

Who is Christ?

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+ Announcer : My dear viewer, you're most welcome to a new episode in our program "Questions about Faith". It is our pleasure to answer all the questions that we receive from you, and it is also our pleasure and honor to have with us the Reverend Father Zechariah Botros. Welcome to you, Father.

+ Father : Good to see you.

+ Announcer : My dear viewer, in a previous episode we dealt with the subject who is Christ in Christianity? We spoke about how He is God, and how He is the Son of God, also how He is Man, and the Son of Man.

It is our pleasure today to continue our dialogue and our discussion with our Reverend Father Zachariah about Christ in Christianity. There is a question we have here, Reverend Father, that says: You have mentioned at the beginning of your talk that the truth about Christ is that He is God who appeared in a human body, which we have also discussed, but you also said that He is the incarnated Word of God. Would you please explain that?

+ Father : Yes. This question is complementary to the previous ones. It deals with the truth that the Bible revealed, and in order to know about it we should open the Bible to gospel of John chapter 1 verse 1. It says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" till we reach verse 14 which says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth".

So the Word, as we said in a previous episode, is God's articulate intellect. As we said God is self-existent, and in this capacity we call Him the Father, because He is the source of existence. Son; that is, God's intellect, God's articulate intellect through the word, and the word is born by the intellect; it expresses the thoughts. So the Word; that is, the articulate intellect, is nothing else but God Himself. God in His existence, knowledge, and God in His spirit. And hence the Bible says, "And the word was God." And it goes on to say, "And the word became flesh" that is, resided in a body. And of course God's intellect can not be separated from His existence; neither could he be separated from His own spirit. This is impossible, isn't so? Therefore in the first epistle of

the Apostle Paul to his disciple Timothy in chapter 3, verse 16, “Great is” “and without controversy: ‘Great is the mystery of the godliness. God was manifested in the flesh.’ “God manifested in the flesh,” but how? The Word of God was incarnated in a man. The Word, God’s Word became flesh. This situation may sound uncanny. How come the word of God can possibly be incarnated and manifested? But, as a matter of fact, there is a common ground between us and Islam.

+ Announcer : Do you mean there is something in Quran that confirms the same meaning?

+ Father : Well said, that’s exactly it.

+ Announcer : This will be easier for people to grasp.

+ Father : Most definitely, because I am sure the Muslim audience will ask these questions. What is this nonsense? What do you mean the Word of God is incarnated?

Isn’t this what they say? Don’t they protest like that? But when we fall back on the Quran, the commentary of legal experts and Islamic jurists, we find this to be an accomplished fact, not our own invention. So let’s check it now and we’ll show it to be to our honorable audience. In Sura 4, verse 171. Sura 4, verse 171: “Christ Jesus the son of Mary was merely God’s messenger and His word, which He cast into Mary and the spirit from Him”. So then, Christ is the Word of God, as mentioned earlier in a previous episode, where the Ha’ pronoun

+ Announcer : Refers back to God.

+ Father : Refers back to God. “And a spirit from Him” “him” refers again to God. So then, Christ is the Word of God. And in Sura 3, verse 39: “God gives you” that is Zachariah “news of John [or Yahia] who will confirm the word of God.” I mentioned this verse before in a previous episode, do you remember that?

+ Announcer : Yes, Yes exactly it was the previous episode

+ Father : In the commentary of Al-Imam Abu Al-Sa`ud الامام ابو السعود , he explains the word *musaddiqan* “to confirm a word of God, or from God,” saying: Who will confirm a word from God; who is Essa, may peace be upon Him, who is the word of God? And who is that? Because he was the first to

believe in Him, and to confirm that He was the Word of God and the spirit from Him.

+ Announcer : So this is no new concept to our Muslim brothers. I mean if they just pay close attention, they will find the same thing in the Quran.

+ Father : If they would read with understanding there would no problem; the problem is that the majority don't read.

+ Announcer : Yes, unfortunately.

+ Father : And those who read only skim. They are superficial. They just recite "aaaah God gives you the good news of John who will confirm word from God."

+ Announcer : No, not only that, also those who think are automatically accused of being infidels.

+ Father : Yes, free thinkers. I was once talking with someone, I said why don't we think about it, and talk about it in detail. He said no, no, no, we have a statement that says: "The evil resides in the details." What kind of answer is that! For them it is an open and shut case. Is the devil truly in the details!

