil, they desire power, riches and immoral relationships, they murder, steal and just don't care about the suffering of their fellow man. Prophets expose this evil and people don't like having their evil desires exposed. So like the prophets before him, Jesus was also rejected. Even though he performed miracles in their presence, the majority of people did not believe in him. They loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God. So Jesus was rejected by his relatives, the people of his home town Nazareth and by the Jews in general.

Jesus' main enemies were the religious leaders. The very people who were supposed to be leading people to a closer relationship with God were leading them astray. They were hypocrites and Jesus denounced them for it. (Matthew 23:13-28) They were jealous of Jesus, because the crowds followed him and were impressed by his teaching with authority. The religious authorities argued with Jesus, criticized him and insulted him. They tried to trap him in what he said so that they could condemn him. They forbade people to believe in him and finally made plans to kill him.

Jesus could not even trust those who did believe in him, because he knew man's sinful heart. And many who did believe in him turned away when the teaching became difficult. Even his chosen disciples did not understand who he was and often didn't grasp the deeper meaning of his teaching. Peter, the leader of his 12 disciples, denied knowing him and another disciple, Judas, betrayed him. When he was arrested the other disciples all ran away.

His only true friend was God, whom he called Father. He spent much time in prayer, sometimes whole nights. To have time alone with God he had to get up very early in the morning and go out of town. Sometimes Jesus didn't have time to eat, because of the crowds. Some people said he was mad, while the leaders said he had a demon. On many occasions he was tired, thirsty and hungry. Marriage was not appropriate for this unique person, so he did not have the support of a wife and family. And Satan did not leave Jesus alone. He was often tempted, but he did not sin.

Jesus' greatest suffering occurred on the last day of his life when he was crucified on the cross. He knew all along that he would be crucified by evil men and he often told his disciples to be prepared for it, but they could not understand that their great prophet, the Messiah could die. The night before he died he was in great distress. His soul was deeply grieved to the point of death. He sweat drops of blood. It was not the physical suffering of being nailed to the cross, it was the fact that he was to carry the punishment for the sins of the whole world, which necessitated his being separated for a short time from fellowship with God his Father.

He was arrested and unjustly condemned by both Jews and Romans. The Jews spat on him and beat him. The Roman soldiers whipped him and mocked him. He was nailed to the cross at 9 a.m. outside Jerusalem, nails being driven into his hands and feet. Thieves were erected on crosses on his right and left. He was insulted and slandered and mocked by all who went past. Jesus' only response was: "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing." Darkness covered the land until midday. Jesus' suffering was at its greatest. As he paid the penalty for our sins, he was separated from fellowship with God. At 3 p.m. he cried out: "My God, my God, why did you abandon me?" His humiliation was complete, his work was finished. The apostle Paul helps us understand why God would allow his servant, the only perfect man to undergo such suffering and to suffer such injustice. He said:

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit,
but in humility consider others better than yourselves.
Each of you should look not only to your own interests,
but also to the interests of others.
Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
Who being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself
and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name
that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:3-11)

6. Jesus, the man of Peace

The prophet Isaiah made a prophecy about Jesus 740 years before Jesus was born. He said:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
And the government will be upon his shoulders.
And he will be called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

Jesus' Example

When Jesus was arrested to be judged and crucified, some of his disciples wanted to fight, but Jesus would not allow it. One of Jesus' disciples drew his sword and cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant. Then Jesus touched the man's ear and healed it. Jesus said to his disciples: "All who draw the sword will die by the sword." God's weapons aren't physical force and warfare. That is incompatible with Jesus' teaching on loving your neighbour and even your enemies. Violence only breeds violence. The Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Jesus never possessed a weapon of violence.

Jesus said he would bring division to the world, and wherever people become Christians this division has happened. But it is significant that this division is because those who reject Jesus are opposed to those who believe in him, not because those who believe in Jesus are opposed to those who don't. Those who obey God's will walk in the light, while those who reject it walk in darkness and darkness and light are always in opposition to each other.

Jesus Teaching

Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."

Jesus condemns anger and encourages reconciliation. He said that men must make peace with each other before approaching God in worship. You can't worship God with feelings of hate, anger or revenge in your heart.

Jesus also said:

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Jesus' teaching is deeper than that given in the law of Moses, because his followers receive the Holy Spirit who enables them to overcome their weaknesses and sinful reactions and do what would seem impossible to the natural man. Just as some people have a relationship with a spirit who comes and lives in their bodies, so Christians have a relationship with God and his Spirit comes and lives in their bodies. Because of this they call God "Father" and God calls them his "sons". The apostle Paul inspired by the Holy Spirit wrote:

"Do not repay anyone evil for evil.

Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: It is mine to avenge, I will repay, says the Lord.

On the contrary:

If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this you will heap burning coals on his head.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:17-21)

Growth of the Church

32.5 percent of the world's population is Christian, over 2 billion people. How has Christianity spread? The Church is not perfect, because it is made up of human beings and at times unchristian methods have been used. In the book of the Acts of the Apostles we see how the Church grew in the first century. God gave the apostles power to do miracles, so that people would know that their message was from God. Even where miracles were not performed, the power of God's word, the Bible and the power of the Holy Spirit have caused people to become Christians. The good news of the Gospel message is that Jesus died on the cross for the sins of mankind, so that those who believe in him can have their sins forgiven and the assurance that they will live in paradise for eternity. Where this message is preached, the Church grows. People don't have to be driven by force or persuaded with gifts. God's promises are mainly spiritual and include the assurance that believers will be saved from the terrors of Judgment Day.

Since 1960 the Church has grown enormously in the non-white countries of the world. In 1960 70% Christians were white and Christianity used to be called the white man's religion. But in 2000 only 40% Christians were white. In 1900 African Christians were 8 million and 10% of the population. In 2000 this had risen to 350 million and 48% of the population.

The Jewish (Israelite) religion was a state religion supported by the kingdom of Israel. They had to fight when attacked by their enemies. Islam is also a state religion and in countries where Muslims form the majority, Islamic religion and Sharia law are mandatory upon the whole population. The Quran says that there is no compulsion in religion, but Islamic history and tradition contradict this. Christianity is different. It is not a state religion, although it became so in many European countries under the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. Today even in the United States of America there is strict separation between the State and religion. Jesus said that his kingdom was not of this world. So it should not be mixed with politics. Jesus is presently calling people out of the world system into his eternal kingdom. He will establish his kingdom on earth as a political system when he returns to earth. So Christians do not strive for political dominance. They are the salt of the world and the light of the world and in this way are to have a good influence on the society in which they live.

The Christians weapons of warfare

Christians ARE fighting a battle. They fight against evil in the world by spreading the truth. They desire that everyone may hear the good news about Jesus Christ and be saved. The battle they fight is not against their fellow human beings, but against the wicked spiritual forces in the invisible realm. Satan is the king in this kingdom of darkness.

Demons, evil spirits, possessing spirits, territorial spirits, jinn or whatever you like to call them are his followers. These spirits who are worshipped through sacrifice and offerings and invocations are the real cause of ignorance, hatred, idolatry and immorality in the world. They are the false gods.

How do you fight against demonic forces? Only Christians can do so, because their leader Jesus defeated these evil powers when he died on the cross. By his blood he redeemed mankind from the power of Satan and gave Christians authority to cast out demons. The weapons of warfare are the Word of God, prayer and the power of Jesus' name and his blood. With these weapons, Christian warriors go forth in love to save men and women from every tribe, language, people and nation to the glory of God.

Jesus' peace

Jesus was a pacifist, but he was more concerned with giving people inner peace. The world talks about peace, but Jesus' peace is infinitely more satisfying. Man will always be restless until he finds peace with God. When we are put right with God through faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ. Jesus said to his disciples: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." Jesus breaks down the barriers between races. Those who trust in him are the true brotherhood, because they all become God's children.

By his death on the cross Jesus destroyed enmity between races, he united them into one body and brought them back to God. John the Baptist (Yahaya) was sent by God to prepare the way for Jesus. John's father Zechariah made this prophecy concerning his son:

"And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,
to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the Rising Sun will come to us from heaven
to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace." (Luke 1:76-79)

Jesus is the Rising Sun. He came to save people and lead them into the path of peace - peace with God and peace with their fellow men, which results in peace in the heart.

7. Jesus the Messiah

Isa Al-Masih

Both the Injil and the Quran confirm that Jesus, son of Mary is the Messiah. The Quran says:

"O Mary! Lo! Allah gives you glad tiding of a Word from him,
whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary,
illustrious in the world and the hereafter, and one of those brought near to Allah."

