



Visit this Friday, 10/21

Be there by 1:00 pm!

(Allow $1\frac{1}{4}$ - $1\frac{1}{2}$ hrs for travel)



Atlanta Masjid of al-Islam

560 Fayetteville Rd SE

Atlanta

Sign up today, or contact:

Denny Clark, 314-620-5701,

dennyclark74@gmail.com

PICK UP travel & etiquette instructions!





Imam Emeritus Plemon El-Amin

Important Visit Info:

- Dress in **loose, modest clothing**, with long sleeves. Women, please wear some sort of scarf on your head.
- **Remove shoes** when entering; either sox or bare feet are permissible.
- Don't bring in any purse, bag, or briefcase. Leave in car!
- Make certain phones are OFF.
- **Don't extend your hand** to shake the hand of someone of a different gender than yourself, **unless they do first**.
- We'll be there as **observers**, NOT as participants in the prayer lines.

Remain SEATED throughout the service; we'll be in chairs.

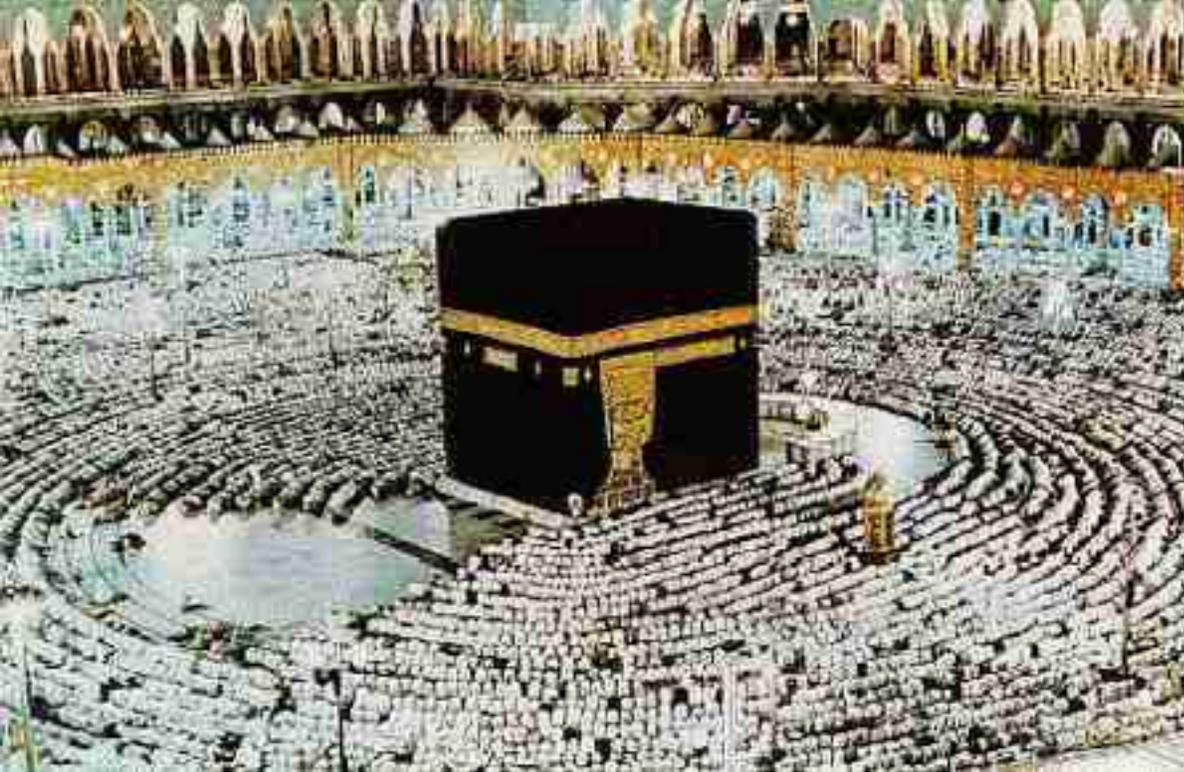
During the Prayers themselves, you're invited to pray **silently in your own way**.

- We'll meet first with Imam Plemon, who will talk about Islam and the Atlanta Masjid community. (1:00 pm)
- We'll then stay for the **Friday Prayers (2:00 pm)**.
- We'll reconvene briefly for questions after the Prayers.
- We'll be **on our way home by 3:30 pm**.

As-salaamu alaykum!
(Peace be with you!)

Wa alaykum as-salaam!
(And to you, also, peace!)

Bismallah ar-Rahman, ar-Rahim
(In the Name of God,
the Compassionate, the Merciful)



On 'Not Bearing False Witness' about Our Muslim Neighbors

Denny Clark, Ph.D.
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*Questions
welcome!!!*

9/11: Barriers in Understanding
our Muslim Neighbors

9/18: Encountering the Qur'an
as Word of God

9/25: Shari'a: Living God's Values

10/2: NO CLASS

10/9: Violence in the Name of God?

