

UNDERSTANDING
JESUS
AND
MUHAMMAD

What the ancient texts say about them

Bernie Power



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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction	v
1. Is Jesus 'God'?	1
2. Is Jesus the Son of God?	8
3. Why was Jesus so limited?	16
4. Understanding the Trinity	21
5. What the Qur'an teaches about Muhammad	31
6. What the Qur'an teaches about Jesus	39
7. Prophecies about Muhammad in the Bible	46
8. The sinlessness of Jesus Christ, according to the Qur'an, hadith and Bible	53
9. Was Muhammad sinless? What the Qur'an, hadith, Sira and Islamic commentators say	57
10. The miracles of Jesus	64
11. Muhammad and miracles	71
12. Jesus, violence and peace	82
13. Muhammad and violence	89
14. What Muhammad said about violence, fighting and jihad	97
15. How Jesus responded to women	103
16. Muhammad and women	109
17. Did Jesus really die and rise again?	117
18. The death of Muhammad	125
19. Jesus and the end of the age	133
20. Muhammad and the end of the age	138
21. Jesus and faith	144
22. Muhammad and faith	149
Afterword	154
Bibliography	155

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Bernie Power

INTRODUCTION

It has been alleged by some that neither Jesus nor Muhammad ever existed.¹ Others have argued that their lives are so overlaid with legend and myth that it is impossible to discover what they really said and did. They also claim that neither the Bible nor the Islamic early documents are reliable records of the events surrounding the lives of Jesus and Muhammad. Both Christian² and Muslim³ scholars have responded to these charges.

It is not the aim of this book to discuss such matters. The view is taken here that these early texts are recognised as authoritative by their respective faith communities. The texts operate as ‘functional truth’ within those communities independently, as it were, of their relative historical merits. Christians and Muslims have built their belief systems, lives and institutions around them, and the texts are generally accepted as historical givens.

Our goal is to examine some aspects of the lives and teaching of Jesus and Muhammad using these texts as data.

This book is written for Muslims and Christians and for others who want to know more about these two very important individuals. A case could be made that Jesus and Muhammad are the most crucial personalities in history, and that the future of civilisation might depend on how the followers of the two great religions they founded, Christianity and Islam, will interact with each other and within themselves.

This book aims to give an introductory understanding of Jesus Christ, with the questions in mind that Muslims might raise. It does not say everything about Jesus that could be said, nor is it an in-depth analysis. It is only an introduction, and to gain a fuller understanding of Jesus, one should read the Bible and other relevant books for oneself.

Likewise, this book seeks to give an introduction to Muhammad based on questions that Christians might raise. It does not say everything about Muhammad that could be said – that would take a significantly larger volume. For a fuller understanding, one needs to read the Qur’an, the Sira literature (biographies of Muhammad) and the hadith (traditions), as well as other books. Another writer might emphasise completely different aspects of Muhammad’s life, and readers are encouraged to look at other sources as well to gain a more comprehensive view of Muhammad.

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1. See Ehrman’s *Did Jesus Exist?* and Spencer’s *Did Muhammad Exist?*
2. McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, and Strobel, *The Case for Christ*.
3. Ahmed Deedat, *The Choice*.

The topics were chosen because they give a helpful comparison between Jesus and Muhammad and provide a basis for assessment and comparison of both their lives.

It is hoped that, by reading this, Christians and Muslims will come to a deeper understanding of what the other might believe, thus opening the door for further discussions.

WHAT THE QUR’AN TEACHES ABOUT MUHAMMAD

The young Muslim woman’s face was intense and glowing as she told me: ‘Muhammad was the greatest man to have ever set foot on the earth. A perfect leader, a perfect husband, a perfect father, and an ideal role model. That’s why I love him so much.’

The Qur’an is seen by Muslims as the literal word of Allah, and Muhammad is seen as Islam’s (and the world’s) final prophet. One might expect to find all the crucial information about Muhammad in the Qur’an. However, it lacks many details about Muhammad’s life (see the final section of this chapter), and there is no chronology of his life outlined in the Qur’an because the Qur’an itself is not in chronological order. It is only through the use of the *Sira* (biographies) of Muhammad, *hadith* (traditions), *tafsir* (commentaries) and *tarikh* (histories) that we are able to find out such details.

The earliest extant biography of Muhammad is that of Ibn Hisham in 218 AH/833 AD,¹ 200 years after Muhammad died in 10 AH/632 AD. This is an edited version of an earlier but now lost biography of Ibn Ishaq (d. 149 AH /767 AD). Another important biography is by al-Tabari (d.319 AH/932 AD).

