

Inside this issue

Season's greetings?	3
3 questions about Christmas ..	4
Ahl ul-Bayt	6
Voice of Islam	8
Prayer timetable	9

Rocket Science

December 2019

Rabi ul-Akhir / Jumada al-Awal 1441



In the name of Allah,
most Gracious, most Merciful

Having a good opinion of others

The scholar who was ready to teach

There is a traditional story about a young scholar in Hadramaut, Yemen, who wanted to become a teacher and call people to Allah (swt). He pleaded with his father, who was his teacher and a great scholar at the time, "Dear father. Give me permission to teach". His father wanted to test him, in order to see if he could sincerely and truthfully do so. He said, "Go out to the town and find one person who is less than you and then come back."

The first person the son saw was a sinful person. He pondered, "This person is known to commit this and that sin. However, he might make repentance (*tauba*), and have all his bad deeds turned into good deeds. I have no guarantee that I will fall into the same sin or worse, and die in that state. Therefore, in the bigger picture, I cannot say he is less than me."

The next person he saw was a disbeliever. Again, he reflected, "What if that person becomes a Muslim? They may die as a Muslim, while I have no guarantee that I will die as a Muslim. In the bigger picture, I cannot say he is less than me. I may be less than him."

Finally, the son saw a dog. He thought, "On the Day of Judgement, this dog will be turned into dust. However, if I fall off the bridge (*sirat*) and end up in Hellfire, then I will be less than this dog."

So, he returned home and confessed he could not find anyone worse than him. To this, his father replies, "Now you are ready to teach. Now you are ready to call people to Allah (swt)."

The importance of having a good opinion

It is important for us to try to have a good opinion of others. The Prophet (saw) taught us not to consider ourselves ultimately better than other people. We should recognise that, while they may be doing something bad that we are not doing, the opposite may also be true, that they may not be doing something that we should not be doing.

We have to really think about how we look on one another. Many of the companions (ra) were people bowing to idols, but then fighting in the battle of Badr with the Prophet (saw). If we had seen them, what opinion would we have had about them?

In a hadith, the Prophet (saw) advised us, "Whoever conceals (covers) the faults of another Muslim, Allah (swt) will conceal that person's fault in this world and the next."

Fake news and gossip

We live in a world filled and driven by rumours and scandals, where it is normal to go up to someone and say "I heard so and so". We may be spreading the news of shortcomings and mistakes, whether true or not. As the community (*ummah*) of the one who was the Best of Creation (saw), is this the standard we have lowered ourselves to? Do we take pride in this?

Every single one of us has something we are not proud of. For some people, we find it acceptable to publicise what they are not proud of. However, in the above hadith, we are taught the opposite, that covering the faults of others will lead to the covering of our own faults in both worlds.

Another hadith states, "Whoever believes in Allah and the last day, should speak good or keep silent." Similarly, "A Muslim is someone whom other Muslims are safe from, by their tongue and their hands."

Jesus and the dead dog

There is a traditional story about Jesus (Isa, as)¹. Isa was walking with his disciples when they came upon the corpse of a dog. The disciples ranted about how ugly and smelly the dead dog was, but Isa knelt down beside the dog and, ever seeing the divine beauty in all things, proclaimed that the dog had beautiful white teeth. What a lovely parable!

A stepping stone towards change

When we have this thinking

positively about people and things (*husn dhan*), it creates room for people to change. It encompasses people in the infinite Mercy of Allah (swt), so that they can change and improve. Vice versa, if we do the opposite and stamp people with the seal of sin, then we will never have an inclination to change. This is the step to creating a true community with unity.

The drunk who loved Allah

At the time of the Prophet (saw), there was a man who would constantly be punished for drinking alcohol, a major sin. The *hadd* punishment would be applied and he would be whipped for his mistakes, time and time again, until one of the Companions (ra) got fed up and cursed the man.

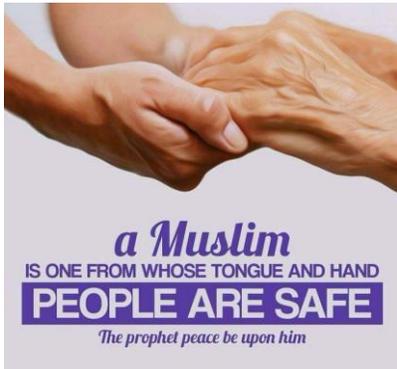
The Prophet (saw), however, told the man, "Do not curse him, for what I know of him is that he loves Allah and his messenger."

