

The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

WAS PROPHET JESUS^(pbuh) SENT TO THE GENTILES?

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INTRODUCTION

Christians in the main believe in the universality of Prophet Jesus's^(pbuh) ministry where they attempt to preach the message to the 'gentiles' with a view to convert them to Christianity (evangelize). An attempt is made to inculcate the belief that Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) was sent as a saviour to humankind and died for their sins. Quite apart from the theological contentions that may arise with such a belief, there is no support for this understanding of the scope of Prophet Jesus's^(pbuh) ministry in the Quran. As will be noted later in the article, there are also 'explicit' statements in the Bible where it is clear that Prophet Jesus's^(pbuh) ministry was limited to the Children of Israel.

Many Christians provide an array of explanations to counter 'explicit' verses of the Bible which limit Prophet Jesus's^(pbuh) ministry to the Children of Israel often relying on 'implicit' interpretations from the Bible. The readers can decide for themselves whether or not these interpretations are cogent responses. It is not the purpose of this article to provide a detailed response to these interpretations, but rather, to provide explicit references from the Quran and the Bible to entice readers to conduct their own research.

Also a common contention will be dealt with which is usually cited from the Quran by Christians to support their understanding of the universality of Prophet Jesus's^(pbuh) ministry.

MAIN

Whether Judaism at the time of Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) was ever a missionary religion has long been debated in serious scholarship and there is no consensus.

“The question of whether Judaism at the time of Christian origins was a ‘missionary religion’ is a well-worn track in scholarship and, as yet, no consensus has been reached (Note 1)” [1]

This is an important question as this sets some pretext to the mission of the Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) who was himself a Jew. Much Biblical scholarship seems to concentrate on the Pauline corpus to understand the legitimacy of preaching the new faith to the gentiles with a view to converting them. However, Muslim contention with much merit, questions the Apostle Paul's legitimacy outright as not having any authority been granted to him as a direct disciple of Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) nor having ever met him in person.

The Gospels written in the name of the direct disciples of Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) provide explicit references of his words where he clearly limits the scope of his ministry.

Matthew 10:5-6

"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, **Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel**" [2]

Matthew 15:22-24

"And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. **But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel**" [3]

Luke 19:9-10

"And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. **For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost**" [4]

Matthew 1:21

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: **for he shall save his people from their sins**" [5]

Mark 6:4

"But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house" [6]

The Quran supports the above explicit statements of the Bible which limit the scope of Prophet Jesus's^(pbuh) ministry to the Children of Israel.

003.049

"**And (make him) a messenger to the Children of Israel, (with this message):** "Indeed, I have come to you, with a Sign from your Lord, in that I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, and breathe into it and it becomes a bird by God's leave: And I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I give life (to) the dead, by God's leave and I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses. Indeed, in that (is) surely a sign for you if you are believers"

005.046

“ **And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Torah between his hands** (Arabic: ma bayna yadayhi) : We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Torah that (was) between his hands : a guidance and an admonition to those who fear God”

061.006

“**And when, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: "O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of God (sent) to you, confirming the Law before me, and giving Glad Tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad."** But when he came to them with Clear Signs, they said, "this is evident sorcery!"”

Against the backdrop of the Bible's explicit statements, proof is sought by some Christians for their position from the Quran by attempting to limit the ministry of Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) by interpreting passages which refer to his remit to his kindred (26:214) and to the mother towns (42:7).

Quite apart from lack of cogency in attempting to defend a position by attacking another, a fuller appreciation is not given to the fact that what is in contention is a belief of universality of Prophet Jesus's ^(pbuh) mission which stands in direct contrast to '**explicit**' statements from the Bible which seem to negate it.

Furthermore, albeit the immediate remit of the Arabic Quran is recognised as a warning first to those who spoke and understood the language, the 'message' of the Quran was to be conveyed to mankind by those that heard it as witnesses '**...That the Messenger may be a witness for you, and you be witnesses for mankind!...**' (22:78)

Furthermore, there is no **explicit reference** in the Quran which limits the message given to Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) unlike the **explicit** Biblical references quoted above such as '**Go not into the way of the Gentiles**' (Matthew 10:5-6).

FINAL THOUGHTS

The Quran confirms that Prophet Jesus ^(pbuh) was sent only to the Children of Israel to warn them. There are also explicit references to be found in the Bible which also support this position.

Related Articles:

- (1) [People of the Book \(Jews & Christians\)](#)
- (2) [Is the Name 'Ahmad' Found in the Bible?](#)
- (3) ['Between his Hands' or 'Before It' \(Ma Bayna Yadayhi\)](#)

REFERENCES

[1] DICKSON. JOHN.P, **Mission-Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in the Pauline Communities**, Die Deutsche Bibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the Internet at <http://dnb.ddb.de>. (c) 2003 by J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), P.O. Box 2040, D-721010 Tübingen, Chapter 1, **Winning the Gentiles: Mission and Missionaries in Ancient Judaism?** page 11.

Highlights in black bold are my own insertions. They have no bearing on the original text other than they emphasise relevance to the topic at hand. These are merely illustrations and have solely been utilised for educational and explanatory purposes.

Note 1 cited:

Those who affirm the presence of 'mission' in ancient Judaism include: Bamberger, B. J. *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period*. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1968; Braude, W. G. *Jewish Proselytizing in the First Five Centuries of the Common Era: the Age of Tannaim and Amoraim*. Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1940; Kasting, H. *Die Anfänge der urchristlichen Mission: Eine historische Untersuchung*. BEvT, 55. Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1969; Moore, G. F. *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: the Age of the Tannaim*. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932; Feldman, L. *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, 288-415; Feldman, L. H. "Jewish Proselytism." In *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, edited by H. W. Attridge and G. Hata. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994; Harnack, A. D. *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*. 2 vols. Vol. 1. London, 1908; Nock, A. D. *Conversion: the Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933; Jeremias, J. *Jesus' Promise to the Nations*. London: SCM Press, 1958, 11-19; Georgi, D. "Missionary Activity in New Testament Times." In *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 83-228. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1987; Carleton Paget, J. "Jewish Proselytism at the Time of Christian Origins: Chimera or Reality?" *JSNT* 62 (1996): 65-103; Borgen, P. "Proselytes, Conquest, and Mission." In *Recruitment, Conquest, and Conflict: Strategies in Judaism, Early Christianity, and the Greco-Roman World*, edited by P. Borgen, 57-77. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998; Segal, A. F. "The Costs of Proselytism and Conversion." In *Society of Biblical Literature 1988 Seminar Papers*, edited by David J. Lull, 336-69. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988; Bedell, C. H. "Mission in Intertestamental Judaism." In *Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach*, edited by W. J. Larkin and J. F. Williams, 21-29. Maryknoll N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998.

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[2] **The Bible: King James Version**

[3] **Ibid.**

[4] **Ibid.**

[5] **Ibid.**

[6] **Ibid.**

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