

THE MESSAGE

Of Nabi Isa

By

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In days past, when letters were sent, it could take many days, even weeks or months before it reached its destination. There was no e-mail or telephone available. Not even a telegraph. And still people found ways and means to communicate with each other.

Messages were not only sent by someone via some kind of messenger to the recipient. It also happened that messages were sent from God via messengers to people. We believe that God has 'spoken' to communicate with mankind. Would one not expect the designer and creator of the world to reveal who He is and to send instructions on how to live in harmony with their Maker.

A man who claimed to have received messages from God, was called a 'prophet'. Translated correctly, the Hebrew and Arabic word Nabi, actually means 'messenger'.

Jews, Christians, and Muslims, agree to a considerable extent on who these messengers were. They are, among others, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Job and David. The Jews would deny the title 'prophet' to Jesus, while Muslims call Jesus 'Nabi Isa'. Interesting is the fact that while he is called 'messenger', the actual message he brought is not recorded in the Qur'an. It is found in the Gospel.

Strangely, Muslim teachers today allege that Jesus' message was given to the Jews only, yet the Qur'an mentions Jesus as being "a sign for **all** peoples [beings]" (Surat 21:91).

The Qur'an teaches: "We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob ... to Moses and Jesus and that given to all prophets from their Lord. We make no differences between one and another of them" (Surat 2:136).

To justify such contradiction to the Qur'an, Muslim teachers declare that the Bible, which originally recorded the messages of "Abraham... Moses and Jesus", is no more the Word of God, but has been changed and corrupted.

That again is not what the Qur'an teaches, when it says: "People of the Book! ... stand fast by the Law, the Gospel and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord" (Surat 5:68) These words were written in the seventh Century. Many old Bible manuscripts that are still in existence today, are considerably older than that, yet they do *not* differ from today's Bibles. One would expect Muslim teachers to state when the Bible was supposedly changed, and why, but they do not.

The Qur'an actually challenges Muslims: "If you were in doubt as to what we have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee" (Surat 10:94). Which Book? The one given before the Qur'an. No man can honestly claim on the basis of the Qur'an that the Bible has been corrupted. It actually orders: "Ask those who possess the message" (Surat 21:7). That were the Jews and Christians.

As we already noticed, the Qur'an explicitly states that the Gospel *is* the Word of God. And it also states categorically that "no man can change the Words of Allah" (Surat 10:64 and 6:34).

Since relatively few people read the Gospel for themselves, this little booklet presents a selection of the actual words that Jesus spoke, while on earth. They are ordered topically to make the reading easier. Everything printed not in black is the actual message of Jesus.

WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT HIMSELF

His message comes from God and its truthfulness can be tested:

"My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own".

John 7:16

His message is eternal and will not be changed:

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away".

Matthew 24:35

He came into the world (i.e. from outside):

"I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me".

John 18:38

He came from heaven, i.e. from God:

"No-one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven - the Son of Man".

John 3:13

God was always with Jesus:

"The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him".

John 8:29

Jesus had this one thing in mind, to please and honour his heavenly Father and to complete His task.

"My food', said Jesus, `is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work".

John 4:34

And why we should believe him:

"Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me?"

John 8:46

Muslims are taught that all prophets of God were sinless. That again is a deviation from the facts. Only Jesus is called sinless or holy (Surat 19:19), while we read of the sins of Adam (Surat 7:22-23),

Moses (28:15-16), Abraham (26:82), Jonah (37:141-144), David (38:24-25), and also of Muhammad (40:55, 47:19, 48:1-2).

For us to do the work of God includes putting our trust in Jesus:

"The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent".

John 6:29

To reject Jesus is to reject God Himself!

"He who rejects me rejects him who sent me".

Luke 10:16

He not only came to bring a message, but to fulfil a task.

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost".

Luke 19:10

He came to call sinners to repentance and to rescue them from hell. Those assuming to be good enough to enter God's Presence, deem not to need Jesus anyway.

"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners".

Mark 2:17

To the weary he becomes like a brother. He wants to bring peace to troubled hearts.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light".

Matthew 11:28-30

Water is needed for life. Spiritually speaking Jesus offers "living water" not only to meet our needs, but also to be a fountain to let others taste of it as well.

"If a man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him".

John 7:37

"Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life".

John 4:14

To accept Jesus for what he is proves our love for God:

"I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. I have come in my Father's name and you do not accept me, but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him".

John 5:42-43

(Following the custom of the time, Jesus often spoke of himself in the third person). Here Jesus makes a tremendous claim about himself:

"Whoever believes in him (Jesus) is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light".

John 3:18-21

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life".

