

## **Prophet 'Isa (as)**

**The following was taken from Stories of Prophets by Allama Ibn Katheer**

### **The Birth of Mariam (ra)**

Allah the Almighty said: *The wife of Imran said: "O my Lord! I have vowed to You what (the child that) is in my womb to be dedicated for Your services (free from all worldly work; to serve Your Place of worship), so accept this, from me. Verily, You are the All-Hearer, the All Knowing."*<sup>1</sup> Then when she delivered her (child Mariam (ra)), she said: *"O my Lord! I have delivered a female child," and Allah knew better what she delivered, - "and the male is not like the female, and I have named her Mariam (ra), and I seek refuge with You (Allah) for her and for her offspring from Satan, the outcast."*<sup>2</sup>

### **Mariam's (ra) Sustenance - Quranic**

So her Lord (Allah) accepted her with goodly acceptance. He made her grow in a good manner and put her under the care of Prophet Zakariyyah (Prophet Zakariyah's (as) wife's (Elizabeth) sister had a daughter named Hannah who had a daughter called Mariam (ra)). Every time he entered Al-Mihrab (a praying place or a private room), he found her supplied with sustenance. As Allah recounted in the Glorious Quran: *She said: "From Allah. Verily, Allah provides sustenance to whom He wills, without limit."* (Ch 3:37 Quran)

### **Prophet Zakariyyah (as) Becomes Mariam (ra)'s Guardian**

As the baby was a girl, the question of her guardianship posed a problem for the elders. This was a child of their late and beloved leader, and everyone was eager to take care of her. Prophet Zakariyyah (as) said to the elders: *"I am the husband of her maternal aunt and her nearest relation in the temple; therefore, I will be more mindful of her than all of you."* As it was their custom to draw lots to solve disagreements, they followed this course. Each one was given a reed to throw into the river. They had agreed that whoever's reed remained afloat would be granted guardianship of the girl. All the reeds sank to the bottom except Zakariyyah's. With this sign, they all surrendered to the will of Allah and made him the guardian.

### **Mariam (ra)'s High Status**

To ensure that no one had access to Mariam (ra), Zakariyyah (as) built a separate room for her in the temple. As she grew up, she spent her time in devotion to Allah. Zakariyyah (as) visited her daily to see to her needs, and so it continued for many years. One day, he was surprised to find fresh fruit, which was out of season in her room. As he was the only person who could enter her room, he asked her how the fruit got there. She replied that these provisions were from Allah, as He gives to whom He wills. Zakariyyah understood by this that Allah had raised Mariam (ra)'s status above that of other women. Thereafter, Zakariyyah spent more time with her, teaching and guiding her. Mariam (ra) grew to be a devotee of Allah, glorifying Him day and night.

### **Mariam (ra) Receives News of Prophet Isa (as)**

While Mariam (ra) was praying in her temple, an angel in the form of a man appeared before her. Filled with terror, she tried to flee, praying: *"Verily! I seek refuge with the Most Beneficent (Allah) from you, if you do fear Allah."* The angel said: *"I am only a Messenger from your Lord, (to announce) to you the gift of a righteous son."* She said: *"How can I have a son, when no man has touched me, nor am I unchaste?"* He said: *"So (it will be), your Lord said: "That is easy for me (Allah): And (We wish)*

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<sup>1</sup> Qur'an 3: 35

<sup>2</sup> Qur'an 3: 36

*to appoint him as a sign to mankind and a mercy from Us (Allah), and it is a matter (already) decreed, (by Allah).'''<sup>3</sup>*

### **The Birth of Prophet Isa (as)**

With a heavy heart, she left the temple and went to Nazareth, the city in which she had been born where she settled in a simple farm house to avoid the public. But fear and anxiety did not leave her. She was from a noble and pious family. Her father had not been an evil man nor was her mother an impure woman. How could she prevent tongues from wagging about her honour? After some months, she could not bear the mental strain any longer. Burdened with a heavy womb, she left Nazareth, not knowing where to go to be away from this depressing atmosphere. She had not gone far, when she was overtaken by the pains of childbirth. She reached Bethlehem valley, about four to six miles from Jerusalem. She saw down against a dry palm tree, and here she gave birth to a son. Looking at her beautiful baby, she was hurt that she had brought him into the world without a father. She exclaimed: "I wish I had died before this happened and had vanished into nothingness!" Suddenly, she heard a voice nearby: "Grieve not, your Lord has placed a rivulet – small stream of water - below, and shake the trunk of this tree, from which ripe dates will fall. So eat and drink and regain the strength you have lost; and be of good cheer, for what you see is the power of Allah, who made the dry palm tree regain life, in order to provide food for you." For a while she was comforted by Allah's miracle, for it was a sure sign of her innocence and purity.

