Who has the Real Jesus, Christians or Muslims?

Big picture: Christians and Muslims both claim to love Jesus, but the Jesus of the Bible and the Jesus of the Qur'an are very different. Who is the Jesus of the Qur'an and how is he different from the Jesus of Scripture?

1. Jesus is a key feature of Quran



Ask most Muslims, and they will claim to love Jesus. In western cities Muslims are active in reaching out, inviting people to accept Islam through various street outreach ministries. Often, seeking to appeal to western nominal Christian audiences, their stands will have large signs declaring their love for Jesus: "I am a Muslim and I love Jesus (peace be upon him)". "Many people are unaware that to be a Muslim, one must love Jesus pbuh and hold him in high esteem" tweeted one Muslim cleric with a following of around 10 million1.

Of course, while it might surprise Christians to hear such a claim, it's not surprising that Muslims have a high regard for Jesus considering the amount which he is mentioned in the Quran. In total he is mentioned by name 25 times2, whereas Muhammad only gets mentioned by name 4 times3. In general Muslims have a high regard for prophets driven by the Quran's directive to believe in the other books and prophets that came before Muhammad. For example, Quran 4.152 says: "And those who believe in Allah and His messengers and do not discriminate between any of them - to those He is going to give their rewards. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful"4.

2. The Jesus of the Quran and Bible are very different

While Jesus appears many times in the Quran, we see within its pages a very different Jesus to that of the Christian Scriptures. While there are some areas of agreement, for example, his sinlessness, or the fact that Jesus came performing many miracles, the Quran otherwise contradicts the most essential claims the Bible makes about Jesus. Consider the following:

Topic	Bible	Quran
The deity of Jesus	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)	Indeed, the example of Jesus to Allah is like that of Adam. He created Him from dust; then He said to him, "Be," and he was.(Quran 3.59)
Jesus as Son of God	The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God (Mark 1:15)	He to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and who has not taken a son and has not had a partner in dominion and has created each thing and determined it with [precise] determination. (Quran 25.2)
Jesus in Trinity	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 (Matthew 28:19 – note 3 persons but 1 singular name.)	And do not say, "Three"; desist - it is better for you. Indeed, Allah is but one God. (from Quran 4.171)

Incarnation of Jesus	The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)	Denying the deity of Christ, rules out belief in the incarnation.
The Cross	It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. (Mark 15:25) With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. (Mark 15:37)	…And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but [another] was made to resemble him to them… (Quran 4.157)
Providing salvation	Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.' (Acts 4:12)	No mention of Jesus providing salvation, rather deeds the means to attain favour with God: "And those who believe and do righteous deeds - We will surely remove from them their misdeeds and will surely reward them according to the best of what they used to do." (Quran 29.7, see also Quran 29.9, Quran 47.2)
The Resurrection	But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. (Matthew 28:5-6)	Denying that Jesus died, also denies the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. Quran 19.33 does mention Jesus being "raised alive", but this is not something unique to Jesus and said of John the Baptist in the same chapter (Quran 19.15).
The Return of Jesus	But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. (1 Corinthians 15:23-25)	The Quran has one verse that is possibly speaking of the return of Jesus, and Tafsir al-Jalalayn interprets Quran 43.61 as referring to the coming of Jesus in the future6. The standard Muslim understanding of the return of Jesus comes from Bukhari 2476 which speaks of coming as a "just ruler" who will "break the cross, kill the pigs, and abolish the Jizya tax" and bring a time of prosperity.

We can see therefore that the Jesus of the Quran and the Jesus of the Bible are by no means the same.

3. The Jesus of the Bible is God himself

When we look at the text of the New Testament, Jesus takes a central place. The New Testament starts with his genealogy7 and ends8 with his promise that he will return when he will ushering in all the promises that in him find their fulfilment9.

Two things become evident about Jesus when reading the New Testament. First is that Jesus is a human being. He is born of Mary, grows up under the supervision of his family (Luke 2:7, Luke 2:52), is prone to limitations of time and space and human weakness (e.g. hunger, Matthew 4:2, and thirst, John 19:28) and ends up dying on a cross (Luke 23:46). He is 100% human, but he is also declared to be fully divine.