(3:45)

What does the word Messiah mean? Messiah is a Hebrew word meaning "the Lord's Anointed". In the Greek language Messiah is translated Christ, so Christ and Messiah mean the same thing. In Arabic it is Masih or Al-Masih. Among the Jews kings and priests were anointed with oil to consecrate them to their service for God. The oil was a symbol of the Holy Spirit who would give them the strength and wisdom to perform their work.

The Lord's Anointed, the Messiah, was a man who would come to save Israel from oppression and restore Israel to the former glory they had under king Solomon (Sulemanu). The Jews saw the Messiah as a king through whom God would do his will. He would be ruler of a theocratic state and from Jerusalem he would establish the kingdom of God in all the world. But there were also prophecies that the Messiah would be a suffering servant. The Jews did not emphasize that so much, it seemed incompatible for a victorious king to also be a suffering servant! But in the person of Jesus we see both of these fulfilled. When Jesus came 2000 years ago, he fulfilled the role of the suffering servant. When he comes again, as taught in both the Injil and the Quran, he will come as a victorious king to rule the whole world.

The first coming of the Messiah

The following passages from the prophet Isaiah were written over 700 years before Jesus was born. They tell of how the Messiah would suffer for God's people so that their sins would be forgiven. For this reason Jesus is called Saviour. Read: Isaiah 42:1-7, 49:1-6, 50:4-11, 52:13 - 53:12

Jesus is a servant the Lord has chosen and in whom he is well pleased. He is filled with the Spirit of God. He is humble and gentle and without compulsion brings justice to the nations. Through the Messiah God will make a covenant with all peoples and bring them light. He will open the eyes of the blind (both physical and spiritual blindness) and set free those who sit in dark prisons (enslaved by sin, death and Satan).

In Isaiah 50:4-7 the Messiah speaks:

"The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue,
to know the word that sustains the weary.

He wakes me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.
The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears and I have not been rebellious,
I have not drawn back.

I offered my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard,
I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.
Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced.
Therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know I will not be put to shame."

Here we see the Messiah rising early each morning to pray and listen to God's voice. He is perfect in his obedience to God. Despite this he would be whipped and insulted and spat upon by his enemies. But the Messiah is confident. He knows he will not be disgraced, God will vindicate him.

Isaiah 53:3-7 written over 700 years before Jesus was born, give us a clear picture of his suffering for the sins of mankind on the cross:

"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering.

Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities,
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way,
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth,
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth."

Isaiah 53 is a beautiful passage of holy Scripture. It gives us a picture of the Messiah when he came into the world the first time. He ministered to people, suffered and died. He was the perfect, sinless man. His life was characterized by love, holiness, justice and compassion for his fellow man. He was put to death in a most disgraceful way. But three days later he rose from death and will come again as Muslim tradition affirms. His first coming was in humiliation for our sake, but his second coming will be to reign forever as king as foretold by the prophets.

The second coming of the Messiah

Read the second Psalm (Zabura 2). In this Psalm about the Messiah, written by David (Dauda), we see the nations rebelling against God and his Anointed, Jesus the Messiah. God laughs at man's efforts to oppose him. He has installed his king, Jesus, on Mt Zion in Jerusalem. In verses 7-9 the Messiah declares what God told him.

"I will proclaim the decree of the Lord:

He said to me: You are my Son,
today I have become your Father.

Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession.

You will rule them with an iron scepter,
you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

David called the Messiah the Son of God 1,000 years before Jesus came. The king of Israel was sometimes referred to as a son of God, because as king over God's people Israel, he was God's representative on earth, having God's authority to rule and to judge people. But the Messiah was more than king over Israel, he was to be king over the whole earth.

Psalm 89:3 also speaks of the Messiah:

"I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to David my servant,
I will establish your line forever
and make your throne firm through all generations."

The Messiah, the descendant of David, Jesus, will be king forever. The following prophecy about the Messiah is from Isaiah 9:6-7:

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever."

Just as the Quran gives to the prophet Jesus more lofty titles than to any other prophet (for example: The Word of God, a Spirit from God, Illustrious in this world and the next), so here Jesus has titles that could apply to no other person. He is referred to here as both man and God and as King he will rule with justice for eternity. Read also Isaiah 11:1-10 The final prophecy about the Messiah is from the prophet Daniel who lived over 500 years before Jesus was born. In chapter 7 verses 13-14 he describes a vision he saw:

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power, all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

8. Jesus' Crucifixion

There are three verses in the Quran that speak of the death and resurrection of Jesus. They appear to be contradictory.

"Peace on me the day I was born and the day I die and the day I shall be raised alive." (19:33)

(Spoken by baby Jesus from the cradle.)

"When God said, O Jesus, verily I will cause you to die and I will take you up to me and I will deliver you from the unbelievers." (3:55)

"And because of their saying 'we slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, Allah's messenger'

- they slew him not nor crucified, but it appeared so to them." (4:157)

No matter what the first two verses mean, it is clear from the third that the Quran teaches that Jesus was not crucified by the Jews. On this point the Quran, written 600 years after Jesus' death, contradicts the clear testimony of the Injil and also clear statements made in other historical records.

The Roman historian Tacitus wrote detailed passages about the crucifixion of Jesus and his sufferings in a large volume written in 55 AD

The Jewish historian Josephus, born a few years after the crucifixion, wrote a history of the Jews in 20 volumes and he gives a detailed account of the crucifixion of Jesus as ordered by the Roman governor Pilate.

The Greek historian Lucius wrote in about 100 AD about the death of Jesus and Christians. He said: "The Christians continue to worship that great man who was crucified in Palestine because he brought a new religion to the world."

The Roman governor Pilate who had Jesus crucified sent a full report of Jesus' crucifixion, his burial and his rising from the dead, and his report is among Roman records. The Christian scholar Tertullian used this report in his famous defense of Christianity called "Apology" in 197 AD.

The Jewish Talmud, an official record of Jewish history and tradition says: "Jesus was crucified one day before the Passover. We warned him for 40 days that he would be killed, because he was a magician and planned to deceive Israel with his delusions."

These historical records are interesting and prove that Jesus was crucified, but for Christians the record contained in the holy Injil is far more important. The Injil which Christians possess today, which has been translated into thousands of languages is exactly the same Injil which Mohammed refers to in the Quran and commands Muslims to believe.

"And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel (Injil). Therein was guidance and light and confirmation of the Law that had come before him, a guidance and an admonition to

those who fear Allah." (5:49)

"O you who believe! Believe in Allah and his Apostle and the Scripture which he has sent to his Apostle and the Scripture which he sent to those before him. Any who deny Allah, his angels, his books, his apostles and the day of judgment has gone far, far astray." (4:136)

All four gospel records (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) cover the events surrounding the crucifixion in much greater detail than any other period of Jesus' life. These details show conclusively that the one crucified could only have been Jesus Christ. The details are so abundant and consistent that it is impossible to set aside the historicity of the crucifixion accounts. It would have been impossible for Jesus' disciples and his mother who were present at the crucifixion and who handled his dead body to mistake him for someone else.

We will look now at the events of the last day of Jesus' life as recorded by Jesus' disciples under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The arrest of Jesus and his judgment by the Jews (Matthew 26:47-68)

Jesus had been praying with his disciples in a garden outside of Jerusalem, when a large crowd armed with swords and clubs arrived to arrest him. They were led by Judas, one of Jesus' own disciples, who had betrayed him. Jesus offered no resistance. He could have called an army of angels to help, but he knew that his death was God's will, because it was prophesied by the prophets and written in the Scriptures that the Messiah must suffer and die and rise again. Jesus had told his disciples about it many times.

He was taken to the house of the Jewish high priest where the Jewish council was gathered to judge him. They could not find any evidence against Jesus to put him to death, so the high priest asked him directly whether he was the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus said he was. He was then condemned for blasphemy, of which he was guilty, unless he was the Son of God.

Jesus judged by Pilate, the Roman governor (Matthew 27:1-2, 11-31)

Jesus was put in chains and taken to the Roman governor, who alone had the authority to crucify him. Jesus refused to answer the governor's questions and he could find no fault in Jesus. He knew that the Jews had handed Jesus over to him because they were jealous of the attention the crowds gave him. So he tried to release Jesus. His wife had had a dream about Jesus and she told her husband that he must not condemn this innocent man. But Pilate feared a riot, so he washed his hands in front of the crowd and said he was not responsible for this man's death. The Jews replied: "Let the punishment for his death fall on us and on our children." Forty years later Jerusalem was destroyed by a Roman army and the Jews were scattered throughout the world where they have been persecuted for nearly 2000 years. After the Roman soldiers mocked Jesus for claiming to be the Messiah, the King of the Jews, they led him out of the city to be crucified.