So, even in the midst of such a major sin and flaw, the Prophet (saw) focussed on what was good. In some narrations, the drunk stopped drinking. That was all he needed.

Duas for the occasion

When we think negatively of anyone, or think about what others have done to us, make the dua *Allahumma ardaw alayhi* ("May Allah be pleased with them"). It could be through your dua for them that Allah changes their ways. The angels will make the same dua for you as recorded in the hadith of our Prophet (saw) about when one prays for their brother in his absence. Such benevolence halts the *nafs* in its place.

Likewise, when an evil thought comes to your mind, immediately send salawat on your nabi (saw).



1 Isa and the Dead Dog. blogs.harvard.edu/aidanstoddart/2018/03/20/post-2-isa-and-the-dead-dog

Season's greetings?

How should Muslims greet non-Muslims during the so-called festive season? And how should we respond if people wish us "Happy Christmas"?

As the holiday season approaches, this perennial tricky problem will be facing us again soon. To approach the problem, let's take a step back and imagine it is Eidul Fitr. A non-Muslim has just greeted us with the words "Eid Mubarak". We smile and thank him. If he holds no religious beliefs, greeting us in that way was clearly not a problem for him. If he is religious, it is either not against his religion to greet us like that or it hasn't occurred to him that uttering those words may contradict his beliefs.

Now fast-forward to Christmas. The boot is on the other foot. All around us people are wishing each other "Happy Christmas". We think back to Eid and recall the people who wished us "Eid Mubarak". So should we be wishing people "Happy Christmas"?

Here's what Mufti Ismail Menk says: "When others congratulate us upon a religious festival that does not contradict their beliefs, it does not mean we must congratulate them when it contradicts our beliefs."

As Muslims we neither celebrate nor recognise Christmas in the

sense that Christians do, as marking the birth of the son of God. The word Christmas comes from Old English words meaning "the Mass (celebration) of Christ". When the true meaning of Christmas is stated in those blunt terms, it's clear why we should not be going around saying "Happy Christmas" – we would be condoning the idea of Christ as the son of God, which is *shirk*.

An acceptable greeting at this time of year is to wish people "Happy holidays", since in New Zealand (and Australia) late December marks the beginning of the long summer holiday period.

If someone wishes us "Happy Christmas", we may wish to offer a simple explanation: "As a Muslim, I do not celebrate Christmas but thank you anyway." It should be said with a smile so as not to offend them, since you may be certain that it was not their intention to offend you or to insult Islam.

Many people glibly utter the words "Happy Christmas" without even thinking about either the true meaning of the words or the beliefs of the person to whom they are speaking. As Muslims, however, we ought to know better, and we should not compromise our own beliefs just to fit in with people around us. And Allah knows best.



Three questions about Christmas

The festival of Christmas has come round again. However, as Wikipedia¹ states, it is “celebrated religiously by a majority of Christians, as well as culturally by many non-Christians.” That is, it has become both a religious festival for “a majority of” Christians, and a non-religious festival for non-Christians. Here, we are only thinking about the Christian religious festival.

It makes little sense to celebrate the religious Christmas unless you believe three things.

When was Jesus (Isa, as) born?

If you do not believe that Jesus (Isa, as) was born in 25 December, then you are celebrating on the wrong day, or at best, it is an arbitrary date. In fact, nobody knows when Jesus was born. As the Reverend Brian D Blacker points out², “in the fourth century – 354 AD - Bishop Liberius of Rome declared that Christians everywhere should celebrate the birth of Christ on December 25.”