John 8:12:

"When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no-one who believes in me should stay in darkness".

John 12:44-46

Jesus often spoke in parables and used allegories. Here he speaks of himself as a gate and a shepherd, and his followers as sheep.

"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full".

John 10:10

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep".

John 10:11

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me - just as the Father knows me and I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep".

John 10:4

This 'laying down' of his life was a voluntary act based on his own authority.

"The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life - only to take it up again. No-one takes it from me, but I lay it

down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again".

John 10:17

The 'life in full' that Jesus came to provide includes the assurance here and now of the life to come:

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no-one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one".

John 10:27

To a person whose brother had been in the tomb for three days, and then been raised by Jesus from the dead, he said:

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

John 11:25-26

Jesus makes it clear that he himself is the only means to eternal salvation:

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well".

John 14:6

Jesus sometimes used metaphors to illustrate spiritual matters. One is particularly striking. By it he describes where he came from and his reason for coming to this earth:

"The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world".

John 6:33

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty".

John 6:35

"Whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall loose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day".

John 6:37-39

"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life".

John 6:63

Here Jesus is quite specific and to the point:

"If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me".

John 8:42

"You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins".

John 8:23-24

Before his death, Jesus spoke to his closest followers, saying:

"I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father".

John 16:28

He urged his followers to believe in his divinity and again substantiated his claim:

"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father".

"Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves".

John 14:9-11

In a recorded prayer Jesus communed with his Father and, referring to his eternal existence:

"Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began".

John 17:5

Because Jesus had a human mother, he appeared to be and was a real human person. He, like we, was hungry and tired, felt a need to pray and experienced grief and pain. But because God had inspired and by that effected his birth without a human father, he was divine, could heal, raise the dead, walk on water, forgive sins, still the storm and perform many more reported miracles. He therefore could claim a relationship that may shock us at first:

"They all asked, `Are you then the Son of God?'. He replied, `You are right in saying I am'".

Luke 22:70

Liberation from fear, including the fear of death, satanic influences and freedom from sin comes from him alone:

"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed".

John 8:36

Once Jesus made an astounding remark about himself. Can we understand what he meant? His listeners knew!

"I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am!"

John 8:58

It is important to note that "I am" in Hebrew is the same as "Yahweh", the very name of God! This provoked the Jews to kill him. Here we find an additional explanation. Since God is eternal there is to him no 'was' or 'will be'. He always 'is'. What he really says here is: 'Before Abraham was, I was eternally alive!'

Even so he is not aloof up there in highest heaven. He loves you and me! And He wants us to respond to his love!

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you".

John 15:9

His love is more than just a kind of fondness. He proved his love!

"Greater love has no-one than this that one lay down his life for his friends".

John 15:13

Several times Jesus spoke of his approaching death and the purpose of his dying:

"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many".

Matthew 20:28

The word 'ransom' is seldom used these days. We read occasionally that e.g. kidnappers demand a ransom. This is the price to set a captive free. Jesus paid the price to set us free from the condemnation of sin.

Four times Jesus predicted his death to his close followers. But even to them it made little sense in the beginning:

"We are going up to Jerusalem', he said, 'and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise".

Mark 10:33, 34

Before his death the man Jesus agonized in prayer when he contemplated the terror, pain and suffering of his imminent crucifixion:

"He went away a second time and prayed, 'My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done'".

Matthew 26:42

It was not a godless mob that wanted to arrest him. They were the supreme religious authority of the day, and they feared that their religious authority was being threatened by Jesus. At his arrest one of his companions drew a sword wanting to resist and fight. But Jesus said:

"Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

Matthew 26:53-54

To understand the words "fulfilled Scriptures", we ought to know that the prophets in the Old Testament many hundreds of years before had foretold many of the important events in the life of Jesus. His pre-existence in eternity, his miraculous birth by a virgin and his divinity, his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead, were recorded. In Jesus they were now being fulfilled.

Jesus' claim to be divine was as upsetting to the Jews as it is to many people today:

"Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?' *We are not stoning you for any of these', replied the Jews, 'but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God'*".

John 10:31-33

Even at this very crisis situation of his life, Jesus thought not of himself, but of others.

"When they came to the place called "The Skull", there they crucified him, along with the criminals - one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing'".

Luke 23:33-34

After his resurrection from the dead Jesus joined some of his companions on their way home, but remained unrecognized by them. They were in great sorrow over his death, which they could not fathom. Jesus said to them:

"How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself".

Luke 24:25-27

Again Jesus pointed to the prophecies concerning him in the Old Testament.