On the contrary the details point a lot of things out. Details require research and study. Do you see the narrow-mindedness, don't think, don't think, don't study, don't research, so many don'ts. It is as we tell you. And that is wrong. And that's why I drove the attention of our dear audience to think, to think about their own religion, about the Quran, about prophetic traditions, about the commentaries, their own, not ours- only to try and think, and understand. So this is what Abu Mas`ud ابو المسعود says: "will confirm a word from God; that is, confirm Essa, may peace be upon Him" because it is said that he (that is John the Baptist) was the first one to believe in Him and confirmed that He was the word of God and a spirit from Him." He was the first one to believe and he refers to Al-Siddi's السّدى statement when he said the following: "Yehia's mother met Essa's mother and said: O, Mary has you felt my pregnancy? And Mary also said: I am also pregnant. So Yehia's mother said: I have found the one in my belly worshiping the one in yours." And this is the interpretation of the divine statement: "...and will confirm a word from God." Now where do we find that?

+ Announcer : Yes, it is very important. Where is it written?

+ Father : So that the audience could refer to the book. If they want to read and understand. In the commentary of Al-Imam Abu Al-Sa`ud Mohamed Ibn Mohamed Al-`Ammadi العمادي محمد بن محمد ابو السعود , page 233.

+ Announcer : Abu Al-Sa`ud Mohamed Ibn Mohamed, so the name does not include Abd-Al-Masih or George; it's a Quranic commentary, and also Mohamed son of Muhammad means Muhammad through and through.

+ Father : In Sura 3 as well, he says the following, "Thus the angels said: Mary God brings you the good news about a word from Him whose name is Christ Jesus the Son of Mary." In a previous episode I mentioned that the Quran is the standard of eloquence and it cannot contain a grammatical mistake. When I refer to the good news the angle brought to Mary about Jesus's birth here's two words that's grammatically should not go together and they're *kalmia* and *ismuhu* instead of *kalmia* and *ismuha* which grammatically incorrect 10:00

To those who don't know about Arabic, they say: Ah it refers to Christ of course, but Arabic grammar states the pronoun must refer to the noun *kalmia* preceding it, not the noun succeeding it. Do you see the point? So *kalmia* "word" has been defined in the masculine. Instead of the feminine And therefore it is not any ordinary word, it must be the 'logos' God's intellect.. His Word means God's intellect, God's knowledge. All that is in the masculine, and it is the something that occurs in the gospel of John "In the beginning was" in Arabic is in the masculine *kana*, not *kanat*, and *al-kalima kana*, not *kanat*, and "the word became", *al-kalima sara* not *sarat*. So the Quran here agrees with the Bible, that this is not an ordinary word, it is the knowledge of God, transfigured, manifested, and appearing to mankind. This is what Sura 3 says. Let's see what the commentators say, perhaps we are interpreting the way we like, and perhaps our audience are saying, "Please don't interpret the way you like.

+ Announcer : This is your own interpretation.

+ Father : Let's go to the Muslim jurists, the Muslim scholars, and the Muslim interpreters. In order to reach out the truth, one must research, mustn't one? Sheikh Mohyi Al-Din Al-Arabi الشيخ محيي الدين العربي , in His book *Fusus Al-Hikam* فصوص الحكم , volume 2, page 35 .. *Fusus Al-Hikam*, volume 2, page 35. Now, what does Mohyi Al-Din Al-Arabi say? He says: The word is God revealed. Did you hear that?

+ Announcer : Oh glory to the name of the Lord. Would you please repeat it Reverend Father?

+ Father : The word is God revealed, and it is the very Godhead and none else. It is the very Godhead, it is the Godhead itself. That means that the Word is God; and no nothing else. As we say that the knowledge of God is God, the intellect of God is God, the existence of God is God, the logos of God is God, the spirit of God is God. The same as it is with man: man's existence is man himself, his intellect is man himself, his spirit is himself-

+ Announcer : They can not be separated from one another at all.

+ Father : Personal attributes. Who was this? Sheikh Mohyi Al-Din Al-Arabi. He also said in the same book *Fusus Al-Hikam* page 143, previously it was page 35, now he goes back in page 143, to confirm the truth. The word is the divinity. What does divinity mean? God's nature- we call it divinity. The same way we call human nature humanity, because it is derived from human. Do you see the emphasis? The word is the divinity, the Word of God. And previously he said, "It is God revealed" that is, made manifest, the same way you reveal your mind when you speak, your word is the revelation of your intellect, your word reveals your mind. God's word is a revelation of God's intellect, or knowledge. Okay, we come now to other people than sheikh Mohyi Al-Din Al-Arabi. Now we come to Mu'atazites, a well-know Islamic denomination. They explain the account of the prophet Moses when God spoke to him from the tree, which occurs in Sura 27 and Sura 20 and Sura 28. I believe I mentioned that previously, but perhaps there are new attendants among our audience who did not attend the previous episodes. May I tell it?

+ Announcer : Repetition is very helpful.