Matthew tells us this in his first chapter, that Mary "will conceive and give birth to a son", yet they will "call him Immanuel (which means 'God with us')" and therefore he is worshipped (Matthew 2:2, Matthew 14:33, Matthew 28:17). John tells us that the "Word10 was God", and through him all things came into being. Jesus himself too tells us the same, using God's personal name for himself (John 8:58)11. In the Gospel's too he does things that only God can do, like forgive sins and have exercise authority over nature. The transfiguration is a key event too in the Gospels where the glory of Jesus in momentarily revealed.

In Acts, Peter calls Jesus "Lord" (Acts 2:36) and the "author of life" (Acts 3:15). Stephen too when being killed, sees Jesus seated in the highest place of authority, "standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55-56).

The epistles too are full of references to Jesus' deity. Paul is his letters is explicit in calling Jesus, "the image of the

invisible God" stating that in him "all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9), then describes him elsewhere as "being in very nature God". He calls him "our great God and Saviour" and "the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised!" One other key verse in Paul's letter is 1 Corinthians 8:6 where Paul using the structure of the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4, to show that Jesus is the Lord himself12.

Jesus identity in the non-Pauline epistles too is the same. James calls him "Lord" (James 1:1, James 2:1 etc.) and calls Jesus "the Judge" (James 5:9) after stating that there is "is only one Lawgiver and Judge" (James 4:12). Peter calls him Lord (1 Peter 1:3) and says that the "Spirit of Christ" was at work in the prophets long before his birth (1 Peter 1:7) and speaking of him in divine terms saying that Christ has, "gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him." (1 Peter 3:22) John in his first epistle too says of Jesus, "He is the true God and eternal life." and warns that if we believe the wrong things about him we would be guilty of "idolatry" (1 John 5:20-21).

The book of Revelation too is full of references to his deity. He is called the "First and the Last" (Revelation 1:17, Revelation 2:8, Revelation 22:13) a title the LORD uses of himself in Isaiah (Isaiah 41:4, Isaiah 44:6 and Isaiah 48:12) a title that speaks of his eternal being and imagery that is used to describe the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7 is used of him (Revelation 1:12-15).

This use of the title "Lord" in the NT for Jesus is significant. The Greek word "kyrios", is sometimes used as a term to refer to those in positions of respect or authority (see for example, Matthew 13:27, translated 'sir' or Matthew 6:2, translated 'master'). What is significant about the word "kyrios" however, is that around the time of Jesus, the word was used to translate the name "Yahweh" in the Greek translation of the Olt Testament. Grudem comments:

> *Now there are many instances in the New Testament where "Lord" is used of Christ in what can only be understood as this strong Old Testament sense, "the Lord" who is Yahweh or God himself. This use of "Lord" is quite striking in the word of the angel to the shepherds of Bethlehem: "For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord " (Luke 2:11)13.*
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> *One other clear way in which we see the deity of Jesus in the New Testament is when it applies Old Testament verses which speak of the LORD, to Jesus. Mark starts his gospel applying Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 to Jesus. Hebrews too is full of Old Testament references that speak of the LORD, that are applied to Jesus14. John in his Gospel, wanting us to understand who Christ is, documents his "I AM" statements showing us Jesus is God by directly linking Him to the divine name God used in the Old Testament, thereby asserting His eternal and divine nature. What makes these statements unique is that each "I AM" references something that can only be true of God, (E.g. Resurrection and the Life, or the Way the Truth and the Life), or links to an Old Testament picture of who God is (e.g The Good Shepherd a fulfilment of Ezekiel 36).*
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> *Alongside Jesus referring to himself using God's name, Yahweh, Jesus also used other Old Testament references to God for himself. The title, Son of God, while is a title often used of humanity in the Bible15, in its fullest sense does describe Jesus divine nature. A key place we see this is where Jesus quotes Psalms 110:1 in the context of asking those listening a question around his identity as the Son16.*
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> *By far and away Jesus' favourite title for himself was not "Son of God", but "Son of Man" Jesus' use of "Son of Man" is rooted in Daniel 7. In Daniel's vision he sees, "one like a son of man" approaching the "Ancient of Days". What is interesting about him, however, is that he is described as having divine attributes, He is seen "coming with the clouds of heaven", language used only for God in the Bible, and is "given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." (Daniel 7:14)*
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> *The fact that this "Son of Man" is worshipped, leads us to conclude that he shares the divine nature of the Ancient of Days. As when Jesus uses God's divine name for himself, when on trial, and Jesus quotes Daniel 7:14 (alongside Psalms 110:1) the High Priest accuses him of blasphemy understanding what Jesus was claiming in using the Son of Man language for himself17.*
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> *Theologian Wayne Grudem righty summarises all of this by saying, "Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one*