Some people have speculated that Jesus did not actually die, but that he was taken down from the cross unconscious and later revived. This was quite impossible, for the soldiers, to make sure he was dead, pierced his chest before he was taken down (John 19:33). What did Jesus have to say to that?

"I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades (hell)".

Revelation 1:17-18

Jesus did not come for the Jews only, as some believe. He said:

"This is what is written (in the Law): The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day; and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem".

Luke 24:46-47

39 days after his resurrection from the dead Jesus was taken up to heaven before the very eyes of his disciples. His last words to them were:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age".

Matthew 28:18-20

That is why Christian believers have it on their hearts to make him and his message known. When the end of time comes, Jesus will be the judge:

"The Father judges no-one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him. I tell you the truth whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when

the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice".

John 5:21-28

If nothing else makes us think and consider - this should! To reject this offer for fear of any kind is simply foolish.

Jesus encourages us to trust him and in what he is doing for us:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am".

John 14:1-3

Jesus will come again. This time not to save, but to judge all those who did not accept his offer of pardon and forgiveness. It is therefore so important to be prepared for his coming at any time:

"You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him".

Luke 12:40

How this is going to happen he told us as well:

"You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven".

Mark 14:62

"As the lightning comes from the East and flashes to the West, so will be the coming of the Son of Man".

Matthew 24:27

Jesus is coming again to judge the world – all nations and all people. But perhaps we die before that. In that case he meets us at the point of our death.

Why is Jesus speaking of himself as the 'Son of Man', and not of the 'Son of God'? The title 'Son of Man' is first mentioned in the Old Testament in the year 555 BC:

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not

pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed".
Daniel 7:13-14

In the light of this statement we can easily see that there is really no difference between the `Son of Man' and `Son of God'?

The time to receive pardon is not yet over. Jesus is still waiting. He left us with an invitation:

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in ...".
Revelation 3:20

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT US

Jesus did not teach high theology or deep philosophy. He spoke to the people as they were able to understand and comprehend:

"He told them many things in parables, saying: `A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow.

But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.

Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop - a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He who has ears, let him hear.-.....

Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. What was sown on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. What was sown among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. But what was sown on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown".

Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23

God criticized the unwillingness of the hearers to respond. So Jesus warned:

"You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them".

Matthew 13:14-15

"Therefore consider carefully how you listen".

Luke 8:18

Also in a parable Jesus explained another important truth:

"A man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man

who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig-tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' 'Sir', the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig round it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down'".

Luke 13:6-8

In another parable Jesus explains:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. –

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My commandment is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other".

John 15:1-8

None of us could honestly claim to bring such fruit by our own effort. Elsewhere in the Bible we are instructed that this fruit consists of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:23). Who does not want to bear such fruit?

Another parable shows a different facet of the same topic:

"Jesus continued: 'There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my half of the

estate'. So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

When he came to his senses, he said: 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men. So he got up and went to his father'. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son'. But the father said to his servant: 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found'. So they began to celebrate."

Luke 15:11-24

We need "to come to our senses", as the wayward son did. He did not attempt to compensate for his wrongdoing by offering a repayment, which he could not produce anyway. His father did not expect it either. He simply wanted to go home - and he went. The "best robe" is symbolic for the covering of his filth, the ring for his acceptance again as son into the family and the sandals to show he was now a free man again, for slaves were to walk barefoot. The principle is the same as taught in yet another parable:

"Two men owed money to a certain money-lender. One owed him five hundred Denarii (equivalent to more than a year's wages), and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay back, so he cancelled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Luke 7:41-42

Forgiveness is a gift of God to those who sincerely seek it and ask for it. Stories illustrating the compassion of God are repeated again and again:

"Then Jesus told them this parable: 'Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep

until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulder and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep'. I tell you that in the same way there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent".

Luke 15:3-7

I suppose most of us never saw God in this light. We think in terms of compensating God for the sins we committed. But what He wants is our heart. Remember, neither of the men who "owed" could repay. A sin, once committed, can never be undone. It is a colossal misunderstanding or misjudgment of God's holiness. Our sin results in a vast unbridgeable gulf between Him and us. We are totally and utterly dependent on what God does for us! Let us look at a last parable of Jesus to hear what he has so say about this point:

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like all other men - robbers, evil-doers, adulterers - or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get'. But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said: 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner'. I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted".

Luke 18:10-14

A Pharisee was a highly respected religious leader in the contemporary society. He did indeed stick to a rigorous, self-disciplined life style in an effort never to break one of God's Laws. But in his self-deceit he gloried in his achievements, his fasting, giving etc., thinking that he would by that effort be acceptable to God.

