

Who is Christ?
Episode 8

+ **Host:** Hello my dear viewer and welcome to a new episode of our program “Questions About Faith.” It’s our pleasure to answer all your questions and respond to all the thoughts that come to your mind. It honors us to have the Rev. Father Zekaria Boutros here with us to answer all your questions. Welcome Father.

+ **Father:** Thank you very much.

+ **Host:** We will resume our discussion about “*God the Incarnate Word.*” Please review what we have already discussed about, so the viewers are able to keep up with what we are saying? Please go ahead.

+ **Father:** Actually the whole topic developed and the discussion revolves around the question of “Who is Christ in the Christian thought?” And we’re also looking into it in the Islamic thought. Are there differences about the person of Christ in the Christian and the Islamic thoughts? That was the topic of discussion throughout the several previous episodes.

The problem that the Muslim brother faces is How can we say that Christ is the Son of God? It is indigestible, unacceptable. Why? For he has an objection against the expression the Son of God. How could he possibly be the Son of God? And why? Because he understands the Son of God in the literal sense; that is physically. And therefore he can’t accept it. But Why doesn’t he discuss it with us and ask, Do you mean it like that?!

Well, they don’t. Some of our beloved Muslims don’t want to discuss. They only want to object. You are wrong and that’s it. But I am a hundred percent sure that many of our beloved Muslim friends want to understand the truth regardless of anything else. They want to know the truth. And so long as the

mind works, it wants to find the truth. Well, you say such and such about certain facts. Are these true things or not? What do the Christians say about it? Is that what they really mean? And as long as you think, you must enquire.

+ **Host:** Certainly.

+ **Father:** And if you enquire you will search and if you search you'll most definitely arrive at...

+ **Host:** Truth.

+ **Father:** The truth. And therefore we're always ready to answer everyone who asks about the reason for the hope that is in us with love and pleasure.

Your question to me from the beginning was: What is our doctrine about Christ? What is this matter about the Son of God? And what is it about Christ? Is He God, or is He man? Is He the Son of God, or the Son of Man? And of course the issue in the Muslim's mind is a bit confused. And of course he's to be excused. Because he neither researches nor reads; he just hears what is being said,

+ **Host:** Not just hears Father. He is fully saturated with what he hears. And they have implanted in him complete rejection to what we say.

+ **Father:** Of course you can identify and express this better because you come from the same background. But we have never lived in the atmosphere of a Muslim family, but you lived in one. They inculcate them as children; and they poison their minds. This is all out of fear lest the children should leave Islam. And if they forsake Islam, then the Islamic state would fall apart ... And then the infidels- the Christians and Crusaders- would come as well as the Zionists and occupy Arab countries.. and such a big fuss.

+ **Host:** A lot of other fanciful ideas that have no place.

+ **Father:** And the Crusaders as you know, they came to occupy our countries, and.. but for Salahuddin Al-Ayyuby صلاح الدين الايوبي - the defender of Islam- the Crusaders would not have been vanquished. Of course the Crusaders never went out in the name of Christ or the cross, because the cross is the guillotine, so to speak upon which Christ was killed. The cross is never a weapon to stab others and put them to death. Even the very concept of the Crusades was contrary to Christianity. The cross has nothing to do with it.

+ **Host:** The very name is wrong.

+ **Father:** They were based on colonial aspirations that are absolutely remote...

+ **Host:** From Christianity.

+ **Father:** From the spirit of Christianity. And as evidence, Christ says the following: “Whoever desires to come after me. Let him deny himself and take up the cross; that is his execution guillotine and follow me.” Do we then bear the cross in order to stab people with it? And again Christ said to..

+ **Host:** Peter.

+ **Father:** Peter, you know, on the night they arrested Christ, Peter drew out his weapon, his sword, and he wanted to strike them all dead. But because of his lack of skill in terrorist acts, you know, all he could do was he cut off the ear of that guy. That’s all he could do.

+ **Host:** Well, he missed the mark really.

