

# The Coming of the Prophet

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**M**uslims believe that one of the most important features of Jesus' mission was to give the 'glad tidings' of the coming of the Prophet Muhammad. During his short missionary career that lasted not more than three years, and which was overshadowed by the hostile attitude of his own people, Jesus gave them the good news of Ahmad, the last messenger of God, who would perfect the divine teaching both in theory and in practice. According to the Qur'an, Jesus said:

وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ

**"O Children of Israel! I am the apostle of God (sent) to you, confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving glad tidings of an apostle to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad."**(Surah 61:6)

The official Qur'an gives the name as Ahmad but there was a variant reading in the *mashaf* of Ubayy b. Ka'b who was one of Muhammad's secretaries. This rendering referred to a prophet after Jesus but did not speak of Ahmad (A. Jeffrey, Materials for the history of the text of the Qur'an, p.170). Furthermore we do not find any mention of the name

Ahmad in Ibn Ishaq or Ibn Hisham's *Sirah Rasul*, in their discussion of the prophecy of the coming of a prophet after Jesus. (Alfred Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, pp. 103-104). W. M. Watt says that "Muslim children were practically never called Ahmad before the year 125 A.H." (As quoted by G. Parrinder, *Jesus in the Quran*, p.99).

Abdullah Yusuf Ali in his translation of the Quran states, "Ahmad or Muhammad, the Praised One is almost a translation of the Greek word Pericyltos. In the present gospel of John 14:16, 15:26 and 16:7, the Greek word Paracletos is translated in the NIV as Comforter. However, Paracletos means Advocate, one called to the help of another, a kind friend, rather than Comforter."

In the Gospel according to John, Jesus promised the Paraclete four times (John 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). Christians believe that the promise is about the Holy Spirit, who was to descend upon the disciples on the Day of the Pentecost (Acts 2), to witness to Christ and lead them into the whole truth and to be with the believers forever. The promise was fulfilled in the lives of the first disciples, so the idea of a fulfilment 600 years later in Muhammad would make it too late for them. Secondly, this Paraclete, comforter or the Spirit of truth, was going to live for ever while the Prophet of Islam only lived on this earth for about 63 years. Thirdly, Christians argue that the message the Paraclete was to give was from Jesus; "he will take it from me and will give it to you". If we were to agree with the claim made by Muslims, 'Muhammad being the

Paraclete', then they would have to admit that the Quran came from Jesus. In spite of these differences both Christians and Muslims hold fast to their convictions.



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