

# On The Living Christ

## A Talk Given in the Easter Sacrament Meeting in the Sterling Park Ward of the Ashburn, VA Stake

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## **Introduction**

I keep a mental list of books I want to read. For a number of years, The Koran, by the Prophet Mohammed, has been on that list. In the last few months I found a website where volunteers have recorded--in audio format--a number of classic books whose copyrights have expired. One of those books is The Koran. I downloaded the audio files and put them on my iPod. I have been listening to the Koran off and on for about the last three weeks, and am about two-thirds the way through the book.

Mohammed was about 40 years old in the year 610. He found himself in a world where most of the people in Arabia adhered to a pagan religion with many gods. There were also groups of Jewish people and Arab Christians living in Arabia. Not only was he dissatisfied by the pagan worship of the local Arabs, he was also disconcerted by the fragmentation of Christianity into many churches. Moreover, he was concerned about the departure of the Jews from their traditional religion. In short, he observed what we would call a general apostasy from the truth.

Mohammed frequently retired to a cave to contemplate the religious confusion around him. He claimed that God called him to be God's messenger to the world. He wrote God's messages a series of poems. These poems have been compiled into what is called The Koran.

The messages are directed to the three groups of people I just mentioned: the pagan Arabs, the fragmented Christians, and the apostate Jews. There are two overriding messages of the Koran. The first is a call to return to the pristine worship of God, as practiced by Abraham and Moses. The second message is a warning of the punishment God will mete out to those who do not return to the pristine religion.

The Koran is a fierce defense of the God of Abraham, of Ishmael and Isaac, and of Jacob: the one true and only God. To quote The Koran, "There is no god, but God." (Sura 3 Aya 62) This saying is reminiscent of the 1st of Moses' commandments, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." (Exodus 20:3) The Koran labels as an infidel, any person who "adds gods to God." This includes the Christians, who, from the Muslim point of view, have added a Son of God to God.

The Koran does not see the need of a second God, besides the one God who was the God of Adam, the God of Noah, the God of Abraham, the God of Moses, the God of David, and the God of Jesus. The Koran claims that God is powerful enough, in and of himself, to forgive sins. Thus, God does not need or want the services of a Son to intercede between God and man (see, for example, Sura 5 Aya 116 and Sura 23 Aya 91). The Koran asserts that doctrines--like the atonement--are a perversion of the original religion preached by Abraham and Moses. Besides, the Koran argues, God could not have a son, because God does not have a consort.

The Koran has had a very powerful impact on the people of this world. There are currently over 1 billion adherents to Islam. Over the last 1500 years, Islam has displaced many pagan religions, and pointed those people toward God.

## **The Living Christ**

From the vantage point of the Restored Gospel, we see Islam in the same light as we see Judaism and traditional Christianity, that is, religions with more truth than the alternatives they replaced. Yet, they each have fallen short of the complete gospel. It was just such a world in which Joseph Smith found himself--Judaism, Christianity, and Islam--all with aspects of the truth, but incomplete. When Joseph prayed, there was an unmistakable answer. God the Father, and God the Son appeared together. This appearance erased the confusion about the nature of God. This act of revelation dispelled the centuries of philosophical and religious debate. The Father not only bore witness of His Son on that occasion when he said "This is my beloved Son," but also sustained His Son in his Son's calling as God of this earth, when he commanded Joseph to "hear Him." With those words, the Father delegated the work of the Restoration over to the Son. (JS-Hist 1:17)

It is no accident that Parley Pratt's hymn, "The Morning Breaks," is the first one in our hymnal. We love to sing it precisely because the restoration of the knowledge of God is like the sun rising in the morning to dispel the darkness of nearly two millennia. One can feel the refreshment this knowledge of Christ brings.

Christians around the world today are celebrating the resurrection of Christ--for good reason. Christ's resurrection broke the bands of death. The resurrection also consummated the atonement, which breaks the bands of Satan. That Christ resurrected Himself, means He still lives today. He is not just an historical figure. He is not just another prophet. He is not just a great teacher and perfect example. He is the creator and Savior of the world. He is the Great Jehovah. He is the God of this earth. He is the God of the Old Testament. He is the God of the Koran. He is the God of the New Testament. He is the God of the Book of Mormon. He is the God of the Doctrine and Covenants. He is the God that nations of the world worship. He is a living God, Who is actively engaged in the affairs of this Earth.

When the God of Abraham, the God of Ishmael and Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of Moses comes to reign personally on the earth, the Jews and the Muslims will ask their God in wonderment: "What are these scars in your hands and feet?" (Zech 13:6 and DC 45:51-53) They will then come to a knowledge of the truth about God.

Christ is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. ("The Living Christ" Ensign, December 2004)

## **Conclusion**

Brothers and sisters, "I know my Redeemer lives!" What joy this sentence brings. (Hymns, 136) He lives, who once was dead. He lives, and I, too, shall conquer death. He lives, my Prophet, Priest and King. He lives! All glory to His name!

To His divinity, I bear my solemn witness. In the sacred name of our God, Jesus Christ, amen.