The hadith are another essential source of detail about Muhammad’s life. The most authentic (*saheeh*) hadith are the collections by al-Bukhari (d.256 AH/870 AD) and Muslim (d.261 AH/875 AD).

The most important early commentaries are by Ibn Kathir and Jalalayn, and al-Tabari’s history is a key one.

It is only as we read these other historical accounts that we are able to place certain events of Muhammad’s life into some kind of chronological order and identify the details that are found in the Qur’an.

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1. These dates use both the Muslim and Western calendars. AH stands for ‘After Hijra’, being the number of years after the migration of Muhammad and the Muslims from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD. Islam follows a lunar year with about ten days less per annum than the Gregorian AD calendar used by most nations.

The historical, cultural and religious background of Muhammad's life

According to many Muslims, in about 570 AD, the year that Muhammad was born, there was an unsuccessful attack on Mecca by the Abyssinian (Ethiopian) forces. Their army was led by the general Abraha who used elephants as cavalry. The Qur'an, in one of the few historically verifiable events that it records, refers to this event (Q.105:1-5). Another was the ongoing war between 'Rome' (Constantinople) and Persia (Q.30:2-4). The Qur'an also refers to some aspects of the social and economic conditions in Arabia at Muhammad's time. These include:

- summer and winter caravans (Q.106:2) – the Meccan camel caravans carrying goods for sale and trade went to north to Syria in the winter and south to Yemen in the summer
- the Arab practice of raiding other tribes (Q.100:1-11)
- pagan customs (Q.5:103-104)
- the naming of the three daughters of Allah as pagan goddesses (Q.53:19-20)
- the Arab preference for male children (Q.53:21-22)
- the live burial of unwanted infant girls (Q.81:8-9).

Specific details about Muhammad's life from the Qur'an

When Muhammad was young, he was a poor and unguided orphan (Q.93:6-8). When, as an adult, he received the first revelation (described in Q.96:1-5), Muhammad thought he was going insane (Q.68:1-3) and he despaired and attempted suicide.² However, he was reassured by a new vision in which Gabriel comforted him (Q.81:23). Some time later, he was told to preach publicly.³ Right up until his death, Muhammad continued to receive auditory revelations,⁴ claiming that they came from God (Q.75:16), the spirit,⁵ the angel,⁶ Gabriel (Q.2:97) and an unnamed being who was mighty in power (Q.53:5-12). He was taught by Gabriel how to recite the Qur'an (Q.73:4) and was made to recite the revelations (Q.87:6-8). He was not free to add his own ideas, for he was told by Gabriel to say that he only followed what was revealed.⁷

Opposition to Muhammad and how he responded to it

During the years that he lived in Mecca, after receiving the first revelation, Muhammad preached against the idols of the Arab pagans (Q.53:19-20, 62). The people plotted against him (Q.86:15), and he was even opposed by his

2. Q.93:3; 18:6; 26:3.

3. Q.73:1-5; 26:213-214.

4. Q.53:10; 81:19.

5. Q.26:192; 16:102; 42:52.

6. Q.16:2; 15:8; cf. 53:5; 81:23.

7. Q.10:15-16; 46:9.

uncle Abu Lahab and his aunt (Q.11:1–5). In one of his revelations, he was commanded to ‘withdraw from those who join other gods with Him’ (Q.6:106) and told that most people would not believe in his message (Q.12:103). Even his own tribe, the Quraish, wanted him to compromise by accepting that they could worship their idols, but he refused (Q.109:1–6).

On one occasion he recited some positive verses about three pagan goddesses, but he was later told that this revelation did not come from Allah. He was informed by Gabriel that Satan sometimes interjects into prophecies, but Allah cancels these out (Q.22:52). These cancelled verses were substituted with new ones (Q.2:106).

As a result of this and due to his other teachings, Muhammad was mocked by the people of Mecca (Q.25:41–42) and at times they prevented him from praying at the Ka’ba (Q.96:9–19). Life was getting very hard for Muhammad. He even suffered on a social and familial level when he lost his wealth and his sons died (Q.9:85).