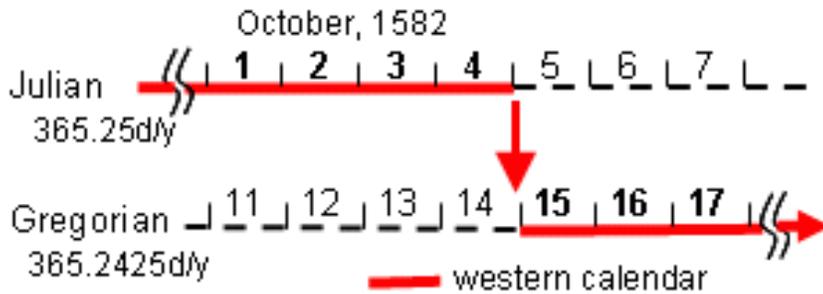
It may surprise some readers to learn that not all Christians celebrate Christmas on the same day. “Some jurisdictions of the Eastern Orthodox Church, including those of Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Jerusalem, mark feasts using

the older Julian calendar. As of 2019, there is a difference of 13 days between the Julian calendar and the modern Gregorian calendar, which is used internationally for most secular purposes. As a result, December 25 on the Julian calendar currently corresponds to January 7 on the [Gregorian] calendar used by most governments and people in everyday life. Therefore, the aforementioned Orthodox Christians mark December 25 (and thus Christmas) on the day that is internationally [using the Gregorian calendar] considered to be January 7.”¹

Was Jesus “special”?

In order to celebrate someone’s birthday, you must believe that they are in some sense “special” to you. Christians believe that Jesus is, in a literal sense, the son of God. In contrast, as Muslims, we believe that Jesus was a great prophet of God and 100% human. The Islamic argument against the divinity of Jesus is contained in various parts of the Quran: “The Jews call Uzair a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the son of God. That is a saying from their mouths. In this, they just imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. God’s curse be on them! How they are deluded from the truth!” (Surah Tauba 9:30).

In fact, not all people who call themselves Christians believe that Jesus was the literal son of God. As mentioned in previous issues of *Rocket Science*³, Unitarian Christians adhere to strict monotheism and they maintain that Jesus was a great man and a prophet of God, but not God himself.



Does Christian scripture tell its readers to celebrate Christmas?

The Bible not only does not tell us when Jesus was born, but it also does not tell its readers that they should celebrate Jesus's birthday. As noted above, the date of Christmas was not decided until the 4th century. Early Christians before then did not celebrate Christmas. "It was strongly felt that the celebrating of any day or date – be they birthdays or anniversaries of an event – was a custom of the pagans."²

The celebration of Christmas has even been banned at times in history. "During the rule of Oliver Cromwell, (Lord Protector of Britain and the Commonwealth), the celebration of Christmas was banned because of 'the heathen traditions surrounding this sacred event'. From 1649 to 1658 no celebration was allowed except for special church services on Christmas eve. Cromwell was a dedicated Christian who lived by the commands and principles of Scripture."²

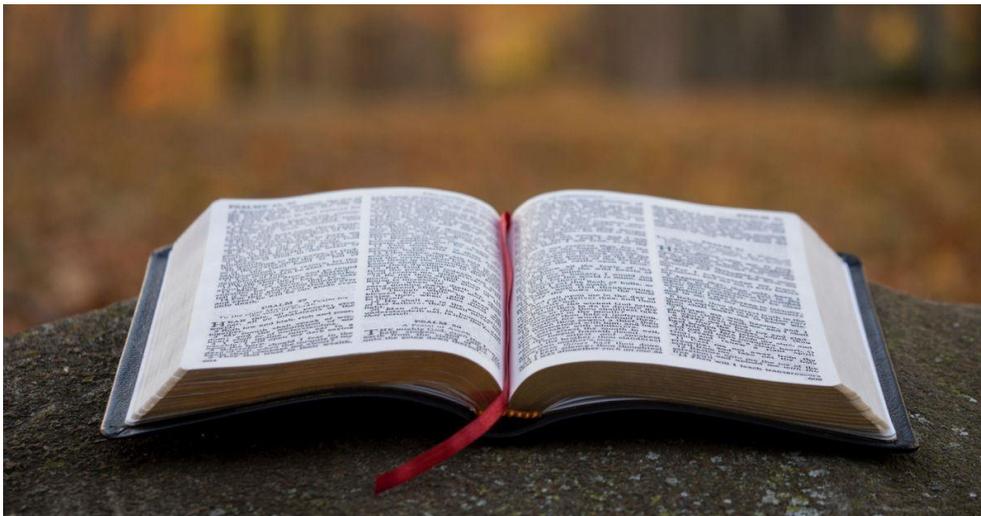
Conclusion

Three seemingly simple questions, with simple answers. Nobody knows when Jesus was born. The Bible does not state when he was born, and its celebration was considered a pagan tradition. The most debatable of the three questions is whether Jesus was special in the Christian sense of being the son of God. This is one of the major differences between Christianity and Islam.