+ **Father:** He was shaking as he struck because he wasn’t trained. Had Christ intended to rely on weapons, He would have

trained the disciples, but not so. He lived with them in peace and in love. He said “Love you enemies; bless those who curse you.” Not “Fight your enemies.” And even after Peter had cut off the ear of the guy, Christ healed it. He glued it back on and he said “Peter, you listen well to me. This sword will never be used again in my religion. Return your sword back to its place; for all who take the sword, will perish by the sword. We do not depend on the sword. Remove it. My sword is the Word of God, the tender, kind-hearted, sweet word which expresses God’s love and peace not the sword. So the Crusaders were not Christians; they were colonialists using that name simply to gather people around them and volunteers. You know like what? It’s like Ireland. The war going on between the Catholics and the Protestants. Although Catholicism and Protestantism have nothing to do with this war, because they are simply two political parties not religions. For example in Germany there is a party called the Christian Democratic Party; it’s a party and not a religion. The same way in Ireland; it’s not about religion, it’s not about two churches clashing with one another.

+ **Host:** You know our beloved Muslims confuse the issue.

+ **Father:** But they are to be excused; they find Christian names and they take them at face value but if they dig, if they research!

+ **Host:** There is a difference between behavior or conduct in the Biblical teaching.

+ **Father:** We are talking about principles here. In our Bible, which is our constitution, there is no war. In the Bible, Christ taught us about peace: “As much as you can, live peaceably with all men.” And on the cross, even though they were crucifying Him, He said, “Father, forgive them.” And when Peter wanted to cut off the head of the guy and kill him, Jesus said to him “hold your horses. If I want it to turn into a battle, I would have sent for twelve legions of angels to annihilate them to lay it all to waste. But this is not our style, this is not our policy.” But

when people take on such names to hide their nationalistic or colonial aspirations, Christianity is absolutely innocent of such claims, totally innocent.

+ **Host:** Shall we move on to the next question Father? One of our Muslim brothers is asking: Is it proper to say this about God? Is it proper to say He is the Son of God?

+ **Father:** Well. It's really the same subject and the same objection and it's the same old story where the Son of God is taken to be something sexual, having to do with procreation and marriage, etc.. etc. Actually it's the same idea. But what I want to say here to my Muslim brother whom I truly love and would like him to understand the truth. Why don't we come and look into Islam to see things about God, if it is proper to call Him that way or not? Of such expressions are the following: God says "The poor are my children." "The poor are my children."

+ **Host:** What is this Rev. Father? Is it a divine tradition?

+ **Father:** Yes, it's a divine tradition. "The poor are my family members." But where did God give birth to them? So when the divine tradition says "The poor are my family members" it is then acceptable, but when we say that God says about Christ that He is my Son, it is unacceptable! One must be fair. You've got to be fair in what you think. This is logic, and this is another logic. There are other things. In Sura 20 verse 5 it says "The Mercy-giving is settled on the throne." We discussed it in a previous episode I believe. What throne? What throne is that that God would sit upon? How big is it? What size which can hold Him?

+ **Host:** What is the size of this throne!!

+ **Father:** God is unlimited. Can they provide an unlimited seat for Him, in order for Him to sit on? Well, when we take things literally, it won't work. It won't work. Also, does God

physically sit? Would God then have legs and buttocks, and that sort of thing? And they find fault with us when we say that God was incarnated. And they make a chair for God and He sits on it. How does He sit on it? With one leg, or with His hand, or His buttocks. If He sits, He must have a seat. Buttocks. Does He have buttocks? So we can't take things literally. When talking to Muslims, they ask "Is the Son proper for God?" But then is the word "buttocks" proper for God because it says "The Mercy-giving is settled on the throne." This means He is seated and it can't be. It cannot be taken literally, but purposefully. And what is the implication? What does it denote? What does it symbolize? What's the point of that comparison? What is the point of this metonymy? And then take the meaning, not the letter. Right? And of course the Quran means here that God reigns. So the simile here is taken from a king seated on his throne at his coronation. So it simply says that God most high is the King of the universe who reigns, praise be to Him, a King. But this is a figurative expression. He is seated on the throne of His sovereignty.

