Jesus (A.S.): Rediscovered

Indeed the case of Jesus with God is like the case of Adam: He created him from dust then“ said to him, “Be”, and he was.

"This is the truth from your Lord, so do not be among the doubters." (Holy Qur'an 3:60)

Every year the 25th of December, celebrated in the western world as Christmas, affords us the chance to focus on one of the five greatest Messengers of God, Prophet Jesus (AS).

Although the Son of the Virgin Mary (SA), whose people the Israelites used to follow the lunar calendar (like their cousins the Ishmaelite Arabs), was neither born on this day, nor did he claim to be a son of God, nonetheless the day is an opportunity to remove misconceptions about this Immaculate Prophet, whose birth without the association of a father, remains one of the manifest miracles of the One and Only Creator.

As Muslims we ought to look at Jesus (AS) through the prism of Islam, rather than the differing versions of the Gospels in vogue among the various Christian sects, especially in view of the fact that it was only in 336 AD – three long centuries after the end of the mission of Jesus – that the pagan Roman festival of December 25 was renamed Christmas.

Moreover, the Gospels say Jesus was sent to guide the lost sheep of Israel (which continues to remain lost) and not to the Gentiles (non-Israelites). It was Paul the Hellenized Jew – an opponent of Jesus while the Messiah was on earth – who coined the weird concept of Trinity to suit the warped imagination of the heathen Gentiles of Europe to win converts to the creed called Christianity.

The Romans and the Greeks, upon whom the new creed was forced in the 4th century AD by Emperor Constantine, had no clue about Jesus or his unsullied monotheistic message. They did not even bother to probe it, since the concept of 'Trinity' dished out to them by the Council of Nicaea appeared a shade better than the pantheon of idols imposed upon them centuries earlier by their ancestors who had disobeyed the One and Only God and veered off the track.

As it took another half a millennium for Christianity to spread to other parts of Europe, the pagans of the north added their own heathen customs to Christmas by bringing in mistletoe twigs that centuries later evolved into the "Christmas Tree".

Then came the "Christmas Ham" (Jesus and the Israelites considered pork as religiously unclean), "Santa Claus", the nightlong depraved revelries, and a host of other frivolities that were not only frowned upon by the Puritans of both Europe and the US until the 19th century, but continue to shock Jesus.

Thus when we remove the mist of history we discover the real Jesus and his monotheistic teachings, not among the Christians but in the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith. His birth doesn't seem to have taken place in a manger in Bethlehem, since there are neither any palm trees in and around this place, nor is it a distant land from Bayt al-Moqaddas (Jerusalem) where the Virgin Mary used to live, as could be gauged from the following ayahs: "Thus she conceived him and withdrew with him to a distant place. The birth pangs brought her to the trunk of a date palm. She said: I wish I had died before and become a forgotten thing beyond recall. Thereupon he (the angel) called from below her (saying) do not grieve! Your Lord has made a spring to flow at your feet. Shake the trunk of the palm tree, freshly picked dates will drop upon you. Eat, drink and be comforted. Then if you see any human, say, indeed I have vowed a fast to the All-Beneficent, so I will not speak to any human today. Then carrying him she brought him to her people..." (Qur'an 19:22-27)

Here Islamic texts come to our rescue. In Iraq (a distant land from Palestine) we find in the al-Baratha Mosque near Baghdad a sanctified white oblong slab of stone, where it is said Jesus was born. The place is surrounded by date palms, and there is a spring in it. We also read in Islamic texts that it was on the 6th of Muharram that Jesus was born.

And the most important point is that Jesus, whose alleged crucifixion God Almighty refutes in the Holy Qur'an, gave the tidings of the coming of the Last and Greatest Messenger after him – a hint that also remains in the Gospel of St. John despite the interpolation wrought over the centuries.

"O Children of Israel! Indeed I am the Prophet of Allah to you, to confirm what is before me of the Torah, and to give the tidings of the Prophet to come after me, whose name is Ahmad." (61:6)

It is clear that "Ahmad", which is Arabic for the Aramaic and Hebrew word "Hmda" or the "Most Praised One", and the "Most Admirable One" is a name of Prophet Muhammad (SAWA).