1 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas

2 Rev. Brian D. Blacker. The early Church never celebrated Christmas. www.sundaytimes.lk/111225/Plus/plus_10.html

3 Dec 2018, Apr 2014: mtalbertislamiccentre.org/newsletters



The Prophet's family

It was in light of the tremendous character and nature of the Prophet (saw) that all those who were associated with him were blessed with virtues and excellence not found elsewhere.

- His forefathers were amongst the best of generations since Adam (as) until the time of his birth (Bukhari).
- The women that he married became the Mothers of the Believers, and were honoured by being addressed by Allah (swt) in the Quran (33:6).
- The people who believed in him, the companions (*Sahaba*), became the greatest human beings to walk the earth after the Prophets and Messengers.
- Those that migrated to Madinah with him became the Migrants (*Muhajirun*), and those that opened their doors to them became the Helpers (*Ansar*), both groups of which are honoured in the Quran.
- Those that were with him in the cave during the *Hijra* journey have specific mention in the Quran.
- The tree he used to lean upon became a tree of Paradise (Bukhari).
- The ground he once trod became one of the gardens of Jannah (Bukhari).

In light of the above, it is no wonder that the most perfect of beings to ever live, Prophet Muhammad (saw) was succeeded by the most perfect of progeny, the *Ahl al-Bayt*, the People of the House, the perfect family. Their importance is so central to Islam that five times a day at the very least, every Muslim who performs ritual prayers must invoke

blessings not only upon the Prophet of Islam (saw), but also his family.

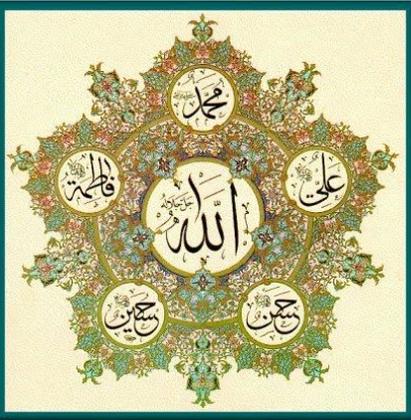
Many a time when we speak of *Ahl al-Bayt*, we speak of how beloved they were to the Prophet (saw) and their position as his family. The emphasis on his family by the Prophet (saw) was not merely to emphasise lineage or relationships, but more importantly to emphasise their merits, what they stood for, what they sacrificed etc.

The People of the Cloak

This hadith, known as the hadith of Ahl al-Kisa (People of the Cloak) refers to an event which took place and was captured in a number of narrations in which the Messenger of Allah (saw) drew under his blanket his daughter Fatima (ra), her husband Ali (ra), and their sons al-Hasan and al-Husayn (ra), reciting the 'Verse of Purification' from Surah Ahzab (33:33). ("God but wishes to remove impurities from you, O people of the House, and purify you thoroughly".)

This unique distinction and sign of immense honour was conferred by the Prophet (saw) upon his nearest and dearest, and was not known to have been repeated for anyone else.

This event is signified through the blessed garments of the Prophet (saw), mentioned in the Quran in Surah Al-Muddathar and Surah al-Muzammil. And a narration in Sahih Muslim even shows the Sahaba still used his clothes for curing illnesses, not through the garment itself, but through the barakah and blessings contained in it for having been worn by the Prophet (saw).



Who are the *Ahl al-Bayt*?

There are four categories:

- *Ahl al-Kisa* (the 'Five') and their descendants.
- The Mothers of the Believers (wives)
- Wider opinion includes *Bani Hashim*, *Bani al-Mutallib*, and their descendants
- The families of Ali, Aqil, Jafar and Abbas (ra) (according to a hadith of Zayd ibn Arqam (ra), sahih Muslim)

The essence of the teachings of Sunni Islam in this matter is honour, respect, and love for the *Ahl al-Bayt*, without diminishing, in any shape or form, love and respect for the Companions (ra).