Many accusations were made against Muhammad

The initial opposition to Muhammad was verbal. Meccans made many allegations about him (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. Accusations made against Muhammad

Accusations	Arabic term	Qur’anic references
he is mad or possessed	<i>majnoon</i>	Q.7:184; 15:6; 37:36; 44:14; 52:29; 68:2, 51; 81:22
he is bewitched	<i>mas-Huur</i>	Q.17:47; 25:8
he is a poet	<i>shaa’ir</i>	Q.21:5; 36:69; 37:36; 52:30; 69:41
he is a magician	<i>saahir</i>	Q.10:2; 11:7; 34:43; 38:4; 53:2; 74:24
he is a soothsayer	<i>kahin</i>	Q.52:29; 69:42
he is a forger	<i>muftar</i>	Q.10:38; 11:13; 16:101; 21:5; 25:4; 34:43; 46:8 (<i>afterahu</i>)
he is a liar	<i>kadhhaab</i>	Q.38:4; 53:11
he fabricates his revelations	<i>taqawwal</i>	Q.52:33
he invents false sayings	<i>taquul al’aqawweel</i>	Q.69:44
he is only human	<i>bashar</i>	Q.74:25; 18:110; 17:93; 41:6
he has a jinn	<i>bihi jina</i>	Q.23:70
he tells ‘tales of the ancients’ ...	<i>asateer al’awwaliin</i>	Q.6:25; 8:31; 16:24; 23:83; 25:5; 27:68; 31:6; 46:17; 68:15; 83:13
... which he obtained from human informants	<i>Yu’allimuhu bashar</i>	Q.25:5; 16:103
he lends his ear to every news [lit. ‘he is an ear’]	<i>huwa udhun</i>	Q.9:61
the Meccans asked: ‘Why hasn’t treasure been sent down to him or an angel come with him?’	<i>Lo la unzil ‘alayhi kanz aw jaa’ ma’u malak</i>	Q.11:12

Although he was a prophet, Muhammad struggled at times to do the right thing. For example, he was rebuked by Allah for paying attention to a powerful pagan while ignoring a poor, blind enquirer (Q.80:1–12). At other times, he received divine help and encouragement: on one particular night, his heart was cleansed (Q.94:1–8) and he made a journey to heaven.⁸ During this journey, he was ushered almost into the divine presence (Q.53:11–18). Not long after this, he established the daily prayers (Q.30:16f).

Although he was persecuted and opposed by his own townspeople,⁹ he was informed¹⁰ that some jinn or spirits did respond to his preaching (Q.72:1–2). The opposition intensified. Muhammad was threatened with death by the Meccans, but he was told by Allah that he would be successful (Q.43:39–42). ‘When the unbelievers plotted against you to keep you prisoner, or to kill you, or to banish you; they plotted, but Allah plotted; and Allah is the best of plotters’ (Q.8:30).

Eventually he migrated to Yathrib with his followers.¹¹ In response to his preaching, some Jews converted to Islam (Q.3:198f), but most rejected his message and mocked him.¹² In response to the Jewish rejection of the message of Islam, the Qiblah, or direction of prayers, was changed from Jerusalem to Mecca (Q.2:138ff), and the yearly fast was transferred from the Jewish Day of Atonement to the Arabian month of Ramadhan (Q.2:179–183).

Muhammad was also in conflict with the Christians (Q.98:1–8). He was opposed by the ‘hypocrites’¹³ and betrayed by the Bedouin (Q.9:91). As a result of a Muslim attack on a Meccan caravan, he took part in the Battle of Badr, which the Muslims won against overwhelming odds.¹⁴ After the Battle of Uhud (Q.3:102–188), a Jewish tribe (Bani Nadir) had its date-palm trees burnt by the Muslims and was expelled from Medina without possessions (Q.59:2–6, 13). There are some details of the Battle of the Trench (Q.33:9–25) and the subsequent execution and enslavement of a Jewish tribe (Bani Qurayza) (Q.33:26–27). Muhammad was accused of unfairness in the division of booty after successful battles (Q.3:153–159).

Muhammad was given a list of women permitted to him as wives (Q.33:50), and some details about his wives’ behaviour is given (Q.33:28–34). He was permitted to change their nightly turns of sleeping with him (Q.33:51) and allowed to break an oath that he had made to some of them

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8. Q.17:1.

9. Q.53:1–18; 81:17–23.

10. When asked about how he knew this, Muhammad reportedly replied that ‘a tree told him’ (al-Bukhari 5:199, <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/63>).