### **Mariam (ra) Returns to the City with Prophet Isa (as)**

Mariam (ra) decided to return to the city. However, her fears also returned. What was she going to tell the people? As if sharing his mother's worry, the baby began to speak: "If you meet any person say: 'I have vowed to fast for The Beneficent and may not speak to any human today.'" With this miracle, Mariam (ra) felt at ease. As she had expected, her arrival in the city with a new born baby in her arms aroused the curiosity of the people. They scolded her: "This is a terrible sin that you have committed." She put her finger to her lips and pointed to the child. They asked: "How can we speak to a new born baby?" To their total amazement, the child began to speak clearly: *"Verily! I am a slave of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a Prophet; and He has made me blessed wherever I be, and has enjoined me prayer, and Zakat, as long as I live, and dutiful to my mother, and made me not arrogant, unblessed. And Salam (peace) be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive!"*<sup>4</sup> Most of the people realized that the baby was unique, for it Allah wills something, He merely says "Be" and it happens. Of course, there were some who regarded the baby's speech as a strange trick, but at least Mariam (ra) could now stay in Nazareth without being harassed.

### **Prophet Isa (as) Upsets the Jews**

The Jewish priests felt this child Prophet Isa (as) was dangerous, for they felt that the people would turn their worship to Allah the Almighty Alone, displacing the existing Jewish tenets. Consequently, they would lose their authority over the people. Therefore, they kept the miracle of Prophet Isa (as)'s speech in infancy as a secret and accused Mariam (ra) of a great misdeed.

### **Prophet Isa (as)'s Ability to Debate**

As Prophet Isa (as) grew, the signs of Prophethood began to increase. He could tell his friends what kind of supper waited for them at home and what they had hidden and where. When he was twelve years old, he accompanied his mother to Jerusalem. There he wandered into the temple and joined a crowd listening to the lecture of the Rabbis (Jewish priests). The audience were all adults, but he was not afraid to sit with them. After listening intently, he asked questions and expressed his opinion. The

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<sup>3</sup> Qur'an 19: 18 - 21

<sup>4</sup> Qur'an 19: 27 - 33

learned rabbis were disturbed by the boy's boldness and puzzled by the questions he asked, for they were unable to answer him. They tried to silence him, but he ignored their attempts and continued to express his views.

### **Prophet Isa (as) Does Not Observe the Sabbath**

Prophet Isa (as) grew up to manhood. It was Sabbath, a day of complete rest: no fire could be lit or extinguished nor could females plait their hair. Musah (as) had commanded that Saturday be dedicated to the worship of Allah. However, the Pharisees (one of a group of Jews who thought that they kept all God's rules) who were the guardians of the law, were ready to sell it when their interests were involved so as to obtain personal gains. Prophet Isa (as) was on his way to the temple. Although it was the Sabbath, he reached out his hand to pick two pieces of fruit to feed a hungry child. This was considered to be a violation of the Sabbath law. He made a fire for the old women to keep themselves warm from the freezing air. Another violation. He went to the temple and looked around. There were twenty thousand Jewish priests registered there who earned their living from the temple. The rooms of the temple were full of them.

### **Prophet Isa (as) Receives His Prophethood**

Prophet Isa (as) observed that the visitors were much fewer than the priests. They worshipped nothing but money. The poor people who could not afford the price of the sheep or dove were swept away like flies by the Pharisees and Saducees. Prophet Isa (as) was astonished. On this blessed night, the two noble prophets Yahya (as) and Zakariyah (as) died, killed by the ruling authority. On the same night, the revelation descended upon Prophet Isa (as). Allah the Exalted commanded him to begin his call to the children of Israel. To Prophet Isa (as), the life of ease was closed, and the page of worship and struggled was opened.

### **Prophet Isa (as)'s Message**

Like an opposing force, the message of Prophet Isa (as) came to denounce the practices of the Pharisees and to reinforce the Law of Moses. In the face of a materialistic age of luxury and worship of gold, Prophet Isa (as) called his people to a nobler life by word and deed. Prophet Isa (as) continued inviting the people to Almighty Allah. His call was based on the principle that there is no mediation between the Creator and His creatures. However, Prophet Isa (as) was in conflict with the Jews' superficial interpretation of the Torah. He said that he did not come to abrogate the Torah, but to complete it by going to the spirit of its substance to arrive at its essence. He made the Jews understand that the Ten Commandments have more value than they imagined.

### **Prophet Isa (as) Denounces Materialism**

Prophet Isa (as) was therefore in confrontation with the materialistic people. He told them to desist from hypocrisy, show and false praise. There was no need to hoard wealth in this life. They should not preoccupy themselves with the goods of this passing world; rather they must preoccupy themselves with the affairs of the coming world because it would be everlasting. Prophet Isa (as) told them that caring for this world is a sin, not fit for pious worshippers. The disbelievers care for it because they do not know a better way. As for the believers, they know that their sustenance is with Allah, so they trust in Him and scorn this world. Prophet Isa (as) continued to invite people to worship the Only Lord, who is without partner, just as he invited them to purify the heart and soul.

