

Ibn Taymiyyah's Debate with Christians Regarding the Claimed Divinity of Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ)



Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) said:

“I said to those among them who came to me and spoke with something of this [argument]:

If you resemble the creature [such as Jesus] to the rays of the sun and fire and the Creator to the fire and the sun, then there is no difference between Jesus and others [in this regard]. For everything besides Allāh—upon this argument—is like rays and light. For what is the difference between the Messiah and Abraham and Moses? Rather, what is the difference between him and all of the other creatures, upon this [line of reasoning]?

I kept repeating this speech to them. In the gathering was a group [of them] and one of them understood this well. It became clear to him and to those present that their statement is futile, having no reality to it. That what they attribute to the

Messiah is either impossible for every person or is something shared between the Messiah and others. Upon either of the two considerations, specifying the Messiah [with divinity] is futile.

I mentioned to them that there is no sign (miracle) which the Messiah came with except that Moses came with what was greater than it. For the Messiah (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ), even though he revived the dead, then the dead which Allāh revived upon the hand of Moses were greater, those who said: "... **'we will never believe you until we see Allah outright', so the thunderbolt took you...**" (2:55). Then He revived them after their death, as He said: "**Then We revived you after your death**" (2:56). Likewise, [the revival] of the one who was struck by the part of the cow [that that Israelites were asked to sacrifice] and other such [examples].

More than one of the Prophets also came with revival of the dead and the Christians affirm that.

As for making the staff [of Moses] into a snake, then that is greater than reviving the dead. For the dead being once possessed life and life was simply returned back to it, to the place where there was life. As for turning dry wood into a living thing which swallows sticks and ropes, then this is of greater ability and more extraordinary.

As for sending down a table from the heaven, then He used to send down manna (a honey-type substance) and quail to them from the heaven every day. He would also cause water to spring from the rock—and these affairs are greater than that [which was sent down for the Messiah and his helpers]. For the sweet (honey) and the meat [of birds] is loftier in its type and

greater in [demonstrating] His power than what was on the table of olives, fish and other than them.

I mentioned to him what makes clear that specifying the Messiah with divine union and the claim of divinity does not have any angle. That the sum of what can be mentioned regarding this is something that is either:

—shared between him and other creatures,

—or shared between him and others from the Prophets and Messengers, even though some of the Messengers such as Abraham and Moses, are more perfect than him in this regard.

As for him being created out of a woman without a man, then the creation of Eve from a man without a woman is more amazing than that. For he [Jesus] was created out of the womb of a woman, this is something usual, as opposed to creation from the rib of a man. For this is not ordinary.

Hence, there is no affair mentioned about the Messiah (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) except that another from Adam's offspring shares with him in that regard or with something that is greater than it. It is therefore known absolutely, that specifying the Messiah [with divinity on the basis of such arguments] is futile.

And if what they claim about him is something possible, then it is not specific to him, and if it is impossible, then it does not exist in him and nor in others besides him.”¹

“For this reason, I would resign my debate with the scholars of the Christians by requesting them to show the difference between the Messiah and others with respect to the issue of divinity. They would not be able to find any difference. Rather, I

¹ Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā (2/346)

would explain to them that what Moses came with of signs (miracles) are greater. If they were a proof for claiming divinity, then Moses has greater right to it.

As for being born without a father, then that demonstrates the ability of the Creator, not that the creature [so created] is superior to others.”²

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² Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā (15/228)