+ Father : The Arabic saying goes "Repetition teaches the clever". In Sura 28 it says, "Has the story of Moses ever reached you? When Moses had completed the term? [that is, he lived out his life] and was traveling away with his family? He glimpsed a fire on a slope of Mount Sinai [that is, he saw a fire coming out from the side of the mountain] He told his family, "Stay here. Sit. I have glimpsed a fire [that is, I have seen fire]. Perhaps I may bring you some news from it [to check out the people who built the fire] or at least an amber from the fire [a little bit of it], so that you may warm yourselves." Right, to keep warm. So when he came up to it. Someone called out to him from the tree,

in the blessed hollow on the right bank of the valley. [Pay close attention.. not from heaven and not everywhere, from a very specific place on the right bank of the valley. Not only that but also from the tree in the blessed hollow, a blessed spot, a spot that was aflame with fire. So someone called to him from the fire. So God appeared in the fire, then God says, “Moses, take off your sandals. You are in the secret valley of Tuwa.” Until today this is the name of the valley. This is where president Answer Al-Sadat wanted to build a religions compound: a mosque, a church, and a synagogue, but he ran out of time.

+ Announcer : Or he was not meant to build it.

+ Father : Well, yes may be he wasn't meant to build it. So this is how it went- God says to him, “Take off your sandals. You are in the secret valley of Tuwa. I am God the Lord of the universe.” In Sura 20 he says the same thing but he adds, “There is no deity except myself.” And in Sura 27 he says: “Blessed be whoever is in the fire and whoever is around it.” The Mu`atazalites - you know I am not going to explain this myself. Let's see what the Mu`atazalites said – the Mu`atazalites said in this respect: The words or the oracle of God resided in the tree or was incarnated in it.

+ Announcer : Excuse me, would you please mention the name of the reference again; in case people want to refer to it.

+ Father : Under the heading of Mu`atazalites the book *Al-milal wa al-ahwa' wa al-nihal*, go for the chapter on *mu`atazila* and you'll find exactly what I am reading here. So the word of God according to the Mu`atazalites was manifested, appeared, and was incarnated in the tree. So we have now seen Al-Arabi, Mohyi Al-Din Al-Arabi and we have seen the Mu`atazalites. Shall we see a third party also, because by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established?

+ Announcer : Let's go for a three; this is far better.

+ Father : Also to confirm an oath one says three times by the great God, also for the confirmation of divorce they say I divorce you three times. So everything is made perfect by the trinity. You know it is funny; they take these things and do them but they still object to them. Why do you still apply the principle of trinity here? Now we come to Al-Ha'itiyya الحائطية . It is a sect of Islam, also in the same book *Al-milal wa al-ahwa' wa al-nihal* Imam Ahmed Ibn Al-Ha'it امام احمد ابن الحائط , the leader of the Ha'itiyya sect, spoke about

Christ. “Christ put on human body [like he would put on an armor], he put on human body and he is the ancient Word from eternity past who was incarnated, just as the Christians maintain.” Again?

+ Announcer : Yes, please.

+ Father : You will find this in the book *Al-milal wa al-ahwa' wa al-nihal* volume 1, page 77. Imam Ahmed Ibn Al-Ha'it, who is the leader of Ha'itiyya sect, said about Christ, “Christ has put on human body, but who is he? He is the ancient, eternal Word made incarnate, just as the Christian maintain.” That’s the exact meaning of the incarnation of the word. God’s mind made incarnate, appeared. As we said in a previous illustration that when I have thoughts on my mind, I take the pen and I write them down, I incarnate the thought on the paper through the ink and the paper- thus the thought is revealed, is shown, read, and known. Just the same way God wants to reveal His mind, so instead of Him writing on ink and paper, He wrote in a human body. He appeared in a human body. He invested His mind in human body, because sometimes you write on paper, at other times on rocks and stones, isn’t that right? Skin, even bones, right? On bones. Ok, God wrote on skin and bones- a man. He appeared in a man. I don’t see the difficulty about it. Of course this is simple and sound, but in order to have a deep inner faith, you need a touch from God, an illumination of light, an impartation of knowledge, an impartation of the light, and therefore, any man right now, if the esteemed audience would like God to illuminate his intellect right now as you are listening to this program, please repeat these words. O God, I want to know the truth, I want you to illuminate your light into my heart, and I want you, God, to enlighten my mind and to show me the truth about the matter. Shine upon my heart; enlighten my mind, touching me a transforming touch, that I may be able to change my thoughts about you to know the truth of the matter. Right now God answers you when you ask with faith and confidence, with a sincere heart, God must answer you. That’s his promise. So this was the concept of the incarnation of God; we dealt with the incarnation of God in general and now the incarnation of the Word from a different angle. We are dealing with the same subject but from different angles. What has been said about God’s in carnation of God in human body, and what have been said about God’s incarnation knowledge and mind in human body. So we are dealing with the same subject but from various aspects.