Jesus is crucified (Matthew 27:32-56)

Jesus had been whipped and beaten and could not carry his cross all the way. An African man named Simon was forced by the soldiers to carry Jesus' cross for him. They offered

Jesus wine mixed with a drug to lessen the pain, but Jesus would not drink it. They nailed his hands and feet to the cross and erected it. A notice written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek was nailed above his head. It said: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." Two bandits were crucified with Jesus. People passing by insulted him as did the religious leaders. They taunted him for claiming to be the Son of God, while the soldiers gambled for his clothing.

At noon the whole country was covered in darkness, because this was the darkest deed ever carried out by the human race. It also symbolized Jesus' suffering as he bore the punishment for the sins of the world. He was separated for the first time from fellowship with his Father and so cried out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" At 3 PM Jesus died. The curtain in the temple, which barred the way to God's presence, was torn in two from top to bottom. This was symbolic of the fact that Jesus' death opened the way to God. There was also an earthquake to mark this important event. Graves broke open and many of God's people were raised to life. This symbolized Jesus' victory over death. When they saw all this, the soldiers were afraid and the officer who was in charge said: "He really was the Son of God."

4. Jesus' death isn't defeat, but victory.

Jesus' arrest and crucifixion were not a surprise to him. He came into the world to save sinners. He gave himself up as a sacrifice, so that our sins could be forgiven. Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God. He died for all, so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but only for him who died and was raised to life for their sake. The apostle Paul sums it up as follows:

"At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.
Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man,
though for a good man someone might dare to die.
But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8)

Sin separates us from God. It makes us his enemies and brings down his anger on us. Because Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross, when we turn to him in repentance and faith, he effectively removes our sins from us and reconciles us to God. We have peace with God and become his friends. That is why Jesus' crucifixion is so important to Christians.

9. Jesus, the Lamb of God

To understand why Jesus is called the Lamb of God, we need to go back to the Torah and study the meaning of animal sacrifice. We will first of all look at the example of Abraham who was asked by God to sacrifice his son and then God provided him with a sheep instead, as this sacrifice is still enacted by Muslims today.

Abraham offers Isaac (Read Genesis 22:1-19)

Abraham (Ibrahim) had two sons, Ishmael (Sumaila) and Isaac (Izaaku). Ishmael was born of a slave girl named Hagar (Hajaratu) while Isaac was born in Abraham's old age by his wife Sarah (Saramatu) who had been barren before God miraculously caused her to conceive. Isaac was Abraham's only legal son and it was through him and his descendants that God said he would accomplish his promises to Abraham. So imagine Abraham's surprise when God asked him to take his son Isaac (now 15 years old) and sacrifice him on top of a certain mountain. (The mosque of Omar in Jerusalem is built over the traditional site) Abraham trusted God, and either believed that God would intervene before he killed Isaac or else that God would raise him from the dead.

On the way up the mountain Isaac asked his father where the animal for the sacrifice was. Abraham replied that the Lord would provide. Abraham built an altar, then he tied up his son and was about to kill him, when an angel came and told him to stop. He had passed the test, he had not kept back his only son from God. God did provide a sheep there and Abraham sacrificed it in place of his son. Abraham named the place "The Lord will provide". The Lord promised Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his descendants, because he obeyed his command. What does this incident teach us? Let us compare it with the death of Jesus.

- God gave his only Son as a sacrifice.
"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)
- Jesus, the lamb provided by God, died in our place, just as the ram died in Isaac's place.
- Jesus was sacrificed on the cross on the same mountain at Jerusalem, fulfilling Abraham's prophecy "The Lord will provide."
- All nations are blessed through the death of Jesus, a descendant of Isaac, because Jesus died for the sins of the world so that God could forgive our sins.

The Passover (Read Exodus 12:21-26)

The Israelites were enslaved to the Egyptians. God raised up Moses (Musa) to lead his people out of Egypt and back to Palestine, the land that God had promised to Isaac's descendants. God had sent down nine plagues on Pharaoh (Fira'auna) and the Egyptians and there was one last plague left. At midnight all the first born sons of the Egyptians would die. So that the first born sons of the Israelites would not die when the angel of death passed overhead, God told Moses to tell the Israelites to take a lamb or a goat

without any defect, to kill it and sprinkle the blood over their door-posts and above the door. When the angel of death passed over at midnight and saw the blood, he did not kill the first born in that house, but the first born in the houses of the Egyptians were killed. After that the Israelites were able to escape from Egypt.

The Israelites were told by God to celebrate this deliverance each year as a reminder of how he had redeemed them and saved them from slavery in Egypt. What does this incident teach us? Let us compare it with the death of Jesus.

- Jesus died on the day before the Israelites celebrated the Passover festival, when a lamb was killed by each household to commemorate Israel's exodus from Egypt.

- As the blood of the lamb saved the Israelites in Egypt, so it is the shed blood of Jesus that saves us.

"For you know that it was not with perishable things like silver or gold that you were redeemed from that empty way of life handed down to you by your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

- Jesus' death saves us from the present evil world, just as the blood of the lamb saved the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

- Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples the night before he died, relating it to his death on the cross. (Read Mark 14:12-25) Jesus took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them and they all drank from it.

"This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many" he said to them. So instead of sacrificing a lamb as the Jews did, Christians now celebrate Jesus' death by partaking of a fellowship meal where the bread and the wine are symbolic of Jesus' body and blood.

The covenant made with Moses (Read Exodus 24:1-8)

After God had given his law to Moses, the covenant between God and Israel had to formally sealed. So Moses read the law to them and the people said: "Everything the Lord has said we will do." The next morning he built an altar and animals were sacrificed to God. Moses then took the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkled half of it on the altar. Then he read the law again and the people again said they would obey it. Then Moses sprinkled the rest of the blood over the law and the people and said: "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these commands."

The book of Hebrews chapter 9 verses 18-22 is a commentary on this passage from the book of Exodus. It says: "This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. He said: 'This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.' In the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

Jesus, the perfect Lamb

The Bible has two parts, the Old Testament or Old Covenant which consists of the Torah, the Zabur and the Prophets, and the New Testament or New Covenant which is also known as the Injil. The old covenant was an agreement made between God and Israel with Moses as the mediator. The new covenant was made between God and all mankind with Jesus as the mediator. The first covenant was sealed with the blood of animals, while the second covenant was sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ, the perfect lamb having no defect or flaw. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. The sacrifices required by the law of Moses were temporary and symbolic of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. His blood, representing the life of a perfect man is the only blood that can effectively remove sin and it is effective for ever. That is why when the prophet John the Baptist (Yahya) saw Jesus, he said about him:

"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29)

In a vision the apostle John saw a Lamb in heaven standing in the centre of the throne of God, and those present sang a new song in his honour.

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals,
because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.
You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on earth."

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creature and the elders. In a loud voice they said:

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth
and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise." (Revelation 5:9-11)

Jesus died for all the inhabitants of the world. His blood was shed so that you might have your sins forgiven. Will you put your trust in him? The blood of Jesus will never let you down!

10. Jesus' Resurrection

In the Quran, Sura 19:33 Jesus is quoted as speaking as a baby from the cradle and saying: "Peace on me the day I was born and the day I die and the day I shall be raised alive."

In this paper evidence will be presented from the Injil concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Christians believe that if Jesus did not rise from the dead then their faith is in vain. They believe that Jesus died for their sins and that God the Father raised him from death as a guarantee that they also will be raised to eternal life.

The Historical Facts of Jesus' Resurrection (Read Matthew 27:57-66, 28:1-15)

Friday (verses 57-61) Jesus had been crucified on a cross and had died in the afternoon. A rich man named Joseph requested Jesus' body from the authorities so that he could bury him. Pilate the governor sent soldiers to make sure that Jesus was dead (Mark 15:42-5) and then he gave Joseph permission. He took the body down from the cross, wrapped it in a sheet and placed it in a tomb hewn out of solid rock.

Saturday (verses 62-66) Jesus had told his disciples many times that he would rise from the dead on the third day, so the Jewish leaders came to Pilate and asked him to guard the tomb carefully so that Jesus' body could not be stolen. They were given a guard of soldiers and they sealed the stone covering the entrance to the tomb with a Roman seal - carrying the authority of the Roman emperor.

Sunday (28:1-15) As day was dawning some women went to look at the tomb. There was an earthquake and an angel came and rolled the stone away from the entrance to the tomb and sat on it. The guards were terrified and became like dead men. Then the angel told the women not to be frightened, Jesus had risen from the grave. When they saw that his body was not there, they ran off with joy to tell his disciples. As they were going, Jesus appeared to them and they worshipped him. The soldiers went and told the Jewish leaders what had happened. The leaders bribed them and then spread the story that the disciples stole the body of Jesus during the night.