person, and will be so forever."18 The reader of the New Testament can come to no other conclusion.

4. The Quran objects to a divine Jesus

While the New Testament is clear who Jesus is, the Quran explicitly and vehemently rejects the idea that Jesus is God. Quran 5.75 states that, "The Messiah, son of Mary, was not but a messenger; [other] messengers have passed on before him. And his mother was a supporter of truth. They both used to eat food. Look how We make clear to them the signs; then look how they are deluded." The argument here is that if Jesus ate food, like other human beings ate food that precludes him from being God. However, the Bible shows that God has been coming down into time and space right from the beginning of creation (See Genesis 3:819) and so, in Christian thought God could take a human nature alongside His divine nature, especially as man was made in the image of God20.

Elsewhere it says, "The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was but a messenger of Allah and His word which He directed to Mary and a soul [created at a command] from Him." While the Quran calls Jesus "word" here, Muslims understand this to mean that God created Jesus by his command like he had created Adam. Quran 3.59 states, "Indeed, the example of Jesus to Allah is like that of Adam. He created Him from dust; then He said to him, "Be," and he was."

A key objection to the idea that Jesus is God is the strict form of monotheism that Islam holds to. Allah in the Quran is an indivisible unity, who "neither begets nor is born" (Quran 112.3) and therefore any being said to be equal to God cannot exist, any suggestion to the contrary is equivalent to polytheism. The Qur'an accuses Christians to have do so. It says they "taken their scholars and monks as lords besides Allah, and [also] the Messiah, the son of Mary. And they were not commanded except to worship one God; there is no deity except Him. Exalted is He above whatever they associate with Him." (Quran 9.31)

"Ascribing partners to God" is in fact in Islam the greatest sin. Quran 4.48 states that, "Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with Allah has certainly fabricated a tremendous sin." and Quran 14.30 states that, "And they have attributed to Allah equals to mislead [people] from His way. Say, 'Enjoy yourselves, for indeed, your destination is the Fire.'"

Alongside denying his deity, the Quran denies specifically the sonship of Jesus. Quran 19.88-93 states: "And they say, 'The Most Merciful has taken [for Himself] a son.' You have done an atrocious thing. The heavens almost rupture therefrom and the earth splits open and the mountains collapse in devastation that they attribute to the Most Merciful a son. And it is not appropriate for the Most Merciful that He should take a son." Elsewhere, "He to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and who has not taken a son and has not had a partner in dominion and has created each thing and determined it with [precise] determination." (Quran 25.2).

What is interesting about these verses is they accuse Christians of believing things they actually don't believe. The Bible doesn't teach that God took a son, but rather than Jesus is the eternal Son in Trinity, who took on humanity. Likewise , the idea that Jesus as Son is the result of God is the result of God's relationship with a partner, or wife (as Quran 72.3 puts it).

Just like the Quran's view of the Trinity is misinformed and twisted21, so too the Quran's understanding of what Christians have historically believed about Jesus being the Son of God is also deeply flawed.