+ Announcer : May the Lord bless you, Father. Now we come to another question: You maintain that the Word of God was incarnated in Christ, and you said previously that the word of God is the mind of God. How can the mind of God then be incarnated into man, which necessitates the question: Was God without mind in heaven at the time when his mind was incarnated in Christ on earth? And as a matter of fact, Father, we get asked this question so many times. They do ask us also: Has God been without mind up in heaven when Christ was buried, and when he died, how did he rule the universe so mindlessly?

+ Father : That question that occurs to one's mind often. Everyone has the right to think freely, every one has the right to inquire. You can't acquire knowledge without inquiry. As long as you keep asking, as well as you will know, but if one conceals his questions, how will he acquire knowledge?

+ Announcer : And one must also use his mind.

+ Father : And one must also use his mind.

+ Announcer : The one who doesn't ask doesn't think.

+ Father : I doubt, then I think, therefore I exist. Doubt leads me to thinking, and thinking leads me to research and knowledge, and this completes my existence and being. It is good for man to ask and it is shameful for man not to ask.

Ok, logic says: you maintain that Christ is the word of God that is His intellect, and you also maintain that the word of God was incarnated in human body. So God appeared with His mind in human body, but what about God up there, that is so hard?

Of course this question comes from.. I mean it results from incompletable awareness and perception. For example, let me put this question to the one who asked: Can your intellect be separated from your own being or existence? Certainly not. How can we separate man's mind? It's impossible. So wherever the Word of God is, there is God. This echo is verse in the Bible in the book of Ecclesiastes, "Where the word of the God is, there is God." And why so? Because God is infinite and His mind is also infinite. So wherever the Intellect is found, God is also found, because God is omnipresent, and manifested in this particular spot exactly the same as this. We may ask this question: Isn't it also

in the Quran in Sura 28, 20, and 27 when the fire appeared in the holy spot, in the tree, and He said to Moses, "I am God and there is no other deity but I." Alright then, who was filling the heaven at the time?

+ Announcer : Quiet right Father.

+ Father : Well, He was in the tree,

+ Announcer : Or he left heaven and came down!

+ Father : Did he leave heaven! Impossible!

+ Announcer : Or the mountain?

+ Father : Yes, or when he manifested himself on the mountain, has the world come to an end? Something else, when we read the books of the Quran, I mean the books on Islam very well, we find the following: God... this is a prophetic tradition: "God descends in the last third of the night to the lower heaven." God descends to the lower heaven- He descends to the lower heaven! Who is in the upper heaven then! Since he descended, who is there? But this is not the right language to use, since God is omnipresent, but can be seen in a specific spot; He appears in a specific location but He is omnipresent, everywhere, isn't that right? So God is omnipresent; His mind, intellect is manifested and appears in a specific location and a specific place, and this does not preclude His existence everywhere at the same time. right?

+ Announcer : Quiet right. Now then when our beloved Muslims tell us when God was incarnated, where was His mind then, even the very way of putting the question is wrong. This can not be.

+ Father : It's illogic. This question.. I would say about this question that it's quiet naive, and when I use naive, I am actually being rather polite. I'd like to say quiet foolish, if you would excuse me. But I would rather use a refined way of talking. Whoever asks this question is quiet naive.

+ Announcer : So you have now provided us with evidence from the Quran and from the Bible? Would you very briefly give us a summary of everything we have dealt with before the conclusion of this episode?

+ Father : Ok, very good. In conclusion, we have said that Christ is the Word of God incarnated in a man, the Word of God incarnated in a man, and the gospel says that the Word, that is the mind of God, became flesh, and the Quran

also says the same: “I bring you good news about a word from Him, whose name is Christ Essa ebn Mariam.” And as we have examined all the statements of jurists and scholars, from the three examples that we provided, we find that the Word is God manifested, or revealed so Christ is God’s eternal word made manifest in the flesh, and the same I embody my thoughts in ink and paper, God’s mind was incarnated in human body. This is it in a nutshell.

+ Announcer : And of course this is not new to our beloved Muslim friends, because they find the same in the Quran. They have it, but need to read it a bit more careful.

+ Father : Well he should use his mind and understand what he is reading, and if he doesn’t understand he should ask.

+ Announcer : Excuse me, Father, would you please emphasize the verses he should refer to. I know you have mentioned Sura 4 verse 171, I know I memorized them and Sura 3, verse 35, please refer to these verses to be sure of what we have said, and that it is identical to what you have.

+ Father : This also occurs in Sura 27, Sura 28, and Sura 20.

+ Announcer : My dear viewers, God is a Father, he’s loving and affectionate, and He wants your salvation. My dear viewers, as we have mentioned before, we welcome all of your questions and be sure we will answer all of them. If you would like a free copy of the Bible, write to us and we will send it to you free of charge. Thank you, until we meet again.