The testimony of the Apostle Peter (Read Acts of the Apostles 2:22-32)

Peter, the leader of Jesus' disciples, was filled with the Holy Spirit 40 days later. He preached to the crowd of visitors at Jerusalem and said:

"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge. And you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him:

"I saw the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;

my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave,

nor will you let your Holy One see decay.
You have made known to me the path of life;
You will fill me with joy in your presence,
With eternal pleasures at your right hand." (Psalm 16:8-11)

David was a prophet and he saw what God was going to do in the future and so he spoke about the resurrection of the Messiah in this way. Peter goes on to say that David could not have been speaking about himself, because David died and his tomb was still there, he had not risen.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is very important. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, Christians follow him in vain, because death conquered their Lord. But he did rise from the dead and these are the results:

- It proves that Jesus was the Son of God as he claimed.
- It shows that death has been conquered.
- It shows that Jesus is still alive today.
- It confirms the Christian hope of resurrection.

The Testimony of the Apostle Paul (Read 1 Corinthians 15)

This whole chapter contains teaching about the resurrection. Here are some excerpts:

"I passed on to you as of first importance that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter and then to the twelve." (verses 3-5)

"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." (verses 17-22)

The Testimony of the Apostle John (Read John 20:19-29)

After Jesus died, his disciples were frightened and hid behind locked doors. Suddenly on Sunday evening Jesus appeared to them in the room. He showed them the nail wounds in his hands and where he was pierced by a spear in his side. His disciples were filled with joy. Then Jesus told them that they were to be his witnesses.

One of the disciples called Thomas wasn't there when Jesus appeared to the other disciples. When they told, he wouldn't believe it. The following Sunday Jesus appeared to them again. He told Thomas to put his finger in his nail prints and side, to stop doubting and believe. Thomas said to him: "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus Commissions his Disciples

(Read Matthew 28:16-20)

Jesus appeared to his disciples on many occasions during 40 days. This was one such occasion. Perhaps this was when there were 500 present, (1 Corinthians 15:6) as this meeting was pre-arranged by Jesus. Most of the people worshipped him, but some still doubted. Then Jesus drew near to them and commanded them to be his witnesses. Jesus said several important things here:

- Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and earth.

- The disciples were to go to all people everywhere with the Gospel, making people Jesus' disciples.
- They were to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- They were to teach them to obey everything that Jesus had taught them.
- Jesus promised that he would be with his followers always, even to the end of the world.

In the first century the disciples succeeded in preaching the Gospel to the then known world around the Mediterranean Sea and as far east as India. This included north Africa and southern Europe. However it wasn't until the 19th century, when travel and knowledge of the world had increased, that missionaries could take the Gospel to every country. During the 20th century the Gospel spread to every country in the world. Now nearly every tribe and language has heard the good news.

Christians have undertaken this work, knowing that Jesus is indeed Lord and does have total authority both in heaven and on earth. They have gone with the confidence that Jesus is with them. In fact Jesus promised that wherever two or three Christians gather together in his name, he is there among them. No ordinary prophet can make a promise like that. Because Jesus is alive and his Spirit is everywhere, he is able to accompany every Christian through every minute of his life.

The good news that Jesus' disciples preach is the news that Christ died for our sins and rose again from the grave. Through faith in him we can have forgiveness of sins and the assurance that we are accepted by God and will one day rise from the dead also. Then we will praise our Maker for his love and grace throughout eternity.

11. Jesus' Ascension to Heaven

"God said, O Jesus, verily I will cause you to die, and I will take you up to me, and I will deliver you from the unbelievers.

And I will place those who follow you above the unbelievers until the day of resurrection."

The Quran, Sura 3:55

"But God took him (Jesus) to himself." The Quran, Sura 4:158

Jesus Ascension (Read Acts of the Apostles 1:1-11)

Jesus was crucified on a wooden cross, he died and was buried in a tomb. After three days he rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples on various occasions during a 40 day period. On the fortieth day he went with them to Bethany on the side of the Mount of Olives. While talking to them, he promised he would send them the Holy Spirit, and as he was blessing them he rose up into the air and was taken by God into heaven. The disciples watched him rising into the sky until a cloud hid him from view. Then some angels appeared to them and said that Jesus would return bodily to earth in the same way that they had seen him ascend to heaven.

Jesus' Exaltation (Read Acts of the Apostles 2:1-4, 32-39)

Ten days after Jesus' ascension to heaven, on the day of Pentecost, the promised Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus' disciples. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and power and then preached to the crowds gathered at Jerusalem for the festival. The coming of the Holy Spirit was the birth of the Church, for without the Holy Spirit there is no Church, the true Church consisting of Christians who have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them.

Peter preached to the people and said that God had raised Jesus from death and exalted him to his right side, from where he sent the Holy Spirit to be with his disciples. Jesus' exaltation to the right hand of God was prophesied by the prophet David in Psalm 110.

"The LORD said to my Lord,

'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet,'"

The apostle Paul describes it in this way:

"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9-11)

And in the book of Ephesians, chapter one, verses 19-23, Paul wrote:

"And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the mighty

strength which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."

Compare that with what the Quran say about Jesus in Sura 3:45

"His name shall be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary,
illustrious in this world and in the world to come,
and one of those who approach near to the presence of God."

Jesus' Intercession (Read John 17:1-26)

That Jesus is seated at the right hand of God is mentioned at least eight times in the Injil. His being at God's right hand shows his power to save us and this is further strengthened by the fact that he intercedes and prays for us there. In John chapter 17 Jesus prays for those people who belong to God, he does not pray for the "world", that is the unbelievers who have not put their faith in him. He prays that they would be kept safe from Satan. He prays for their unity, that they might be one in their love for one another and united to Jesus, just as he Jesus is united to the Father. He doesn't only pray for his present disciples, but for all those who will believe in him because of their witness. They are to be one big brotherhood, men and women, old and young, black and white, educated and uneducated.

The apostle Paul says that if while we were still sinners and God's enemies, Christ died for us and reconciled us to the Father, how much more will Christ save us by his life. Just as we intercede for others in our prayers for them, so Jesus is interceding for us. He does not want any born again Christian to be lost, but to be victorious over Satan and sin. Because of Jesus' intercession, nothing can separate the true believer from God's love. This gives the sincere Christian what is called the assurance of salvation - he knows for sure he is reconciled to God and saved, not just hoping. The apostle Paul puts it very majestically:

"If God is for us, who can be against us?
He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all -
how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?
Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?
It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns?
Christ Jesus who died - more than that, who was raised to life -
is at the right hand of God and is interceding for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
Shall trouble or hardship or persecution
or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?
As it is written:
For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
(Romans 8:31-39)

Because Jesus is our great high-priest, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Read Hebrews 4:14-16:

"Therefore, since we have a great high-priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high-priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Priests are people who are intermediaries between man and the supernatural. When an idol worshipper goes and sacrifices to his fetish, he first goes to the priest who accompanies him to the place of sacrifice. Under the law of Moses, Israelites could only approach God through priests, but when Jesus ascended to heaven, he became our high-priest and so Christians no longer need any priest here on earth. They pray directly to God the Father in the name of Jesus. God created us and he wants us to do his will and to trust him to look after us in every way. He wants us to talk to him daily in prayer about our needs and problems. He wants us to ask him to feed us, to protect us, to give us prosperity and help us in all our activities. He wants us to confess our sins, to praise him, to thank him and to pray for others. Everything is prayed in the name of Jesus and on the basis of all that he has done and is doing for us. Jesus said: "I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name."

"There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,"
(1 Timothy 2:5)

12. Jesus' Second Coming

Islamic Tradition

According to Islamic tradition, when Jesus returns to earth, he will reign about 40 years, marry and beget children. His reign will close with his death and he will be buried in the grave plot in Medina kept vacant for his remains. At the Resurrection Day Jesus will rise and stand along with other men to be judged before God Almighty.

Christian Teaching

According to the Injil, Jesus has already died and risen from death, never to die again. When he comes again he will come with power and glory and thousands of angels as King of kings and Lord of lords to reign forever. He will defeat all those who oppose him and will then judge everyone who has ever lived.

Every eye will see him

"Look he is coming with the clouds,
and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him;
and all the people of the earth will mourn because of him." (Revelation 1:7)

The Son of Man will come suddenly

"For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

"Immediately after the distress of those days
the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."

At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come."

(Matthew

24:27-31, 36-42)

Christians will rise from the dead

"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep (die), or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep (died) in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are

left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep (died). For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words."

(1

Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Jesus' coming as seen by John in a vision

"I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God."