10/16: Jesus in Muslim Understanding

10/23: Muslim & Christian Theologies
in Conversation



Jesus ('Isa) is HIGHLY Honored in Islam

- Muslims would NEVER say anything bad about Jesus
 - "Muhammad (pbuh)"; "Jesus (pbuh)"
 - Muslims distressed when Christians make negative comments about Muhammad
 - To call Jesus a Prophet and a Messenger of God is **NOT** a negative statement -
 - **NOT** a "demotion"
 - For Islam: highest possible statement about a person
- However, Muslims have plenty of critiques about what Christians say about Jesus
 - They view Christians as the ones who demean and denigrate Jesus

Jesus in the Qur'an

- ~90 verses dealing directly with Jesus
 - 2/3 belong to nativity materials in Suras 3 ("House of Imran") and 19 ("Mary") - which overlap
 - 1/3 for everything else - which overlap
 - NT Gospels:
"passion narratives with extended introduction" (M. Kahler)
 - Qur'an Jesus-materials:
"nativity narratives with attenuated sequel" (K. Cragg)
- No narrative descriptions of Jesus' ministry
- Qur'an sometimes speaks of Jesus as:
 - "Word of God"
 - "Spirit of God"
- Many other Qur'anic materials deal indirectly with Jesus, responding to what are considered improper views about him

DON'T READ INTO THEM
Christian understandings of
these terms, however

The angels said, 'Mary, God gives you news of a Word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, who will be held in honor in this world and the next, who will be one of those brought near to God. He will speak to people in his infancy and in his adulthood. He will be one of the righteous.' She said, 'My Lord, how can I have a son when no man has touched me?' [The angel] said, 'This is how God creates what He will: when He has ordained something, He only says, Be", and it is. He will teach him the Scripture and wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel. He will send him as a messenger to the Children of Israel: "I have come to you with a sign from your Lord: I will make the shape of a bird for you out of clay, then breathe into it and, with God's permission, it will become a real bird; I will heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead back to life with God's permission; I will tell you what you may eat and what you may store up in your houses. There truly is a sign for you in this, if you are believers. I have come to confirm the truth of the Torah which preceded me, and to make some things lawful to you which used to be forbidden. I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. Be mindful of God, obey me: God is my Lord and your Lord, so serve Him - that is a straight path." ... In God's eyes Jesus is just like Adam. He created him from dust, said to him, 'Be' and he was.

(3:45-51,59)

Mention in the Qur'an the story of Mary. She withdrew from her family to a place to the east and secluded herself away; We [i.e., God] sent Our Spirit to appear before her in the form of a perfected man. She said, 'I seek the Lord of Mercy's protection against you: if you have any fear of Him [do not approach]! but he said, 'I am but a Messenger from your Lord, [come] to announce to you the gift of a pure son.' She said, 'How can I have a son when no man has touched me? I have not been unchaste,' and he said, 'This is what your Lord said: "It is easy for Me - We shall make him a sign to all people, a blessing from Us."' "

And so it was ordained: she conceived him. She withdrew to a distant place and, when the pains of childbirth drove her to [cling to] the trunk of a palm tree, she exclaimed, 'I wish I had been dead and forgotten long before all this!' but a voice cried to her from below, 'Do not worry: your Lord has provided a stream at your feet and, if you shake the trunk of the palm tree towards you, it will deliver fresh ripe dates for you, so eat, drink, be glad, and say to anyone you may see: "I have vowed to the Lord of Mercy to abstain from conversation, and I will not talk to anyone today." ' ...

She went back to her people carrying the child, and they said, 'Mary! You have done something terrible! Sister of Aaron! Your father was not an evil man; your mother was not unchaste! She pointed at him. They said, 'How can we converse with an infant?'

[But] he said: 'I am a servant of God. He has granted me the Scripture; made me a prophet; made me blessed wherever I may be. He commanded me to pray, to give alms as long as I live, to cherish my mother. He did not make me domineering or graceless. Peace was on me the day I was born, and will be on me the day I die and the day I am raised to life again.' Such was Jesus, son of Mary.