11. Q.4:100; 9:100; 24:22; 59:8.

12. Q.2:98; 4:48f.

13. Q.2:7–17, 63:1–2, 7–8; etc.

14. Q.5:12; 3:123; 8:5–18, 42–44.

(Q.66:1–4). He adopted a son (Zaid bin Haritha), although the adoption was later repudiated: ‘Muhammad is not the father of any of your men’ (Q.33:36–40). The events concerning his marriage to Zainab, Zaid’s ex-wife, are given (Q.33:36–40), including the guests who overstayed their welcome (Q.33:53). An accusation against his favourite wife Aisha warranted a revelation exonerating her (Q.24:11–25). One time, Muhammad considered divorcing all his wives.¹⁵ Eventually no more wives were permitted to him but he could have an unlimited number of women war captives, as well as other women (Q.33:50–52).

Following the Treaty of Hudabiyah, the conquest of Mecca took place (Q.110:1–2). The Battle of Hunain is mentioned (Q.9:25) and the promise of other military victories.¹⁶ Some detail about the Battle of Tabuk is given,¹⁷ and he predicted the coming Roman victory over the Persians (Q.30:2–40). The building of the opposition mosque in Medina is also described (Q.9:107–110).

Muhammad claimed that he was the apostle to all (Q.7:157) and that Islam was a message for all humanity (Q.14:52).

Muhammad was given the following commands to obey

The Qur’an outlines many specific instructions to Muhammad on how he was to behave in relation to Allah and to others. He was told to:

- read in the name of your Lord (Q.96:1)
- arise and warn, magnify your Lord and purify your garments (Q.74:1–4)
- keep away from idols and do not give in order to get more (Q.74:1–7)
- not worship other gods (Q.26:213–214)
- not obey Abu Jahl and his council (Q.96:9–19)
- not obey the unbelievers¹⁸
- not pray at the funerals of hypocrites or stand at their graves (Q.9:84)
- stand and pray at night, recite the Qur’an (Q.73:1–9)
- recite as much of the Qur’an as is easy for you (Q.73:20)
- follow what is revealed to you (Q.32:2)
- put your trust in the Almighty¹⁹
- be patient²⁰
- be patient and pray²¹
- ask for forgiveness for your sins²²

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15. Q.33:28; 66:5.

16. Q.3:139; 48:1, 22; 58:21; 61:13.

17. Q.9:40–59, 81–99, 117–118, 120–122.

18. Q.32:1; 25:52; 68:8, 10; 76:24.

19. Q.26:217; 73:9; 32:3.

20. Q.73:10; 74:7; 76:24.

21. Q.76:24–26; 52:48–49; 18:28.

22. Q.4:106; 40:55; 47:19; 48:2; 110:3.

- devote yourself to Allah (Q.94:8)
- keep your duty to Allah (Q.32:1)
- strive against the unbelievers (Q.25:52).

Muhammad was given many titles and descriptions in the Qur'an

The Qur'an outlines a list of roles and activities that were prescribed for Muhammad (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2. Titles and descriptions for Muhammad in the Qur'an

Title	Arabic term	Qur'anic references
a messenger	<i>rasūl</i>	e.g. Q. 22:78; 48:13; 73:15 (over 200 times)
a prophet	<i>nabi</i>	e.g. Q.3:68; 33:45; 66:9 (31 times)
a plain warner	<i>nadhīr</i>	Q.2:119; 5:19; 7:184, 188; 11:2,12; 13:7; 15:89; 17:105; 25:7; 26:194; 28:46; 29:50–51; 33:45; 34:28; 46:9; 48:8; 53:56; 71:2; 79:45 (21 times)
a slave	<i>'abd</i>	Q.2:23; 17:1; 18:1; 25:1; 39:36; 53:10; 57:9; 72:19; 96:10a (10 times)
a witness	<i>shāhid</i>	Q.2:143; 33:45; 48:8; 73:15
a witness	<i>shahīd</i>	Q.16:89; 22:78
a bringer of good news	<i>mubashshir</i>	Q.33:45; 48:8
a bringer of good news	<i>bashīr</i>	Q.2:119; 7:188; 11:2; 34:28
one who reminds	<i>mudhkir</i>	Q.87:9; 88:21; 52:29
caller (to Islam)	<i>daa'i</i>	Q.33:45–46; 12:108
a lamp spreading light	<i>sirāj munīr</i>	Q.33:46
conveyer of the message	<i>albalāg</i>	Q.3:20
a mercy	<i>rahma</i>	Q.28:46 (from your Lord); Q.9:61 (to the believers); Q.21:107 (to the worlds)
not a protector	<i>ma hāfidh</i>	Q.42:48
not a dictator	<i>lustu bimusaytir</i>	Q.88:22
only a man	<i>bashīr</i>	Q.18:110
seal of the prophets	<i>khātim alnabiyyīn</i>	Q.33:40
'the prophet who can neither read nor write'	<i>alnabi al'ummi</i>	Q.7:157; 62:2