(Revelation

19:11-13)

Jesus will judge the nations

"The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him."

(John 5:22-23)

"He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that Jesus is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead."

(Acts

10:42)

"For God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

(Acts 17:31)

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right,

"Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance,
the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world."

Then he will say to those on his left,

"Depart from me, you who are cursed,
into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.
For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat,
I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,
I was a stranger and you did not invite me in,
I needed clothes and you did not clothe me,
I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me."

They will answer,

"Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes

or sick or in prison, and did not help you?"

He will reply,

"I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did not do for me.

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

(Matthew 25:31-46)

"God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed."

(2

Thessalonians 1:6-10)

Jesus is coming soon

Jesus said:

"Behold I am coming soon! My reward is with me,
and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches.

I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!"

And let him who hears say, "Come!"

Whoever is thirsty, let him come;

and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life."

(Revelation 22:12-17)

13. Jesus, the I AM

Who is Jesus?

Is Jesus just an apostle of God, or is he God himself? In this paper we will be looking at this complex question, laying stress on Jesus' own teaching about himself.

The Quran says:

"In blasphemy indeed are those that say that Allah is Christ the Son of Mary." (Sura 5:19)

However there is a difference between saying that God is Jesus and in saying that Jesus is God. In saying "Allah is Christ" or "God is Jesus", one implies that the totality of God's being is found in Jesus Christ. Christians do not believe this. Jesus often talked about God, usually calling him his Father. In looking at this question "Who is Jesus?", we touch on a Christian doctrine of the Trinity which will be explained below.

God reveals himself to Moses as the "I AM" (Exodus 3:1-15)

The Israelites had been in Egypt for 400 years enslaved to Pharaoh. The time had come for God to take his people out of Egypt and take them to the land he had promised their forefather Abraham. God chose Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt.

One day while Moses was watching sheep, God spoke to him from a burning bush. The bush was burning, but was not destroyed. Moses approached the burning bush to see why it was not being destroyed. Then God called out to him: "Moses! Moses! Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." When Moses asked God what his name was, God said: "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you."

From that time on the Israelites called God by the name "I AM". In Hebrew this was pronounced Yahweh (Jehovah in English). The name became so holy to the Israelites that they would not pronounce it. When the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek and then into English, Yahweh was translated as "the LORD". The meaning of "I AM" is the One who is existing absolute or the self existing One.

Jesus used the name "I AM" for himself

In the Gospel according to John, Jesus uses the name "I AM" for himself many times.

I AM the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. (John 6:35)

I AM the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (8:12)

I AM the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. (10:9)

I AM the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (10:11)

I AM the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. (11:25)

I AM the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (14:6)

I AM the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit. (15:5)

In each of the above expressions Jesus uses the holy name of God, "I AM" for himself. This is not the ordinary way of saying "I am" in Greek, it is the emphatic form echoing God's name in Exodus 3:14. Note the following passages where Jesus also called himself "I AM".

I AM, don't be afraid. (6:20)

If you do not believe that **I AM**, you will indeed die in your sins.(8:24)

When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that **I AM**, and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. (8:28)

I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that **I AM**. (13:19)

Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked the, "Who is it you want?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "**I AM**" Jesus said. When Jesus said "I AM" they drew back and fell to the ground. (18:4-6)

Jesus claimed to do what only God does

It is not only that Jesus uses the name "I AM" that is evidence of his deity, but also what he claimed to do in the above expressions.

I AM the bread of life - I satisfy. What Jesus meant when he said he was the "bread of life" is explained in John 6:33 "For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." Jesus came down from heaven and he gives life to the world.

I AM the light of the world - I enlighten, I am the source of all light and truth.

I AM the good shepherd - I care for you and provide your every need

I AM the resurrection and the life - I give eternal life. Who is responsible for raising the dead and giving them life but God himself?

I AM the way and the truth and the life - I am the way to heaven, because I am the source of truth and the source of life. I am not *a* way, but *the* way.

I AM the vine, you are the branches. - I am the source of all life, blessing and fruitfulness. Jesus is the source of God's life which is eternal life. If we are not united to him, we cannot experience God's life which is eternal life.

The relationship between the Father and the Son

In the Injil the "Father", the "Son" and the "Holy Spirit" are all spoken of as "God." At the same time it is made very clear that there is only one God, not two or three or more. It is not a question of plurality of gods, it is a question of complexity in the godhead. God is God and not man, we should expect his Being to be more complex than ours. So Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all God, and they are all one in power, wisdom and honour. They have existed from eternity and live in complete harmony. At creation God said: "Let *us* make man in *our* image."

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."
(John 1:1-2)

The following words spoken by Jesus exhibit this oneness he had with the Father.

"Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. I tell

you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. "

(John 5:21-24)

"I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge, because he is the Son of Man"

(John 5:25-27)

"Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father."

(John 6:45-46)

"You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also."

(John 8:19)

"I and the Father are one."

(John 10:30)

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us. Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say: "Show us the Father. Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves."

(John 14:8-11)

"I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."

(John 16:28)

"And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."

(John 17:5)

14. Jesus' Virgin Birth

The Quran

"And remember her who guarded her chastity: We breathed into her of Our Spirit, and we made her and her son a sign for all peoples." (21:91)

Three questions arise from this verse in the Quran:

- Why did God interrupt the ordinary method of human generation in the case of Jesus and Jesus only?
- What does it mean when it says that God breathed his Spirit into Mary?
- In what way was the virgin birth of Jesus a sign for all peoples?

The Injil answers these questions as it gives us detailed accounts of Mary's conception and the birth of Jesus.

The Miraculous Conception (Read Luke 1:26-38)

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and his kingdom will never end." How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

There are *five characters* in this story :

- God, also called the Lord and the Most High,
- the angel Gabriel, sent by God,
- Mary who was engaged to Joseph, but not yet married to him,
- the Holy Spirit who would come upon Mary,
- Jesus, the baby to be born, also called Son of the Most High and the Son of God.

The Birth of Jesus (Read Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 2:1-20)

Here is the account of Jesus' birth as recorded by Matthew.

"This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" - which

means, "God with us."

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus."

The two names given to the child are very significant.

Jesus means "the Lord saves" and describes Jesus' main work. The angel told Joseph to name the child Jesus, because he would save his people from their sins. This was accomplished when he was 34 years old. Jesus died on the cross outside Jerusalem, the perfect sin offering, to take away the sins of the whole world. Everyone who believes in Jesus will have his sins forgiven.

Immanuel means "God with us" and describes Jesus' person. Jesus was a prophet and will return as king, but most important, he is God with us. When Jesus is called the Word of God, the Son of God or God with us, it is not suggested that God has a partner. There is only one God, but within his divine Being there are three distinctions - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The details of Jesus actual birth are given in Luke chapter 2.

"So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks by night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,

and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about. So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger."

Jesus, the Son of God

The normal way of conceiving a child, through sexual intercourse was bypassed. God intervened, his Holy Spirit came upon Mary and his power overshadowed her. So Jesus was born without a human father, the only human being ever to be born in this way. God was his Father, so he is called the Son of God. The Quran calls Jesus, the son of Mary, but in every other case a person is called the son of his father, not of his mother, so Son of God is more accurate.

The Quran affirms the virgin birth of Jesus, but misunderstands the relationships involved.

God does not have a wife

The Quran says: "How should he have issue, since he has no consort?" (6:102) The Injil does not suggest that God had a consort, it simply says that the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and caused her to conceive. God is Spirit, he does not have a physical body, so there is no thought of a physical union between God and woman. Nevertheless, Jesus is his child as much as any other child is his father's child.

God does not beget

The Quran says: "God is but one God. Far be it from him that he should have a son." (4:169) And again: "God is one God, the eternal God: He begetteth not, neither is he begotten and there is not anyone like unto him." (112:1-4) This is true in the general sense that God is the eternal, unchangeable God, but the fact that God was the Father of Jesus, as the Quran itself affirms, cannot be ignored.

The Trinity does not consist of God, Mary and Jesus

The Quran says: "And when God shall say to Jesus at the last day, O Jesus, son of Mary, have you said to men, Take me and my mother for two gods, beside God? He shall answer, Praise be to you! It is not for me to say that which I ought not." (5:116) Christians have never believed that Mary is part of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Spirit are all the one true God.

Jesus was not created in the same way as Adam

The Quran says: "Verily, the likeness of Jesus in the sight of God is as the likeness of Adam: He created him out of the dust, and then said to him, Be; and he was." (3:59) Adam was created out of dust, but Jesus wasn't, he was born of a virgin. Jesus was born of a woman, Adam wasn't. Adam was created directly by God himself, as there was no woman to bear him, but why was this method of human generation interrupted in Jesus' case and for Jesus alone?