+ **Host:** It cannot be applied literally.

+ **Father:** You can't take it literally. And that's exactly what we are saying. My beloved Muslim brother, do not take things literally because in the Quran you have literal things that are also inappropriate for God.

+ **Host:** Unacceptable.

+ **Father:** Unacceptable. In Sura 57 verse 39 it says "Bounty lies in God's hand." Does God have hands? Well, since we are sticking to literalism, how long are these hands of God? Would those hands have fingers, too? Do they have muscles and joints, bones and flesh? If we take it literally, it just won't fit. It won't be acceptable. But we must derive an implication from this expression, and it is that the hand of God means the power of

God. "Bounty is in God's hands" means He is the one to be credited. He is the Owner, the Giver of bounty.

+ **Host:** But we cannot take it physically and say a hand that has fingers. It just wouldn't fit.

+ **Father:** Yes, because God is a Spirit, He's immaterial to start with so He wouldn't have hands.

+ **Host:** So He wouldn't have hands and fingers and such things.

+ **Father:** In Surah 2 as well verse 115 it says the following: "Wherever you may turn, there will be God's face."

+ **Host:** Now..

+ **Father:** Face!

+ **Host:** He has a face!

+ **Father:** Now He has a face! If taken literally. Okay, What does this face of God look like? How do His eyes look? Would He also have a nose? Or does He not breathe? Does He also have a respiratory system; lungs and all that? Does He have a mouth in His face? Does He have a digestive system? Well, does He have ears? Does He have an auditory system? Well, does He have hair? So what's the ... Well, if you are a stickler to the letter and keep telling us "This is inappropriate. This is a appropriate." Now, now you tell me about the face of God? But we know this is a metaphorical expression implying that God is everywhere. Wherever you turn your face, you will find Him. The same applies to the Son of God. I do not mean physical procreation, but rather a refined meaning. Sonship, it means issuance from the Father, and manifestation to mankind. The same way my ideas are manifested to people, brainchildren. We say he is the father of the idea. He is the father; he embodied the

idea. And that's fatherhood. Okay then, who is the Father of Christ? Did He have a physical Father? He didn't have any. He was rather attributed to God... "The poor are My family members" because they don't have a father to look after them. Christ did not even have a father, who begot him? So whose Son is He? Just to put it simply, by this analogy I want to say that there are expressions in the Quran itself if taken literally, would be unacceptable, and inadmissible. Alright then, we must take it by its implications and its meaning, and similarly when we talk about God in Christianity, Christ is the Son of God, He is attributed to God, issuing from God, God's revealed mind, the manifested Word of God in a human being. In this sense, of course these things are logical. When we discuss them they are correct logically. One plus one equals two, okay?

Yet I want to say again, that this logic may convince the mind, but it cannot convince the spirit.

+ **Host:** Right, right.

+ **Father:** So in spite of our attempt to simplify the idea or at least to remove its complexities, we still cannot say "This is it." Why? Because one must be touched by God.

+ **Host:** This is very true Father, because in Islam God, Most High, and may He be praised, He is so high, He is so elevated. There are so many barriers between man and Him. But for us in Christianity, God is a loving Father. God is inside me. He's closer to me than myself. And here lies the difference. That's why our Muslim brothers consider it as unlikely to be children of God, to call God Father.

+ **Father:** Yes, he's considered too far exalted.

+ **Host:** Yes, he's so exalted. He's fearsome.

+ **Father:** Too far above. We have nothing to do with him. You know, I remember one time there was a very famous author whose name is Tawfiq Al-Hakim توفيق الحكيم . I remember in his last days, he wrote in Al-Ahram newspaper and I have kept those issues. I really liked what he had to say. He is a refined philosopher.

+ **Host:** Very much so.