Muhammad was given certain assurances and privileges

Muhammad was told that Allah had not forsaken him, nor was he displeased with him (Q.93:3); he had not gone astray nor was he being misled (Q.53:2). Allah would not rain stones or punish the Meccan pagans while Muhammad was still with them. This would protect Muhammad from danger, and he lived with the hope that they might seek Allah's forgiveness (Q.8:33). Furthermore, Allah had opened his breast, removed the burden which weighed down his back, and raised high his fame (Q.94:1–4). Muhammad was of great moral character (Q.68:4), the best example to follow (Q.33:21) and was prophesied in

other scriptures.²³ Just as Allah and his angels sent blessings on Muhammad, so the believers should also greet Muhammad (Q.33:56).

Despite these privileges, Muhammad also suffered from some limitations

Muhammad stated that he was nothing new among the prophets (Q.46:9) so he could not change the law.²⁴ His knowledge was limited: he did not know the hidden things,²⁵ nor did he know the last hour.²⁶ His power was limited: he could not harm or convert anyone (Q.72:21) and he could perform no miracles.²⁷ His only sign was the Qur'an (Q.21:3, 5, 10). He knew that he would die (Q.39:30), but was uncertain what would ultimately happen to him or his followers (Q.46:9).

The lack of specific detail

The Qur'an is significant in what it omits about the prophet Muhammad. For example, it makes no mention of and gives no details about the following:

- his birth: when and where it took place
- his parents: neither of them are mentioned in the Qur'an
- his genealogy: there is no detail about any of his ancestors
- his childhood or upbringing
- his occupation: the Qur'an does not say what his job was
- his marriages: there are no details about how many women he married or who they were – none of Muhammad's wives is mentioned by name, although some of the problems that he faced with his wives are implied
- his call to prophethood: the place, date and circumstances are not given
- a chronology of the major events of his life: some of them are hinted at (e.g. the Battle of Badr), but no clear details are given
- the places that he lived in or visited – the only locations mentioned are Mecca,²⁸ Bakkah (Q.3:96), Arafat (Q.2:198), Yathrib (Q.33:13), Badr (Q.3:123), Hunain (Q.9:25) and Rome (which he did not visit), although this refers to Constantinople (Q.30:2)
- his only contemporaries named were Zaid, Muhammad's adopted son whose adoption was repudiated (Q.33:37), and an enemy nicknamed 'Abu Lahab', who was 'Abdu'l-'Uzza b. 'Abdu'l-Mutallib, Muhammad's uncle (Q.111:1)
- his death: there are no details about when, where and how it occurred.

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23. Q.61:6; 7:157.

24. Q.10:15; 66:1.

25. Q.6:50; 10:20; 7:188.

26. Q.72:25; 33:63; 79:42–45.

27. Q.6:8–9, 109; 17:90–93; 29:50 – see Chapter 11 for more details.

28. Of these locations, only Mecca is mentioned more than once (two times – Q.33:50; 48:24).

Conclusion

The presentation of Muhammad in the Qur'an is mixed. Historically, it leaves out a lot of the detail normally found in biographies. Of course, the Qur'an does not set out to be a human biography, so for Muslims these omissions are not a surprise. However, the lack of such detail often makes the Qur'an hard to understand and interpret. With the absence of names and places, it is generally unclear in passages whom is being spoken about and the context of the discussion. However, if the other sources are used, we find many clues about Muhammad and his life in the Qur'an, as outlined in this chapter. The picture presented is also mixed. There were many accusations made against him, yet he is often described in very positive terms. At the same time, his shortcomings are not overlooked in the Qur'an, but are outlined for all to see. Chapter 9 raises the question of Muhammad's sins, Chapter 11 describes his absence of miracles, and Chapters 13 and 14 tell of his connection with violence.

WHAT THE QUR’AN TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

In June 2011, large billboards proclaiming: ‘Jesus: a Prophet of Islam’ were placed around Sydney by the Islamic organisation called MyPeace.

Its founder Diaa Mohamed said: ‘We want to raise awareness that Islam believes in Jesus Christ. We embrace him and say that he was one of the mightiest prophets of God.’¹

What the Qur’an says about Jesus and how that agrees with the Bible

The Qur’an contains some information about Jesus, but it is not widely dispersed within the text. The 97 references to him are found in 15 of the 114 *surahs* (chapters) and 93 of the 6211 *ayyahs* (verses). Furthermore, 64 of these 93 verses occur in the nativity stories (partly duplicated) of Surahs 3 and 19.