Why Jesus was born of a virgin?

- The virgin birth was a *sign* for all peoples, a sign that the man Jesus Christ was someone different, someone supernatural, because his birth was supernatural. Gabriel told Mary that he would be a king, called the Son of God.
- The virgin birth was necessary so that Jesus could be born *sinless*. Ever since Adam disobeyed God in the garden, all men have been born weak sinners. We all have a fallen nature inherited from Adam. But Gabriel told Mary that her baby would be "the holy one". As a result Jesus lived a sinless life, he is the only perfect man.
- God wanted to begin a *new race*. For this reason Jesus is called the second Adam. Please read Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-22, 45-50. Just as all people die because of their union with Adam, in the same way all men will be raised to life because of their union with Christ. We become part of this new redeemed race through faith in Jesus.

15. Jesus, the Son of God

It is important to examine this subject, because "Son of God" is perhaps the most important title of Jesus in the Injil, while it is also the biggest stumbling block to Muslims. To understand the concept of "Son of God", one must understand the Christian concept of the Trinity.

The Trinity

God is not man, he is greater in every way and more complex in his Being or Essence. Christians are not polytheistic, they have always believed in one and only one God. At the same time they refer to God as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, because the Bible teaches that the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not three gods, they are three distinctions within the Being or Essence of the one true God. Christians can't understand fully God's complex Being, he is too great for that. They accept what has been revealed. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are the same in every way, except that the Son and the Spirit are not the Father, the Father and the Spirit are not the Son, and the Father and the Son are not the Spirit. So there are three distinctives within God's Being and this is called the Trinity.

Christians do not believe that God has a wife or consort. Christians do not believe that God can beget or have a son in a physical sense. Christians do not believe that God is Jesus, but they do believe that Jesus is God. Christians do not believe that Jesus taught people that they should take he and Mary for two gods beside God. Mary has nothing to do with the Trinity. These things are suggested in the Quran, either because Mohammed did not fully understand the Christian message or because some false Christians had taught him error. In Mohammed's day the idols in the Ka'ba were called daughters of Allah. This was pure idolatry and it was right for Mohammed to condemn it. But when he heard that Jesus was called the Son of God, he understood it in the same way, and so condemned the teaching without knowing the real meaning of Jesus' Sonship.

When Jesus commissioned his disciples to go and preach, he said: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19) When the apostle Paul blessed the Corinthian church, he said: "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

(2 Corinthians 13:14)

Why is Jesus called Son of God?

- One obvious reason why Jesus is called the Son of God, is that *Jesus had no human father*. Never before had a human being been born of a virgin. The birth of Jesus was unique. It was God who created the male seed in Mary's womb. As it was God who caused this miracle, it is natural to call Jesus the Son of God. This baby was conceived by God's direct intervention.
- When Jesus called some people "sons of the devil", he was not suggesting that the devil was their physical father. He was indicating that their character was the same as the devil's. Similarly Jesus is called the Son of God, because he has the *same character* as God.
- But there is a deeper meaning to the term "Son of God", it also means "*God the Son*".

The Bible teaches that God the Son has existed from eternity, there was never a time when the Son did not exist. The apostle John puts it this way: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." (John 1:1-3) Jesus was born into time as a man, but Jesus himself said: "Before Abraham was born, I am." (John 8:58) The birth of Jesus is called the incarnation, which means that the eternal Son of God, a spiritual being, became flesh, a human being. The apostle John puts it this way: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) Jesus prayed to his Father: "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began." (John 17:5) It is difficult for Muslims who have been taught the absolute oneness of God to understand the Christian concept of the Trinity, where Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all God, but that is the revelation contained in the Injil, it is the clear teaching of Jesus Christ and it is a doctrine that Christians have always believed.

The Deity of Jesus Christ

This is most eloquently expressed by the writer of the book of Hebrews, as he explains the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as revealer and as mediator of God's grace. Jesus is God's full and final revelation, superior to all prophets and angels, the ultimate sacrifice who is now seated at the right hand of God.

"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say:

"You are my Son, today I have become your Father."

Or again: "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?

And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world he says:

"Let all God's angels worship him."

In speaking of the angels he says:

He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire."

But about the Son he says:

"Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever,
and righteousness will be the sceptre of your kingdom.

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions
by anointing you with the oil of joy.

In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.

They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment.

You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed.

But you remain the same, and your years will never end."

To which of the angels did God ever say,

"Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."?

(Hebrews 1:1-13)

Jesus, the complete revelation

Jesus is the complete and full revelation of God, because according to the above passage from the Injil:

- The Son is the one through whom God created the universe.
- The Son is the one whom God has chosen to possess all things.
- The Son reflects the brightness of God's glory.
- The Son is the exact likeness of God's own being.
- The Son sustains the universe by his powerful word.
- The Son achieved forgiveness of sins for all mankind.
- The Son sat down in heaven on God's right hand.

None of these things could be said of an ordinary prophet. From beginning to end the Injil teaches these truths. The Quran also testifies to the truth of the Injil:

"And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: *We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light*, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah." (Sura 5:49)

Some people say that the Injil must have been changed or corrupted. There is no evidence of this. It is no more possible for someone to change the Injil as it would be for someone to change the Quran. As the Quran itself says:

"The words of the Lord are perfect in truth and in justice: none can change his words." (Sura 6:116)

The Quran, in fact, *commands* Muslims to believe the Injil, so it is important that those who desire the truth think carefully about who Jesus is and what he did.

"O you who believe! Believe in Allah and his Apostle, and the scripture which he has sent to his Apostle and the scripture which he sent to those before him. Any who denies Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Apostles and the Day of Judgment has gone far, far astray." (Sura 4:136)

"Dispute not, unless in kindly sort, with the People of the Book (Christians), save as such of them who have dealt wrongfully with you: And say: "We believe in what has been sent down to us and has been sent down to you. Our God and your God is one, and to him we are self-surrendered." (Sura 29:46)

Who is Jesus?

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible or invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

(Colossians 1:15-17)

16. Jesus, the Word of God

Kalimatu'llah

The Quran testifies to the fact that Jesus is the Word of God:

"The angels said: O Mary! Allah gives you good news of a Word from him: His name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the hereafter and of the company of those nearest to Allah." (Sura 3:45)

The "Word of God" has a very close relationship with God

"Word" indicates speech or communication and the "Word of God" usually came in the form of a prophecy, a command or an encouragement. It is a verbal manifestation of God's message to us. When Jesus Christ is called the Word of God, it means that he, in a unique way, is God's message to us, he is the ultimate manifestation of God's will. Jesus said: "These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me." (John 14:24) It is true that any prophet could say these words when speaking under inspiration, but Jesus also said:

"The words I say to you are not just my own.

Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me;

or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves." (John 14:10-11)

Jesus tells us that the miracles he did were a sign to us that he had a very close relationship with God the Father, a relationship which enabled him to speak God's words and to do God's work. This relationship is made clear in the first chapter of John's gospel.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things were made;

without him nothing was made that has been made.

In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:1-5)

It is the very nature of God to reveal himself. A man communicates his thoughts by speaking a word. God also communicates his thoughts through his Word, and his Word is Jesus Christ.

The "Word of God" is eternal

The first thing we learn is that this Word has existed from the beginning, in fact all of creation was made through the Word. Put another way, the Word of God, Jesus Christ is the Creator who has existed from eternity.

The second thing we learn is his relationship with God. We are told that from the beginning Jesus Christ was with God and also that he is God. This teaching from holy Scripture can only be explained by the doctrine of the Trinity - not that there are three gods, but that God has a complex nature in which there are three distinctions - God, His Word and His Spirit.

The Word came into the world

This Word of God is not just an attribute or activity of God, the Word of God is a person. John goes on to say:

"He was in the world, and though the world was made through him,
the world did not recognize him.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father,
full of grace and truth.

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

(John 1:10,14,17)

The identity of the Word is made clear. He is Jesus Christ, who stepped out of eternity into time. He left his position with God in heaven and was born as a human baby in Bethlehem. From this point on Jesus is not called the Word of God, but the Son, and God is called the Father. This Father-Son relationship is an appropriate relationship for God and man, but we must never lose sight of the fact that the man Jesus Christ is also the eternal Word of God.

"The Word became flesh" so that we could see God and know him. Jesus said: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." Jesus was born a human being, he came into the world to reveal God to us, so that we can really know God. "In him was life, and that life was the light of men." Jesus only can give us eternal life, the life of God himself. And Jesus alone is the light of the world - he proclaims the truth as nobody else could. The darkness he dispels is error, sin and death and the spiritual world of evil - Satan and his demons.