+ **Father:** Yes. He wrote the following: “From now till I die, I will not use my pen ... my pen except in conversations with God.” That’s after the death of his son. His son was named Ismael. And he started to write in Al-Ahram Newspaper “Communing With God.” He started to say that God is love, and that He loves us, and there is a love relationship. And he has a nice narrative style which is called “The intellectual theatre” in the sense of, "I said and he answered and so forth. For example, the donkey said so I talked back to him." So he used this theatrical style in communing with God. I said to God such and such and such, and God said to me, “I love you.” And I said to him, “How do you love me?” So God said to me such and such. The world was turned upside-down.

+ **Host:** Most definitely.

+ **Father:** How possibly could you talk to God and God talk to you! Are you a prophet that God would talk to you!

+ **Host:** You know, these are the exact barriers that keep the Muslims away from God.

+ **Father:** They called him an infidel

+ **Host:** These barriers are nonexistent.

+ **Father:** Had it not been for some nice folks such as Salah Montasser صلاح منتصر among others who defended him and they

made him write articles that are pleasing to the masses and so forth...

+ **Host:** They would have

+ **Father:** and he gave up this business about communion with God and it was over. So the idea is exactly as you said: There is a barrier, a partition that separates man from God. This is impossible. In Christianity it isn't so. Without God I can not live; because His love fills me; His Spirit strengthens me, and He gives me life; God is so near to me.

The Bible says "Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend to heaven? that is to bring Christ down from above or Who will descend to the abyss? that is to bring Christ up from the dead for God is near you in your heart, the word of faith that if you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth you will be saved". The sense of the closeness to God and this is also in the book of Revelation "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come to him, and dine with him and he with Me". He stands at the door.

+ **Host:** Would you please clarify about opening the door? To know we are talking about the door of one's heart not an ordinary door.

+ **Father:** We are back again to similes like the hand of God,

+ **Host:** Well, we don't want

+ **Father:** And the face of God.

+ **Host:** the viewer to go off on a tangent.

+ **Father:** The door of the heart means the will of man, with his will, with his desire he should open with the longing of his heart and say to the Lord "*Lord my life is open to You. Come into my*

life Lord, and enlighten me and lead me, and bless me.” But there must be first true faith that He would answer, sincerity for the Lord to come into his life, sincerity not playing around. And the other thing is to trust that the Lord will answer.

+ **Host:** Yes Father, the trust.

+ **Father:** Yes of course.

+ **Host:** Trust that God hears and answers.

+ **Father:** Quite true, and that God is near.

+ **Host:** Sometimes this trust is almost nonexistent.

+ **Father:** Well, as long as God is far away...

+ **Host:** How could one trust?

+ **Father:** This is exactly it; I mean I plead with my beloved Muslim friends. My dear, God has given you a mind to think with, think and don't be afraid, because God will guide your mind to the truth.

+ **Host:** Certainly.

+ **Father:** This is my appeal.

+ **Host:** We'll move on to the following question. What is the purpose of the doctrine of incarnation? Or why do you believe that God was incarnated in Christ?

+ **Father:** This is a very important issue. But I have received so many other questions, perhaps you don't want to ask about them? Or have you not received them?

+ **Host:** Well, go ahead then.

+ **Father:** One of them is: Was heaven empty of God ...

+ **Host:** Yes!!!!

+ **Father:** When God was incarnated in Christ? We receive this question so often.

+ **Host:** Ok. Let's deal with this question first before the incarnation.

+ **Father:** Well. First of all we say that God was incarnated, so who was in heaven then?

+ **Host:** This is true, we get asked this question.

+ **Father:** When He was in the body of Christ? It's a logical question. It's a question that really constitutes a complex in ones mind. How come? They say well, you claim that He was incarnated. Ok, we grant it. Ok when He was incarnated in human body, who was up there in heaven? Isn't that right? And as a matter of fact, the answer to these things is very simple and it's really easy, because we can reason it out - we can reason things out.