Some of the teaching about Jesus is very similar to that found in the Bible. Table 6.1 outlines the Qur’an’s teaching about Jesus, with those parallel concepts taught in the Bible.

Table 6.1. What the Qur’an says about Jesus and how that agrees with the Bible

Theme	Detail	Qur’an	Bible
Birth of Jesus	His conception was announced by an angel	Q.3:45	Luke 1:26–38
	The angel said that God can do the humanly impossible	Q.19:16–19	Luke 1:37
	His birth was decreed by God	Q.3:47; 19:21	Matthew 1:22–23
	Jesus was named by God	Q.3:45	Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:31
	Mary was highly favoured by God	Q.3:42	Luke 1:28, 30, 42
	Jesus was a gift from God	Q.19:19	John 3:16
	God spoke/cast his word into Mary	Q.4:171	John 1:14

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 Note: Much of the material in this chapter is drawn from Medearis, *Muslims, Christians and Jesus*, pp. 65–87.

1. Cook, ‘He’s not the son of God, just the support act’.

Understanding Jesus and Muhammad

	No man had touched Mary when she became pregnant with Jesus	Q.3:47; 19:20; 21:91	Matthew 1:18
	God sent his Spirit to give Mary a son	Q.66:12; 21:91	Matthew 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35
	The day of his birth was blessed	Q.19:33	Luke 2:10–14
	He was called 'the son of Mary'	Q.3:36, 45 (23 times)	Mark 6:3; Luke 2:7; Matthew 13:55
	The legitimacy of his birth was confirmed	Q.19:29	Matthew 1:18–25
	Jesus' birth was a miracle for all humanity	Q.21:91	Matthew 2:1–12; Luke 2:8–20
Humanity of Jesus	Jesus ate food	Q.5:75	Luke 7:34; 15:2; 24:43
	God aided Jesus with the Holy Spirit	Q.2:87, 253; 5:110	1 Peter 1:2; Matthew 4:1; 12:18; Luke 4:18
	John the Baptist ('Yahya' in the Qur'an) testified of Jesus	Q.3:39	John 1:29–34
	God gave Jesus commandments to follow	Q.42:13	John 4:34; 5:17–20, 23–30, 36; 6:35–38; 7:28
	Jesus gave money according to the law	Q.19:31	Matthew 17:27
	Jesus faced opposition from others	Q.3:55	Mark 3:6
Titles of Jesus	Word of God	Q.4:171; 3:39, 45	John 1:1, 14; Revelation 19:13
	A saying of the truth	Q.19:34	1 John 5:7–12, 20; 2:21; 1:1; 2 John 1
	The Messiah	11 times – e.g. Q.4:171	53 times in the Gospels – e.g. Mark 1:1
	Prophet (<i>nabi</i>)	Q.2:91; 5:78; 19:30	Luke 13:33; Matthew 21:11, 46; Luke 7:16, 39
	Messenger (<i>rasul</i>)	10 times – e.g. Q.5:75	Hebrews 3:1
	Spirit from God	Q.4:171	John 4:24; 1 Corinthians 15:45–47
	Witness	Q.5:117	John 8:14; 17:12–13

	Servant	Q.4:172; 19:30; 43:57–61	Isaiah 53; John 13:1–17; Acts 3:26; 4:27
	Like Adam	Q.3:59	Romans 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 15:20–22, 45–49
Character of Jesus	Merciful	Q.19:21	Matthew 9:36; 15:32
	Righteous	Q.3:46; 6:85	John 8:46; Hebrews 4:15
	Sinless	Q.19:19	Hebrews 7:26; 2 Corinthians 5:21
	An example to others	Q.43:57, 59	John 13:15; Luke 9:23; Philippians 2:5–11
	Full of peace	Q.19:33	John 14:27
	Honoured his mother	Q.19:32	John 19:26
	Not proud	Q.19:32	Matthew 11:28; Mark 7:36
Relationship with God	God testified about Jesus	Q.5:110–111	John 5:37; 8:18
	Jesus only did what God told him to do	Q.5:117	John 14:1, 10
	God is not Christ the son of Mary	Q.5:17, 72	1 Corinthians 8:6
	God aided Jesus with the Holy Spirit	Q.2:87, 253; 5:110	Matthew 4:1, 12; Luke 4:18; 1 Peter 1:2
	Jesus was dependent on God	Q.3:49; 5:110	John 5:19, 30; 8:28; 12:49–50; 14:31
	Jesus prayed to God	Q.19:31	Luke 1:35; 6:12
	God gave him refuge and protection	Q.23:50	Luke 4:30
	God asked Jesus if he had told people to regard himself and Mary as two gods in place of God, and Jesus denied this	Q.5:116	John 10:30; 17:21; Matthew 17:5
Miracles of Jesus	Jesus came with miracles	Q.43:63; 61:16	Matthew 12:22–32
	God gave miracles to Jesus	Q.2:87, 253	John 6:11–14
	Jesus created a clay bird and breathed life into it	Q.3:49; 5:110	John 5:21; 20:22
	Jesus gave sight to a man born blind	Q.3:49; 5:110	John 9:1–12
	Jesus healed a leper, raised the dead and prophesied	Q.3:49; 5:110	John 6:47–49; 11:43–44; Mark 12:40