But Jesus explained:

"When you have done everything you were told to do, you should say: 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'".

Luke 17:10

Jesus indicted that there is no merit in doing right or good. It is our duty to do. God's standard is the norm. Therefore, forgiveness for failure is always due to God's grace. It is an unmerited act of His compassion:

"He said to them: 'You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight".

Luke 16:15

When Jesus was once asked about the most important commandment, he answered:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments".

Matthew 22:37-40

The military application of the word 'obedience' is mellowed and changes its meaning, when something is done out of love!

While Jesus taught to love and fear the Lord God, he also told us not to fear what men can say and do to us:

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell".

Matthew 10:28

It is when we trust in what he says, when we lovingly serve him with all our hearts, that we honour him:

"The Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God".

John 16:27

"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me".

John 12:26

Faith in God is in fact linked to faith in Jesus. There is really no difference:

"When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that on-one who believes in me should stay in darkness".

John 12:44-46

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

John 3:16-17

"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I raise him up at the last day".

John 6:40

"Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval".

John 16:27

Every decision we make has consequences. So has the decision to follow Jesus. We might be ridiculed or even persecuted:

"...men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved".

Matthew 10:22

"No servant is greater than his master. If they persecute me, they will persecute you also".

John 15:20

But Jesus comforts us:

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven".

Matthew 5:11-12

Jesus wants us to love, respect and honour him more than anybody or anything else:

"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me".

Matthew 10:37

As God's children (He is our Father!), and because we need one another's support in our walk with God, Jesus said:

"A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another".

John 13:34

He also left us a test, to enable us to assess ourselves:

"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him".

John 14:21

We are obedient, because we trust and love him. Obedience is not a tool to merit forgiveness and Paradise.

God's Kingdom is of a different kind and greatness is measured by different values:

"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave".

Matthew 20:25-27

Likewise outward religious rules are exposed and corrected by Jesus:

"Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said: 'Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a man can make him unclean by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of man that makes him unclean'. 'Are you so dull?', he asked. 'Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him unclean? For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body'. (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean). He went on: 'What comes out of a man is what makes him unclean. For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these things come from inside and make a man unclean'".

Mark 7:14-15, 18-23

That is why Jesus scolded the religious leaders:

"Woe to you, teachers of the Law ... you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence!"

Matthew 23:25-26

Religious practices concern themselves mostly with outward dietary and cleansing rituals. In stark contrast to this Jesus taught:

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God".

Matthew 5:8

Jesus addresses a number of issues regarding human relationships and our relationship with God. His words stir our minds and hearts:

About truthfulness he said:

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord'. But I tell you, 'Do not swear at all'. Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' be 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one".

About loving other people Jesus sets yet another standard than we would normally have:

"You have heard that it was said: 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy'. But I tell you, 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect'".

Matthew 5:43-48

About piety and prayer he cautions:

"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by man. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This is how you should pray:

'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one'. For if you forgive men when their sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Matthew 6:1-15

Jesus also emphasizes the relationship between forgiveness and prayer:

"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins".

Mark 11:25

He taught **about our dependence on God** – and God's willingness to respond:

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Who of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will our Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Matthew 7:7-11

About fasting Jesus warned:

"When you fast, do not look sombre (*i.e. don't show it*) as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also".

Matthew 6:16-21

The real value of goods, our attitude to them, and our responsibility regarding them Jesus also clarified:

"Then he said to them: `Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions".

Luke 17:15

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone

else's property who will give you property on your own? No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money".

Luke 16:10-13

Anxieties and worries are part of our life. Jesus shows us a better way to deal with them:

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself."

Matthew 6:25-34

Our life is made up of many choices. Jesus tells us that one choice exceeds all others:

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it".

Matthew 7:7-14

Do we find hypocrisy in religion? We all know that it abounds. Therefore Jesus said:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father, who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers! Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose and

the wind blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash".

Matthew 7:21-27

Problem number one in the world is that of **broken relationships**, in particular the broken relationship with God. Jesus, according to his own statements, came primarily to reconcile us with God. But He also came to heal broken human relationships. Very particularly he addressed partners in marriage regarding unfaithfulness:

"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery'. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart".

Matthew 5:27-28

To describe the severity of sin, which causes broken relationships, Jesus uses a very drastic metaphor:

"If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell".

Matthew 5:29-30

Divorce is an issue that Jesus addressed quite emphatically:

"Haven't you read that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate".

Matthew 19:4-6

"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce'. But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery".

Matthew 6:31-32

"And the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery".

Luke 16:18

"Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery".