### **Jewish Priests Try to Embarrass Prophet Isa (as)**

His teaching annoyed the priests, for every word of Prophet Isa (as) was a threat to them and their position, exposing their misdeeds. The Roman occupiers had, at first, no intention of being involved in this religious discord of the Jews because it was an internal affair, and they saw that this dispute

would distract the Jews from the question of the occupation. However, the priests started to plot against Prophet Isa (as). They wanted to embarrass him and to prove that he had come to destroy the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law provides that an adulteress be stoned to death. They brought him a Jewish adulteress and asked Prophet Isa (as): "Does not the law stipulate the stoning of the adulteress?" Prophet Isa (as) answered: "Yes." They said: "This woman is an adulteress." Prophet Isa (as) looked at the woman and then at the priests. He knew that they were more sinful than she. They agreed that she should be killed according to Mosaic Law, and they understood that if he was going to apply Mosaic Law, he would be destroying his own rules of forgiveness and mercy. Prophet Isa (as) understood their plan. He smiled and assented: "Whoever among you is sinless can stone her." His voice rose in the middle of the Temple, making a new law on adultery, for the sinless to judge sin. There was none eligible; no mortal can judge sin, only Allah the Most Merciful. As Prophet Isa (as) left the temple, the woman followed him. She took out a bottle of perfume from her garments, knelt before his feet and washed them with perfume and tears, and then dried his feet with her hair. Prophet Isa (as) turned to the woman and told her to stand up, adding: "O Lord, forgive her sins." He let the priests understand that those who call people to Almighty Allah are not executioners. His call was based on mercy for the people, the aim of all divine calls.

### **Prophet Isa (as)' Brings the Dead to Life**

Some Qur'anic commentators said that Prophet Isa (as) brought four people back from the dead: a friend of his named Al-Azam, an old woman's son, and a woman's only daughter. These three had died during his lifetime. When the Jews saw this they said: "You only resurrect those who have died recently; perhaps they only fainted." They asked him to bring back to life Sam the son of Prophet Noah (as). When he asked them to show him his grave, the people accompanied him there. Prophet Isa (as) invoked Allah the Exalted to bring him back to life and behold, Sam ibn Noah came out from the grave gray-haired. Prophet Isa (as) asked: "how did you get gray hair, when there was no aging in your time?" He answered: "O Spirit of Allah, I thought that the Day of Resurrection had come; from the fear of that day my hair turned gray."

### **The Miracles of Prophet Isa (as) - Quranic**

Allah the Almighty said: *"Remember when Allah will say (on the Day of Resurrection): 'O Isa, son of Mariam! Remember My Favour to you and to your mother when I supported you with Ruh-ul-Qudus (Gabriel) so that you spoke to the people in the cradle and in maturity; and when I taught you writing, Al Hikmah (the power of understanding), the Torah and the Gospel; and when you made out of the clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My Permission, and you breathed into it, and it became a bird by My Permission, and you healed those born blind, and the lepers by My Permission, and when you brought forth the dead by My Permission; and when I restrained the Children of Israel from you (when they resolved to kill you) since you came unto them with clear proofs, and the disbelievers among them said: 'This is nothing but evident magic.'"*<sup>5</sup> *And when I (Allah) put in their hearts of the disciples (of Isa (as)) to believe in Me and My Messenger, they said: 'We believe. And bear witness that we are Muslims.'"*<sup>6</sup>

### **Prophet Isa (as)' Disciples - Quranic**

Almighty Allah also revealed: *Then when Isa (as) came to know of their disbelief, he said: "Who will be my helpers in Allah's Cause?" The disciples said: "We are the helpers of Allah; we believe in Allah, and bear witness that we are Muslims (we submit to Allah)."*<sup>7</sup> *Our Lord! We believe in what You have sent down, and we follow the Messenger; so write us down among those who bear witness.*<sup>8</sup> *And they*

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<sup>5</sup> Qur'an 5: 110

<sup>6</sup> Qur'an 5: 111

<sup>7</sup> Qur'an 3: 52

<sup>8</sup> Qur'an 3: 53

(disbelievers) plotted (to kill Prophet Isa (as)), and Allah planned too. And Allah is the Best of the planners.<sup>9</sup>