Understanding Jesus and Muhammad

	Jesus did everything with divine permission	Q.3:49; 5:110	John 5:19, 30; 8:28; 12:49–50; 14:31
	Christ asked God to provide food from heaven	Q.5:112–114	John 6:5–14
Jesus and revelation	Jesus followed in the line of Jewish prophets	Q.5:46	Matthew 21:33–41
	God made a covenant with his prophets (including Jesus)	Q.33:7	Luke 4:18, 43
	Jesus confirmed the Old Testament that was in his hands	Q.3:50; 5:46; 61:6	Luke 4:21; 16:17; Matthew 5:18; 15:1–6
	God gave Jesus the <i>Injil</i> (gospel)	Q.19:30	Luke 1:16–20
	The <i>Injil</i> is guidance and light	Q.5:46	Luke 2:32
	God taught Jesus wisdom	Q.3:48; 5:110	Luke 2:40
	Christ brought the people wisdom	Q.43:63	Matthew 13:1–52
	Jesus taught people to worship God	Q.3:51; 5:117	Matthew 6:9–13
	Jesus never said anything he had no right to say	Q.5:116	John 14:10
	Jesus is greater than the law	Q.3:50	Mark 7:14–20
	Jesus has the knowledge of the last days	Q.43:61	Luke 21:25–28; 17:30
	The knowledge of the last days is with God alone	Q.41:47; 43:61	Matthew 24:36
	The followers of Jesus	Jesus had followers	Q.3:53
God’s helpers are those who help Jesus		Q.3:52; 61:14	1 John 2:23
God revealed to the disciples of Jesus that they were to believe in God and in his messenger, Jesus		Q.5:111	John 6:68–69
Jesus told God that the disciples were God’s servants, and he could choose to punish or forgive them		Q.5:118	John 17:6–11
God said that he would make Jesus’ followers higher than the unbelievers until judgement day		Q.3:55	Ephesians 2:6

	The Christians say that Jesus (the Messiah) is the Son of God	Q.9:30	John 20:30–31
Jesus' death and resurrection	People plotted against Jesus	Q.3:54	John 12:10
	God plotted against the people's plotting and God won	Q.3:54	Revelation 13:8; Matthew 20:17–19; Acts 3:15; 4:10; Romans 8:37
	God can do anything he wants to – even allow Jesus to die	Q.5:17	Luke 1:37
	The Jews killed Jesus and other prophets	Q.2:91	Acts 2:36; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30
	The Jews themselves did not crucify Christ	Q.4:157	Luke 23:24–25
	The killers of the prophets and those who killed Christ were acting according to the plan of God	Q.8:17, but also see Q.4:157–158	Acts 2:23
	Jesus was one of the messengers who was killed by Israel	Q.2:87; 5:70	Acts 7:52; Luke 11:49
	God said to Jesus that he would make him die	Q.3:55	Mark 14:36
	When Jesus died and rose again, he was blessed and glorified	Q.19:33	John 12:23; Luke 24:26
	When God made Christ die, God himself became the overseer	Q.5:117	John 17:14
	God said to Jesus that he would raise him up alive	Q.3:55	Acts 1:9; Luke 18:33
	Christ was dead and God raised him	Q.6:122	Romans 6:4–11
	God raised Jesus to himself	Q.4:158	Mark 16:19
	The day that Jesus was raised was blessed	Q.19:33	Luke 2:10–14
Special roles	God preferred Jesus above the other messengers	Q.2:253	Hebrews 1:1–3; Matthew 21:33–41
	Jesus is near to God	Q.3:45	John 14:7–9
	Jesus is highly honoured in this world and the next	Q.3:45	John 5:22; Philippians 2:9–11
	Jesus is blessed	Q.43:61; see also Q.43:85	Matthew 21:9