First of all Surah 24 verse 25 ... Surah 24 verse 25 says the following "God is the light of heaven and earth, His light may be compared to a niche in which there is a lamp" -niche meaning an opening in a wall, I explained that before- "...the lamp is in a glass, the glass is mounted on the lamp" Will it block the light? And then it goes on to say "...the glass is as if it is a glittering star.." The glass is supposed to suppress the light. It covers it; it should block it, but this is not the case, nothing could block the light. Light penetrates transparent glass. "...and the glass is tinted as a glittering star." God equals light; He is the light of heaven and earth. The simile here means that nothing could limit light; the light is in a glass but nothing could limit it. Right? God is the light of heaven and earth. Was manifested in

the body of Christ? Appeared in Him! The body of Christ is like this glass of a lamp, which does not block the light; it proceeds from it and radiates everywhere. We are now seated in your reception room and we have lighting. This lighting comes from a lamp. Don't the rays proceed out of the lamp to give us light? Aren't we illuminated by it? Or has the lamp blocked the light and dimmed the lighting? Impossible. God is light and nothing, absolutely nothing, could block Him, or limit Him; He was manifested in the flesh, but He still radiates everywhere, because He is infinite, right? Something else: in Sura 28, 27, and 20 the ones we talked about before regarding God's conversation with Moses through the tree, where He says "I am God; there is no other Deity but I, blessed be whoever is in the fire and whoever is around it." Since God was manifested in this tree, who was in heaven? It is exactly the same question, right? Well He was manifested in the flesh the same way He was manifested in the tree and earlier in Sura 7 "His Lord manifested Himself to the mountain."

+ **Host:** Was heaven empty then when He was on the mountain?

+ **Father:** Impossible! Of course not. He was not out for an excursion. Here is another thing. In Al-Bukhari's *Sahih صحيح البخارى* volume 4 page 68, here's a prophetic tradition that says "The prophet said 'Our Lord, -may He be blessed and exalted- descends every night to the lower heaven when only one-third of the night is left..' That is the last one- "...and says, "Whoever calls upon Me that I may answer him?" Again?

+ **Host:** Yes.

+ **Father:** In the *Sahih* Al-Bukhari volume 4 page 68 the prophet says -may God's peace be upon him- "Our Lord descends" "Our Lord- may He be blessed and exalted- descends every night to the lower heaven -that's the one here below-

...when one-third of the night is left -that is the final third- and says 'Whoever calls upon Me that I may answer him'"

+ **Host:** This is a call to stay up.

+ **Father:** Ok. What about the upper heaven? Was there nobody there? Was there nobody there?

+ **Host:** No, certainly.

+ **Father:** Well then, the whole issue is a matter of expression. It is just an expression. God is infinite; He is omnipresent. Well, this was an important bit which really needed clarification in our program before we move on to the question that you mentioned.

+ **Host:** As a matter of fact Father, the question is: What is the purpose of the doctrine of incarnation? Or why do you believe in the incarnation of God in Christ?

+ **Father:** Actually it's now the end of the episode so it seems that you are paving the road for another episode.

+ **Host:** Yes, certainly Father.

+ **Father:** Well, in a nutshell. The purpose of the incarnation which will be the subject of another discussion, the purpose is why do we believe that God was incarnated? In order to redeem us, to sacrifice Himself for us, to atone for our sins, to forgive our sins and trespasses by His Love, to take on Himself human body capable of atoning for our sins, that He took an initiative of love.

+ **Host:** Yes, a love initiative.

+ **Father:** So the conclusion is: God loves us and this love prompted Him to come to us and to take upon Himself a body like ours mortal for the purpose of atonement and forgiveness. I

think this will be a topic for another discussion, but my request to the viewer is that he should pray and say to God *“Lord, make Your light shine upon my heart for You love me, and You came to me and You were incarnated especially to forgive my sins and atone for them. God help me to get to know You.”*

+ **Host:** Amen. Amen.

+ **Father:** Amen.

+ **Host:** At the conclusion of our episode, we thank you, Reverend Father, and Lord’s willing we have many more discussions.

+ **Father:** Amen.

+ **Host:** My dear viewer, I repeat once again that we love you and we are ready to answer all of your questions. Write to us at the address which will appear now; send a request and we are ready to send you a free copy of the Bible. Thank you, until we meet again, Lord willing.

+ **Father:** Amen. Amen. Thank You.