5. If the Quran has the wrong Jesus, Muslims can't claim to love Jesus

We have to conclude therefore, that while the claim of Muslims to love Jesus seems at first to be commendable, the Jesus of the Quran is not the Jesus of the Bible or the Jesus that Christians have been worshipping from the 1st century right up until the 7th century, and to this day. Rather than love him they need to be introduced to him.

References

1. *1 https://twitter.com/muftimenk/status/812581265958404096/*
2. *2 Searching on this site brings up Jesus 33 times in the text of the Quran (Sahih Intl. version). Not all of these verses have "Isa" in the underlying Arabic text (e.g. Quran 3.53, which has the l-rasūla or messenger): Quran 5.112, Quran 2.87, Quran 2.136, Quran 2.253, Quran 3.45, Quran 3.52, Quran 3.53, Quran 3.55, Quran 3.59, Quran 3.84, Quran 4.157, Quran 4.159, Quran 4.163, Quran 4.171, Quran 5.46, Quran 5.78, Quran 5.110, Quran 5.111, Quran 5.114, Quran 5.116, Quran 6.85, Quran 19.30, Quran 19.34, Quran 19.36, Quran 19.37, Quran 33.7, Quran 42.13, Quran 43.59, Quran 43.61, Quran 43.63, Quran 57.27, Quran 61.6, Quran 61.14. If we include mentions of Jesus by title and the total comes to 78. See, https://en.wikipedia.-org/wiki/Names_and_titles_of_Jesus_in_the_Quran*
3. *3 Quran 3.144, Quran 33.40, Quran 47.2, Quran 48: 29. Of course Muhammad is mentioned in the Quran by title too many more times, being referred to as "the Messenger", e.g. Quran 5.92, "Our Servant", e.g. Quran 2.4, "the Prophet", e.g. Quran 33.50 etc. However, many translations of the Quran insert Muhammad in square brackets where the translations feel the text is referring to him.*
4. *4 See Quran 4.153 and Quran 3.84 for example.*
5. *5 Muslims may reject Mark 1:1 as authentic due to the fact that some early manuscripts omit "Son of God" from the verse. However, the idea is found a number of times throughout the Gospel and is referenced at the Baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:11) and at the climax of the Gospel (Mark 15:39).*
6. *6 al-Jalalayn 1056*
7. *7 Matthew 1:1-17*
8. *8 Revelation 22:20-21*
9. *9 2 Corinthians 1:20*
10. *10 that's Jesus - see John 1:14*
11. *11 Note the Pharisees tried to stone Jesus to death when he used God's divine name. See also, "Where did Jesus say I am God, worship me?" and "The Deity of Jesus in Mark's Gospel" for a discussion on how Mark and John share a high Christology.*
12. *12 https://bibleproject.com/podcast/theme-god-e18-who-did-paul-think-jesus-was/*
13. *13 Grudem, Wayne A.. Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith (p. 237). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.*
14. *14 For example, Hebrews 1:9 quoting Psalms 45:6,7, Hebrews 1:12 quoting Psalms 102:25-27 and Hebrews 1:13 quoting Psalms 110:1*
15. *15 King David is ascribed to being the son of God in Psalms 2 as he is coronated as King. Luke in his genealogy states that Adam too is known as the "son of God" (Luke 3:38). Both David and Adam are given this title to show the authority bestowed on them by God to rule, Adam over creation (see Genesis 1:26 and 28) and David as King over Israel. Angels are also known as "sons of God" (see Job 1:6 and Job 2:1) as is Israel as a nation (Hosea 11:1; cf. Exod 4:22 and Matt. 2:15)*
16. *16 See Mark 12 including broader context of the parable of the vineyard. Grudem comments: The force of this statement is that "God the Father said to God the Son (David's Lord), 'Sit at my right hand....'" Grudem, (p. 237).*
17. *17 See "the Deity of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark" for more on this.*
18. *18 Grudem. (p. 229).*
19. *19 See also, "The Appearances of the Son of God in the Old Testament".*
20. *20 See https://ccistudyapp.com/q/explaining-the-incarnation/ for more on the incarnation of Jesus.*
21. *21 See "the misunderstood Trinity of the Quran".*