	God made Jesus blessed wherever he went	Q.19:31	Mark 7:37
	Jesus is a mercy from God	Q.19:21	Ephesians 2:4
	Jesus is a sign from God	Q.21:91; 23:50	Matthew 12.40; Luke 11:29–30
	Jesus intercedes with God according to God's will	Q.2:255	1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:27, 34
	The Qur'an refers to God coming in the clouds with his angels	Q.2:210	In the Bible, Jesus described himself (Matthew 24:30–31; 25:31; Mark 13:26–27; 14:62) and is described (1 Thessalonians 4:7; Revelation 1:7) in the same way
	On judgment day, Jesus will witness against those who did not believe in him before their death	Q.4:159	John 5:22–23

Additional or mistaken concepts about Jesus in the Qur'an

The Qur'an contains some additional material about Jesus that is not found in the Bible. Jesus is presented as speaking from the cradle as a baby (Q.3:46) in order to protect Mary against her accusers (Q.19:28–32). This is not a biblical concept, although it was found previously in the later Christian writing *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Saviour*.²

Q.9:31 claims that the Christians took Jesus as Lord instead of God. In fact, Christians have always believed in Jesus as both Lord and God (1 Corinthians 8:6). See Chapter 1 for more details on this.

The Qur'an denies that God could 'take'/beget' *attaxadha*³ or 'have' *lahu* (Q.4:171) a physical son *walad*. The Bible likewise denies any physical relationship in the birth of Jesus, for God is 'spirit' (John 4:24). Jesus affirmed that 'Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit' (John 3:6). Jesus is never described in the Bible as the physical son of God: its language about the conception of Christ excludes any physical contact between God and Mary. The angel Gabriel told Mary: 'The Holy Spirit will come on 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' (Luke 1:35). In the Bible, Jesus is clearly the

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 2. *The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Saviour* 1:2.
 3. Q.18:4; 19:35; 2:116; 17:111; 23:91.

spiritual Son of God, not a physical son. Both the Qur'an and the Bible affirm the virgin birth of Christ.⁴

Some biblical teachings about Jesus are denied in the Qur'an

Arabic versions of the Bible usually translate 'the Son of God' when referring to Jesus as *ibn allah*. On the only occasion in the Qur'an when this term is used, it is repudiated (Q.9:30). *Ibn* can also be used for metaphorical or symbolic sonship (e.g. *ibn sabeel*⁵). However, Jesus is referred to as the Son of God or 'the Son' about 120 times in the New Testament.⁶ See Chapter 2 for more detail.

The Qur'an claims that there are no lords besides Allah.⁷ The contexts of these verses show that they are challenging the Christian concept of the lordship of Christ. Jesus referred to himself as 'lord'⁸ and he is described as 'both Lord and Christ'⁹

In the Qur'an, Jesus denies that he called people to worship him (Q.5:116). However, the worship of Jesus, the Lamb of God, is described in the Bible (e.g. Revelation 15:4). While on earth, Jesus accepted worship by others (see Chapter 1).

In some places, the Qur'an appears to diminish the person of Christ by stating that he is not divine (Q.5:17, 72), is *only* a prophet (Q.5:75), is only an apostle (Q.4:171) or is a slave.¹⁰ It is claimed that he prophesied about the coming of a person called 'Ahmed' (Q.61:6), who Muslims believe to be Muhammad (see Chapter 7 for further discussion). In addition, Jesus' crucifixion appears to be denied (Q.4:157) (See Chapter 17 for a discussion about this).

Conclusion

There are many positive descriptions of Jesus throughout the Qur'an which accord with the Bible's teaching about him. Key understandings include his virgin birth, special titles, humanity, miracles, revelation, his followers, his relationship with God, his death and resurrection, and his special roles. However, other teaching is additional to or contradicts the teaching that is found in the Bible.

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4. Q.66:12; 21:91; 19:16–22; 3:40–42. Matthew 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–27; Mark 6:3; John 1:13; 8:41–42; Romans 1:3–4; Galatians 4:4; 1 Timothy 3:16.
 5. Q.2:177, 215; 4:36; 8:41.
 6. E.g. John 10:36; Mark 1:1.
 7. Q.9:31; 3:64.
 8. E.g. Matthew 12:8; Luke 6:5.
 9. Acts 2:36, NIV.
 10. Q.43:59; 4:172.