### **Allah Sends the Disciples a Feast**

Prophet Isa (as) continued calling people to Almighty Allah and laying down for them what might be called "the law of the Spirit." Once when standing on a mountain surrounded by his disciples, Prophet Isa (as) saw that those who believed in him were from among the poor, the wretched, and the downtrodden (oppressed), and their number was small. Some of the miracles which Prophet Isa (as) performed had been requested by his disciples, such as their wish for a "holy table" to be sent down from heaven. Allah the Exalted said: *"Remember when the disciples said: 'O Prophet Isa (as), son of Mariam (ra)! Can your Lord send down to us a table spread (with food) from heaven?'"* Prophet Isa (as) said: *"Fear Allah, if you are indeed believers."* They said: *"We wish to eat thereof and to be stronger in Faith and to know that you have indeed told us the truth and that we ourselves be its witnesses."* Prophet Isa (as), son of Mariam (ra), said: *"O Allah, our Lord! Send us from heaven a table spread (with food) that there may be for us - for the first and the last of us - a festival and a sign from You; and provide us sustenance, for You are the best of sustainers."* Allah said: *"I am going to send it down unto you, but if any of you after that disbelieves, then I will punish him with a torment such as I have not inflicted on anyone among all the Alamin (mankind and jinn)."*

### **Those Worshipping Prophet Isa (as) and Allah's Questions to Prophet Isa (as)**

The Day of the Table became one of the holy days for the disciples and followers of Prophet Isa (as). Later on, the disciples and followers forgot the real essence of the miracles, and so they worshipped Prophet Isa (as) as a god. Almighty Allah asserted: *"And remember when Allah will say (on the Day of Resurrection): 'O Prophet Isa (as), son of Mariam (ra)! Did you say unto men: 'Worship me and my mother as two gods besides Allah?'"* He will say: *"Glory be to You! It was not for me to say what I had no right to say. Had I said such a thing, You would surely have known it. You know what is in my inner self though I do not know what is in Yours, truly, You, only You, are the All Knower of all that is hidden and unseen. Never did I say to them aught except what You (Allah) did command me to say: 'Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord', And I was a witness over them while I dwelt amongst them, but when You took me up, You were the Watcher over them, and You are a Witness to all things. (This is a great admonition and warning to the Christians of the whole world). If you punish them, they are Your slaves, and if You forgive them, Verily You, only You are the All Mighty, the All Wise."* Allah will say: *"This is a Day on which the truthful will profit from their truth: theirs are Gardens under which rivers flow (in Paradise) - they shall abide therein forever. Allah is pleased with them and they with Him. That is the great success (Paradise). To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and all that is therein, and He is Able to do all things."* (Ch 5:116-120 Quran)

### **The Jews Plot to Kill Prophet Isa (as)**

So the forces of evil accused him of magic, infringement of the Mosaic Law, allegiance with the devil; and when they saw that the poor people followed him, they began to scheme against him. The Sanhedrin (assembly of twenty-three to seventy-one men), the highest judicial and ecclesiastical council of the Jews, began to meet to plot against Prophet Isa (as). The plan took a new turn. When the Jews failed to stop Prophet Isa (as)'s call, they decided to kill him. The chief priests held secret meetings to agree on the best way of getting rid of Prophet Isa (as). While they were in such a meeting, one of the twelve apostles of Prophet Isa (as), Judas Iscariot, went to them and asked: "What will you give me if I deliver him to you?" Judas bargained with them until they agreed to give him thirty pieces of silver known as shekels. The plot was laid for the capture and murder of Prophet Isa (as). The priests had no authority to pass the death sentence at that time, so they convinced the Roman governor that Prophet Isa (as) was plotting against the security of the Roman Empire and urged him to take

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<sup>9</sup> Qur'an 3: 54

immediate action against him. The governor ordered that Prophet Isa (as) be arrested. The Glorious Qur'an affirms that Allah the Exalted did not permit the people of Israel to kill Prophet Isa (as) or crucify him. What happened was that Allah saved him from his enemies and raised him to heaven. They never killed Prophet Isa (as), they killed someone else. Allah the Almighty declared: *" And because of their saying (in boast), "We killed Messiah Prophet Isa (as), son of Mariam (ra), the Messenger of Allah," but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but the resemblance of Prophet Isa (as) was put over another man (and they killed that man) and those who differ therein are full of doubts. They have no certain knowledge, they follow nothing but conjecture. For surely; they killed him not (Prophet Isa (as), son of Mariam (ra)): But Allah raised him (Prophet Isa (as)) up (with his body and soul) unto Himself (and he is in the heavens). And Allah is Ever All Powerful, All Wise. And there is none of the people of the Scripture (Jews & Christians), but must believe in him (Prophet Isa (as), son of Mariam (ra), as only a Messenger of Allah, and a human being, before his (Prophet Isa (as) or a Jew's or a Christian's ) death (at the time of the appearance of the angel of death). And on the Day of Resurrection, he (Prophet Isa (as)) will be a witness against them. ( Ch 4:157-159 Quran)*