Quran

The term *Ahl al-Bayt* is used twice in the Quran:

- Angels addressing *Sayyidina Ibrahim*, (as) and his wife: "May the mercy of Allah and His blessings be upon you, people of the house" (11:73)
- The Verse of Purification from the Hadith of *Ahl al-Kisa*: "Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity [of sin], O people of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you with [extensive] purification." (33:33)

The Prophets all had the same message and were instructed to tell people that they were seeking no reward from them for delivering this message but from Allah (swt).

However, in Surah *As-Shu'ara*, a unique distinction is there for the Prophet (saw): "Say, [O Muhammad], "No reward do I ask of you for this except the love of those near of kin."" (42:23). Here Allah (swt) is telling the Prophet

(saw) to say that the only thing he is asking for is love of his near of kin (*qurba*)'. This is a unique Quranic distinction of the *Ahl al-Bayt*.

Hadith

In several hadiths, the *Ahl al-Bayt* are mentioned:

"O People! Indeed, I have left among you, that which if you hold fast to it, you shall not go astray: The Book of Allah, and my family, my Household". (Tirmidhi, sahih)

"Love Allah for the favours with which He sustains you; and love me for the sake of Allah's love; and love my Household for the sake of my love" (Tabarani, Tirmidhi)

"I implore you, for Allah's sake, to be mindful of my household." (Muslim)

"Raise your children to have three qualities: To love your Prophet, to love his household, and to recite the Quran; for the one who carries the Quran (in his heart) will be in Allah's shade on a Day when there will be no shade but His, alongside His Prophets and his Chosen Ones." (Daylami)

Conclusion

We need *Ahl al-Bayt* and their virtues in our lives. Find out about them and let us do all we can to embody their examples of light in these times of darkness.

Loving *Ahl al-Bayt* does not mean we are leaning towards any other thing, as this love is the Sunnah of our Nabi (PBUH)

Teach your children who *Ahl al-Bayt* were and their example. Let us go beyond simply naming our children after them, but to raising a generation that will embody them, love them, and cherish them.





Omar Suleiman

Voice of Islam

VOI delivers the message of Islam based on the teachings of the Noble Quran and the Sunnah (practices) of the Prophet Muhammad (saw). VOI television is broadcast on APNA TV (Freeview channel 36)(10.30 am Sun). In order to save costs, it now only broadcasts on APNA TV. However, Voice of Islam programmes are available on YouTube.

1 December

Quran: 107: 1-7 Al Maun: Small Kindnesses
 Animation clip 14: Explanation of Surah Al Maun
 Quran: Is it Really the Word of God? 10: The Quran's Miraculous Treatment of Science by Shabir Ally
 Prophet Muhammad clip 11: His Conduct as a Husband
 Lecture: Is Life Fair and What is the Reason to Live? Omar Suleiman
 Doco: The News of the Unseen from the Quran Part 5

8 December

Quran: 98: 1-5 Al Bayyinah: Clear Evidence of Faith
 Animation clip 16: Stop Being Reactionary
 Quran: Is it Really the Word of God? 11: Recap Final by Shabir Ally
 Lecture: Mocking Others & Arrogance
 Doco: The News of the Unseen from the Quran Part 6

15 December

Quran: 98: 1-5
 Animation clip 19: The Devil Pulls You Slowly
 Lecture: Jesus in Islam by Yasir Qadhi
 Br Muhammad: Self Control (Check with MT)
 Crisis of Faith 1: Morals & Social Concerns Shabir Ally
 Belief is Rational 08: The Reason of Creation

22 December

Quran: 98: 1-5
 Animation clip: Jesus in Islam
 Crisis of Faith 2: Personal Trauma Shabir Ally
 My Path to Islam: Kurt Wallace
 Belief is Rational 03: God Does Exist
 Amazed by Quran 31: Two Forms of Mercy

29 December

Quran: 98: 1-5
 Animation clip: Jesus in Islam
 Crisis of Faith 3: Philosophical & Scientific Concerns Shabir Ally
 Lecture: Mocking Others & Arrogance
 Doco: The News of the Unseen from the Quran Part 7

Watch VOI online, or order a free copy of the Quran: www.voitv.org

Auckland prayer timetable for December 2019

(from www.islamicfinder.org. For other cities in New Zealand, see www.fianz.co.nz).