Jesus is the source of grace as well as truth. Grace is God's unmerited favour to us, his kindness to us who don't deserve it. It is made possible, because of what Jesus did on the cross. He died in our place, he suffered the penalty for our sins, so that we might be forgiven. His dying on the cross in our place reveals the love that God has in his heart for mankind.

Fellowship with the Word of God

The apostle John, who was the disciple closest to Jesus, wrote a letter to Christians in which he described the Word of God like this:

"That which was from the beginning,
which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes,
which we have looked at and our hands have touched -
this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

The life appeared, we have seen it and testify to it,
and we proclaim to you the eternal life,
which was with the Father, and has appeared to us.

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard,
so that you also may have fellowship with us.

And our fellowship is with the Father

and with his Son, Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:1-3)

John was privileged to walk this earth with the Word of God. He heard him, he saw him, he touched him. He shares his testimony with others and desires that they share in this fellowship with Jesus. Jesus died and was buried. He rose from death on the third day and

ascended to heaven. Just as John heard Jesus' voice and saw him and touched him, he wants us to join in the same experience, because he was still enjoying that fellowship with God the Father and God the Son in heaven. Yes, we can know God, and we can experience fellowship with him. He is not an unknown Being high in the sky somewhere. God is great, but his greatness does not stop him from having fellowship with men and women who submit to his will. For this reason he puts his Spirit in us.

The Return of the Word of God

The apostle John wrote five of the 27 books which form the Injil. The final book is called the Revelation of Jesus Christ. It is a vision John received from God about the return of Jesus Christ and the end of the world. In chapter 19 he speaks of the Word of God:

"I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron sceptre. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

"King of kings and Lord of lords."

(Revelation

19:11-16)

We have seen that the Word of God was with God before creation. We have seen that he came into the world as a baby and revealed God to us. And now we see him returning to the world in majesty and splendour on a victor's horse to rule the nations as King of kings and Lord of lords. His robe is dipped in blood, because of the blood he shed on the cross to atone for our sin. The sharp sword coming out of his mouth is his word of command, which no one can withstand.

Whose side will you be on when Jesus comes again to judge the nations and judge and punish the evildoers? Jesus said: "Yes, I am coming soon."

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

17. Jesus, Light of the World

Jesus said:

"I am the **light** of the world.

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness,
but will have the **light** of life."

(John 8:12)

700 years before Isaiah prophesied about Jesus and said:

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great **light**;

on those living in the land of the shadow of death a **light** has dawned." (Isaiah

9:2)

600 years after Jesus the Quran declared:

"And we caused Jesus son of Mary to follow in their footsteps, confirming that which was revealed before him, and we bestowed on him the Gospel wherein is guidance and **light**, confirming that which was before it in the Torah - a guidance and admonition to those who ward off evil."

(Sura 5:46)

To understand what it means for Jesus to be the **light** of the world, we need to know what the terms **light** and darkness mean in the figurative sense.

God is light

God lives in **light** that no one can approach. In the physical world there are the two realms of **light** and darkness, and so it is in the spiritual world. God's realm is **light**, and it is characterized by truth, justice, freedom and life. Satan's realm is darkness, and it is characterized by error, evil, slavery and sin. When God created the world, he said:

"'Let there be **light**,' and there was **light**."

God saw that the **light** was good,
and he separated the **light** from the darkness." (Genesis 1:3-4)

Satan is darkness

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood (human beings),
but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world
and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

(Ephesians 6:12)

The realm of darkness is ruled by Satan and demons, spirits to whom men sacrifice and invoke blessings. Villages and children are given spirit names, a surrender of their souls to the powers of darkness.

Many religions and philosophies are doctrines that come from demons. Their aim is to keep people in darkness away from the **light** of God's truth. All men are born into this realm of darkness and the only way out of the darkness is through faith in Jesus, the **light** of the world.

Hell is a place of outer darkness, while Paradise is a place that needs no sun or moon to **light** it, because the glory of God shines on it and Jesus is its lamp.

Jesus, the Light of the world

Into this dark evil world which is under Satan's power, the Son of God came to bring **light** to all people. God is **light** and Jesus came to reveal this **light** to us. Satan's kingdom is threatened by this, so he does all in his power to stop people from seeing the **light** and becoming Christians. Every man must choose whether he wants to live in the **light** or in the darkness. Most people choose the darkness. The prophet Yahaya was sent by God to testify concerning Jesus:

"There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John.(Yahya)

He came as a witness to testify concerning the **light**, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the **light**; he came only as a witness to the **light**.

The true **light** that gives **light** to every man was coming into the world." (John 1:6-9)

Jesus said the following concerning his role as the Saviour of the world and the **Light** of the world:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: **Light** has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of **light** because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the **light**, and will not come into the **light** for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the **light**, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

(John 3:16-21)

And not long before his crucifixion he said to his disciples:

"You are going to have the **light** just a little while longer. Walk while you have the **light**,

before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the **light** while you have it, so that you may become sons of **light**."

(John 12:35-36)

To be a "son of **light**" is to belong to God who is **light**. It also means someone who is enlightened because of his relationship with God.

"But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day (of Jesus coming again) should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of **light** and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness."

(1 Thessalonians 5:4-5)

Coming out of darkness into the light

People are in darkness under Satan's power, they have been blinded by false traditions, false religions and false philosophies. So Jesus said to the apostle Paul when sending him on his mission to preach to the nations:

"I am sending you to them to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to **light**, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." (Acts 26:18)

Later the apostle Paul wrote the following to the Christians in Corinth:

"Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age (Satan) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the **light** of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let **light** shine out of darkness, made his **light** shine in our hearts to give us the **light** of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:3-6)

The glory of God can only be seen by those who put their faith in Jesus, who is the image of God. Those who reject the gospel fail to see God's glory, because it can only be seen in Jesus. To the Christians in Colossae Paul wrote:

"Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of **light**. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

(Colossians 1:12-14)

Christians live in the light

"For you were once darkness, but now you are **light** in the Lord. Live as children of **light**

for the fruit of the **light** consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth." (Ephesians 5:8-9)

"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is **light**; in him there is no darkness at all.

If we claim to have fellowship with him, yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth.

But if we walk in the **light**, as he is in the **light**, we have fellowship with one another,

and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."

(1 John 1:5-7)

(1 John 1:5-7)

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God,

that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful **light**."

(1 Peter 2:9)

18. Jesus, the Good Shepherd

The Lord is my Shepherd

The relationship of a shepherd to his sheep is one of loving care. The shepherd is always with his sheep, he feeds them, protects them, gives them rest and looks after their every need. One of the favourite Psalms of David is Psalm 23 where he compares God's love and care for his people to a shepherd looking after his sheep:

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul.
He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the day of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.'

Sinners are like lost sheep

"We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him(Jesus)
the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

Sheep don't have much initiative, they need someone to follow. We human beings are very much like sheep in this respect. The prophet tells us that we have all gone astray, we have strayed away from God's path, we have neglected the advice that God has given us in his Word and chosen to go the way of the godless world.

Jesus helps us in two ways. Firstly, the prophet says that the Lord laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all. That means that when Jesus died on the cross, he suffered the punishment of all the sin and evil that we have done, making it possible for God to forgive us. So the Shepherd of our souls leads us back to God. Secondly he looks for us so that he might rescue us and give us health and strength as described by the prophet Ezekiel:

"For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David (that is David's descendant, Jesus), and he will tend them and be their shepherd. I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them."
(Ezekiel 34:11-12,16,23)

Jesus' love for his sheep

"When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." (Matthew 9:36)

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command. (John 15:12-14)

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me - just as the Father knows me and I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life - only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand."

(John 10:11-12,14-15,17-18, 25-29)

God is love

God rejoices over the repentant sinner.

"What do you think? If a man owns 100 sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the 99 on the hills and go back to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the 99 who did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost." (Matthew 18:12-14)

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us."

(1 John 4:7-12)

God's love for us is illustrated by the story of Abraham and Isaac, recorded by the prophet Moses in Genesis chapter 21. God had promised Abraham that he would give him and his descendants the land of Canaan. But Abraham's wife Sarah was barren. Abraham was 100 years old and his wife 90 years old, normally too old for bearing children. But God performed a miracle and Sarah bore a son who was named Isaac. Abraham was very proud of his son, and although he had another son, Ishmael, by Sarah's maid, he knew that God's promises to him were to be fulfilled through his unique son Isaac.

So, imagine Abraham's surprise when God tells him to take his son Isaac and sacrifice

him on a certain mountain as an act of worship. Abraham obeyed, and it was only at the last moment, when he was about to cut Isaac's throat, that an angel told him to stop. He was then able to sacrifice a sheep in Isaac's place. Isaac was very special to Abraham, Abraham loved him very much. But Abraham was willing to give him up. This is a picture of God's love for us.