This is a statement of the Truth about which they are in doubt: it would not befit God to have a child. He is far above that: when He decrees something, He says only, 'Be,' and it is. 'God is my Lord and your Lord, so serve Him: that is the straight path.' (19:16-35)

Scholarly observations

- Similar stories in non-canonical Christian gospels;
contact with heterodox Christianity?
 - Infancy Gospel of Thomas
 - Infancy Gospel of James
- Qur'an is addressing and criticizing certain **views about Jesus known in 7th-century Arab culture**
 - That's the primary target
 - Addressed to real views by real people in the 7th-century,
which may be different from ours!
 - **Don't get defensive!**

Vast Islamic collections of sayings/deeds of Jesus

Some critique the "religious establishment" and its leaders

- Jesus said to the religious lawyers, "You sit on the road to the afterlife - but you have neither walked this road to its end, nor allowed anyone else to pass by. Woe to him who is beguiled by you!"
- Jesus used to say, "I preach to you so that you may learn. I do not preach to you so that you may grow conceited."
- Jesus met a man and asked him, "What are you doing?"
"I am devoting myself to God," the man replied.
Jesus asked, "Who is caring for you?"
"My brother," replied the man.
Jesus said, "Your brother is more devoted to God than you are."
- Jesus said, "Accept the truth from those who speak falsehood, but do not accept falsehood from those who speak the truth. Be discriminating in your speech so as not to admit into it anything which may be counterfeit."

Many present Jesus as an ascetic (denying worldly comfort/pleasure) and with special concern for the poor:

- If you wish, you may repeat what the Possessor of the Word and the Spirit [of God], Jesus the son of Mary, used to say: "Hunger is my seasoning, fear is my garment, wool is my clothing, the light of the dawn is my heat in winter, the moon is my lantern, my legs are my beast of burden, and the produce of the earth is my food and fruit. I retire for the night with nothing to my name and awake in the morning with nothing to my name. And there is no one on earth richer than I."
- Jesus owned nothing but a comb and a cup. He once saw a man combing his beard with his fingers, so Jesus threw away the comb. He saw another drinking from a river with his hands cupped, so Jesus threw away the cup.
- Jesus said, "When someone turns a beggar away empty-handed, the angels will not visit his house for seven days."
- Jesus said, "O disciples, gold is a cause of joy in this world and a cause of harm in the afterlife. Truly I say to you, the rich shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven."
- Christ said, "The world is a bridge. Cross this bridge, but do not build on it."

- One of the disciples of Christ died and the others mourned him greatly. They conveyed their distress to Christ, who stood by his grave and prayed. God resurrected him, and his feet were in sandals of fire. Christ asked him about this, and he said, "I swear to God that I have never sinned, but I once passed by a man who was unjustly treated and did not go to his aid; and so I was made to wear these sandals."

Muslim views of Jesus

- Born of the Virgin Mary; miraculously conceived; an act of creation, NOT of reproduction (**unlike** Muhammad)
- Miracle worker (**unlike** Muhammad)
- Prophet and Messenger (**like** Muhammad)
 - Jesus viewed as sent specifically to Jews
- Purely human (**like** Muhammad), **NOT divine**
 - Christian doctrines of Incarnation and Trinity: viewed as improper "innovations" (we'll address this next class)
- Didn't die on the cross; "raised up" by God (**unlike** Muhammad)
- Will visibly return at the end of the Age, introducing the Day of Judgment (**unlike** Muhammad)

Death / Crucifixion / Resurrection

"[They - Jews] said, "We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of God."; they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, though it was made to appear like that to them. Those that disagreed about him are full of doubt, with no knowledge to follow, only supposition: they certainly did not kill him - God raised him up [or "took him"] to Himself. God is almighty and wise." (4:157-158)

- A passing comment in the Qur'an - not a main subject
- It is a defense of Jesus, against certain Jewish claims.
- Subsequent Muslim tradition (**NOT the Qur'an!**) developed numerous "substitution" theories that someone else was killed.
 - This is the majority view in Islam
 - **BUT** numerous Muslim scholars disagree strongly with those "substitution" theories; they claim the Qur'an is claiming that God either "took" Jesus in death, OR rescued/exalted Jesus
- Bottom line: the attempt to kill the Messenger and the Message did **NOT** succeed! God affirms Jesus and Jesus' Message!

Death / Crucifixion / Resurrection

- Denial of Jesus' death is NOT a Qur'anic attack on the role of Jesus' death as a means of atonement. Qur'an NEVER mentions that.
BUT, in fact, Muslims do NOT view Jesus' death as providing forgiveness of sins for humanity.

From a Muslim perspective:

- NO "original sin"
 - Yet Islam thoroughly acknowledges the reality of sin
 - Each person responsible for one's own sins
 - God, "the Compassionate, the Merciful," would NEVER do something so unjust as hold a person accountable for other people's actions!
- Therefore, Jesus is not necessary for atonement / forgiveness. To say that Jesus (or any other human) is needed to do something God cannot (or won't) do, is an insult against God.
- "Sacrifice for sins" was NOT a practice in pre-Islamic Arabia; what Christians often view as "the human problem" & its solution, makes NO sense to most Muslims.

True of our relationship to Adam
AND of Jesus' relationship to us

More than one
view of 'atonement'
in Christianity!