Day	Fajr	Sunrise	Thuhr	Asr 1	Asr 2	Maghrib	Isha
1	04:07	05:55	01:10	05:01	06:14	08:25	10:06
2	04:07	05:55	01:11	05:02	06:15	08:26	10:07
3	04:06	05:55	01:11	05:02	06:15	08:27	10:08
4	04:06	05:55	01:11	05:03	06:16	08:28	10:09
5	04:06	05:54	01:12	05:03	06:17	08:28	10:11
6	04:05	05:54	01:12	05:04	06:17	08:29	10:12
7	04:05	05:54	01:13	05:04	06:18	08:30	10:13
8	04:05	05:54	01:13	05:05	06:18	08:31	10:14
9	04:04	05:54	01:13	05:05	06:19	08:32	10:15
10	04:04	05:54	01:14	05:05	06:20	08:33	10:16
11	04:04	05:54	01:14	05:06	06:20	08:33	10:17
12	04:04	05:55	01:15	05:06	06:21	08:34	10:18
13	04:04	05:55	01:15	05:07	06:21	08:35	10:19
14	04:04	05:55	01:16	05:07	06:22	08:36	10:20
15	04:04	05:55	01:16	05:08	06:23	08:36	10:20
16	04:05	05:55	01:17	05:08	06:23	08:37	10:21
17	04:05	05:56	01:17	05:09	06:24	08:38	10:22
18	04:05	05:56	01:18	05:09	06:24	08:38	10:23
19	04:05	05:56	01:18	05:10	06:25	08:39	10:23
20	04:06	05:57	01:19	05:10	06:25	08:39	10:24
21	04:06	05:57	01:19	05:11	06:26	08:40	10:24
22	04:07	05:58	01:20	05:11	06:26	08:40	10:25
23	04:07	05:58	01:20	05:12	06:27	08:41	10:25
24	04:08	05:59	01:21	05:12	06:27	08:41	10:26
25	04:08	05:59	01:21	05:13	06:28	08:42	10:26
26	04:09	06:00	01:22	05:13	06:28	08:42	10:27
27	04:10	06:01	01:22	05:14	06:29	08:43	10:27
28	04:11	06:01	01:23	05:14	06:29	08:43	10:27
29	04:11	06:02	01:23	05:15	06:29	08:43	10:27
30	04:12	06:03	01:24	05:15	06:30	08:43	10:27
31	04:13	06:03	01:24	05:16	06:30	08:44	10:27

Asr 1: Maliki, Shafii and Hanbali schools (single shadow length)

Asr 2: Hanafi school (double shadow length)

“Seek (Allah’s) help with patient perseverance and prayer: It is indeed hard, except to those who bring a lowly spirit.”
(Hadith)

Credits

Rocket Science is a monthly newsletter produced by the Mount Albert Islamic Trust.

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Why attend Rocket Park jumuah?

Prayers are held at the **Senior Citizens' Association building, Rocket Park, New North Road, Mount Albert.**

- ✓ Central location
- ✓ Plenty of free parking
- ✓ Facilities for ladies
- ✓ Heating and air-conditioning
- ✓ Bayan (religious talk) before jumuah prayers
- ✓ All bayans and khutbahs in English

NB We are only open for Friday prayers – not for the five daily prayers.

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Missed an issue of *Rocket Science*? All our monthly issues are available online at the Mount Albert Islamic Trust website: www.mtalbertislamiccentre.org

SwT, saw, as, ra

SwT: subhanahu wa ta'ala "Glory to Him, the Exalted" (when mentioning Allah)

saw: salallahu alaihi wassalam "May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him" (when mentioning Muhammad)

as: alaihis salam "Peace be on him" (when mentioning other prophets)

ra: radi allahu anhu/ha/hum "May Allah be pleased with him/her/them" (when mentioning members of Muhammad's family, companions, etc)