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

The Shepherd's Protection

Jesus said to his disciples:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.
I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:27)

Jesus' followers don't pray for him, he prays for them - continually. Jesus is the perfect High Priest. "Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to make intercession for them, one who is holy, blameless, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens."
(Hebrews 7:25-26)

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, "he is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."
Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.
He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.
A thousand may fall at your right side ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.

You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

If you make the Most High your dwelling even the Lord, who is my refuge,
then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

They will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him;

I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

He will call upon me and I will answer him,

I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him.

With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation." (Psalm 91)

19. Jesus' victory over Satan

Who is Satan?

From the book of Job we learn that Satan is a leading angel who is given permission by God to test Job.

"One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."
(Job 1:6)

On reading further we find that Satan is able to kill and destroy and can manipulate humans and nature to work out his purposes.

The apostle Paul calls Satan "the god of this age" who "has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Corinthians 4:4) By calling him "god of this world", Paul means that Satan has taken the place in the lives of unbelievers that God alone should have. He blinds people's minds so that they follow ungodly philosophies and false religions and ignore truth as revealed by God. In Ephesians 2:2 the apostle Paul calls Satan "the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient." Spirits do not have bodies. Satan is a spirit and the ruler or king over other spirits. He is not restricted to earth, his kingdom is in the air.

In Hebrews 2:14 we learn that Jesus became man "so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil." Satan is also called Iblis, the evil one or the devil. Satan holds the power of death, because he induces people to sin and to come under sin's penalty, which is death.

The apostle John says:

"We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God (Jesus) keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.
(1 John 5:19)

Again we learn that Satan is in control of unbelievers.

Satan's kingdom

Satan's kingdom consists of hundreds of thousands of spirits known as demons, evil spirits, nature spirits, territorial spirits or jinn. It appears that they are fallen angels, that is angels who sinned and rebelled against God. Satan is not all powerful like God. He is a created being, but his power and the extent of his activity is increased by the cooperation of this host of demons.

"Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. But some of them said, "By Beelzebub (another name for Satan), the prince of demons, he is driving out demons." Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub. But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

(Luke 11:14-20)

The apostle Paul told Christians at Ephesus that their struggle is not against flesh and blood (human beings), but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."
(Ephesians 6:12)

Satan and his demons adapt the manner of their activity according to the locality and the enlightenment of the age, but both the animist in the village and the atheist in the university are under Satan's power.

Satan confronts Jesus

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Then the devil took him to the holy city (Jerusalem) and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." Jesus answered him: "It is also written: Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

Again the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only." Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.
(Matthew 4:1-11)

The purpose of God for man in this world is that he might be saved from sin and death. The Saviour provided by God is Jesus Christ, the sinless one who died in our place. If Satan could only tempt Jesus to sin, he would ruin God's purpose. Jesus was not to accomplish his mission by using his power for his own needs (1st temptation), or to win a large following by miracles or magic (2nd temptation) or by compromising with Satan (3rd temptation). Jesus never sinned by action or word or thought. Jesus defeated Satan by using the written word of God.

Satan's sin was pride. He said:

"I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."
(Isaiah 14:14)

Satan is in competition with God, he wants the whole world to worship him. He is a liar and deceiver, deceiving people with false philosophies and religions. All who sacrifice to spirits have been deceived into worshipping Satan. But he was not able to deceive Jesus.

Jesus confronts Satan

An important part of Jesus ministry was casting out demons from people who were afflicted with them. This was a direct attack by Jesus on Satan's kingdom.

"When evening came, many who were demon possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick."
(Matthew 8:16)

Not only did Jesus cast out demons himself, he also gave his disciples authority to do it.

"He called his 12 disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness."
(Matthew 10:1)

Later Jesus sent out 72 disciples with the same purpose. When they returned they said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy, nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

(Luke 10:17-20)

Jesus explains this victory by the fact that although Satan is strong, someone stronger than him has come to attack his kingdom.

"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe.

But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armour in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils." (Luke 11:21-22)

Jesus' victory over Satan

Jesus said: "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world (Satan) will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth (crucifixion), will draw all men to myself."

(John 12:31-33)

"And having disarmed the powers and authorities (demons),

Jesus made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them by the cross." (Colossians 2:15)

Jesus' death on the cross looked like defeat, but in fact it was a great victory - victory over sin, death and Satan. Victory over sin, because on the cross Jesus paid the penalty for the sins of mankind, so enabling those who believe in him to be forgiven. Victory over death, because on the cross he conquered death. He rose from the dead himself and guaranteed believers that they would have eternal life. Victory over Satan, because on the cross Jesus defeated the enemy, Satan and his demons, by making man's salvation sure.

Satan's defeat is recorded this way in the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation:

"And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down - that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels (demons) with him. Then I heard a voice in heaven say:

"Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you!

He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short." (Revelation 12:7-12)

We can escape his fury when we throw in our lot with Jesus, the only one who is stronger than Satan. The final doom of Satan is also foretold in the book of Revelation. "And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Revelation 20:10)

Jesus has won the victory over Satan. The victory belongs to Christians as well as promised by the apostle Paul: "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." (Romans 16:20)

20. Jesus and the Kingdom of God

What is the Kingdom of God?

There are many kingdoms in the world, many governments ranging from local to national. All these governments have been established by man, but there is one government that has been established by God. In the Bible it is called the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. It is not God's own kingdom, which is universal, it is a kingdom from God, the kingdom that God has established here on earth. The king in this kingdom is Jesus, the Messiah whom God has chosen. People from every country on earth are now entering this kingdom, they are leaving Satan's kingdom of darkness and entering Jesus' kingdom of light. This kingdom is here now, but it is not recognized by the world. When Jesus comes again, he will come as king and sit on his throne. His kingdom will take over from all present governments. This kingdom from God was spoken about by the prophets thousands of years ago.

The prophet Nathan

When David, king of Israel, wanted to build a temple for the Lord at Jerusalem, the prophet Nathan spoke this promise from God to him:

"When your days are over and you go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne *forever*. I will be his father, and he will be my *son*. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor. I will set him over my house and my kingdom *forever*; his throne will be established *forever*."

(1 Chronicles 17:11-14)

This promise was partly fulfilled when David's son Solomon became king, but the prophet Nathan saw further ahead than Solomon. His prophecy is only completely fulfilled in the Messiah. Only Jesus' throne will last *forever*. Only Jesus is the true Son of God.

The prophet David

King David made this prophecy about the Messiah, the king who will rule the world from Jerusalem. Although he was David's descendant, because of his greatness, David calls him 'my Lord.'

"The LORD says to my Lord,
'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.
The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion (Jerusalem);
you will rule in the midst of your enemies."

(Psalm 110:1-2)

The prophet Daniel

The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about world kingdoms and a kingdom from God that would last *forever*. The prophet Daniel told him his dream:

"You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue - an enormous dazzling

statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth." (Daniel 2:31-35)

And then the prophet Daniel interpreted the dream and told king Nebuchadnezzar that he was the head of gold and other world rulers would be the chest and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of bronze, the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay.

"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure *forever*. This is the meaning of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands - a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the silver and the gold to pieces." (Daniel 2:44-45)

The future king was revealed to Daniel in a vision.

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a *son of man*, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language *worshipped* him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." (Daniel 7:13-14)

Who is this king, a human being who will be worshipped by all nations?

The prophet Yahaya

When the prophet Yahaya (John the Baptist) came to prepare the way for Jesus, he preached:

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." (Matthew 3:2)

When Jesus began preaching he also said:

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." (Matthew 4:17)

The prophet Issa

The prophet Issa (Jesus) was thinking of Daniel's vision when he taught his disciples saying:

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

(Matthew 25:31-34, 41)

After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, he appeared to his disciples many times. During one appearance he said:

"*All* authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of *all* nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey *everything* I have commanded you. And surely I am with you *always*, to the very end of the age."

(Matthew 28:18-20)

The apostle Paul

Inspired by the Spirit of God the apostle Paul tells us what will happen at the end of this age.

"Then the end will come, when Christ hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed *all* dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put *all* his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he 'has put *everything* under his feet.' Now when it says that 'everything' has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all."

(1 Corinthians 15:24-28)

God is calling people out of every nation to come and live with him throughout eternity. Jesus said:

"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is *born again*."
(John 3:3)

"No one comes to the Father *except through me*."

(John 14:6)

If you want to belong to the kingdom that God has established on earth and enjoy God's presence throughout eternity, believe in *Jesus* today. He is the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of kings and the Lord of lords to whom every one will bow his knee.