Matthew 19:8-9

Jesus wants us to forgive each other. This is, in fact, a prerequisite to receive **forgiveness from God**. In a model prayer Jesus taught us to pray:

"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors".

Matthew 6:12

He also said:

"If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent', forgive him".

Luke 17:3-4

When one of Jesus' disciples asked him, how many times he should forgive his brother, mentioning: "Seven times?", Jesus answered:

"I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven".

Matthew 18:22

By his deeds Jesus confirmed his words. A touching example is recorded of this. We have to tell the whole story, not just the words spoken by Jesus, to transmit his spirit of forgiveness:

"Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such woman. Now what do you say?'. They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw the stone at her'. Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no-one condemned you?' 'No-one, sir', she said. 'Then neither do I condemn you', Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin'".

John 8:1-11

We all know that God hates sin. But did we also recognize Jesus' compassion for sinners, as this story demonstrates? It is matchless. He is in fact waiting for all of us to come to him to plead for forgiveness. Once we have received it our love and appreciation for him will not make it difficult for us to turn away from sin.

Obedience and commitment do not lead to bondage, but rather to true freedom:

"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free".

John 8:21-32

"I tell you the truth, everyone who sins (= keeps on doing it) is a slave to sin".

John 8:34

Jesus spoke of the supernatural element in believing and following him:

"I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God".

John 3:3

Continuing, Jesus added that no one can enter the Kingdom of God without such an experience. This illustrates that as natural life begins with the natural birth, so spiritual life begins with a spiritual birth. It starts when we are "set free" or "born anew". We are set free after God has forgiven our sin and by that cleansed us from it. Then the bondage is broken, our guilt is removed and the "new life" i.e. the working of God's Spirit in us causes a constant renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2). This soon makes us hate sin, love righteousness and follow the one who set us free, Jesus - the Messiah. It all begins with the decision to accept God's gift - his pardon. The result is always the desire to know more about God. That happens when we let God speak to us through His Word and live in close union with our heavenly Father.

THE CHALLENGE

The message of Nabi Isa is, and always has been, a challenge to mankind. It is a personal challenge to respond to. Since it is impossible to separate the Message from its Messenger, we are facing an existential question: Are we prepared to receive and accept this message and the Messenger for what they are, God's revelation?

Of course, it is in conflict with what many Jews, Muslims and even many nominal Christians believe. However, Truth is not a matter of opinion, customs, culture or upbringing. If, for example, one source claims that Jesus was crucified and died as a sacrifice for our sins, and another that he was neither crucified nor killed, both statements cannot be true. If the one is right, the other is essentially wrong.

The right answer to that question is ultimately the crucial issue of our lives. It decidedly effects our eternal destiny, and by that the quality of life here and now! We are well advised not to take for granted what our particular cultural or religious circumstances dictate, neither to rely on our feelings, or worse, on the expedient opinions of others.

THE PROOF

Are there any tangible facts that can prove this case in point? If God holds us responsible for detecting and choosing the truth about him and us, we can expect him to provide some mode, which allows us to distinguish between divine revelation and any counterfeit.

To make the right choice, we do need some basic insight and knowledge, and this must be weighed and applied fairly, honestly and wisely. Any preconceived conviction or idea is an unfit tool to differentiate between Truth and error.

Thank God, He did provide evidence to ascertain His Truth. It is accessible to all that care enough to find it. "You will ... find me when you seek me with all your heart!" (Jer. 29:13). That is a promise of God. But it is not for the half-hearted.

In his message to Moses (Deuteronomy 18:21-22), and later through many of the prophets (Isaiah 41:21, Amos 3:7, Jeremiah 28:9 etc.) God provided one proof of his authorship, which no man can imitate: predicted unforeseeable events and their fulfillment. Unpredictable historical events were correctly foretold in one Book only, and that is the Bible. Once these were fulfilled, they provided the proof of its divine authorship. Moses, David, Isaiah and others predicted the coming and life of Jesus the Messiah 750, 1000 or even more years before his birth in great detail. God has given a signal. It is up to us to take notice of it

When these prophecies, which are absolutely unique in every way, were fulfilled in Jesus, it became clear to anyone who cared enough to check, that they must have come from God. They state i.a. that Jesus is "God among us", and that he was born by a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). It says that he would be a "wonderful counselor, mighty **God**, everlasting Father and Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). As such, he became their Saviour" ('*Jeshua*' in Hebrew. It was the name by which **Jesus** was called by his contemporaries). "He saved" and "in his love and mercy redeemed" his people (Isaiah 63:7-9). "Yet they rebelled and grieved his **Holy Spirit**" (vs.10). This rebellion culminated in the rejection of Jesus and his killing which is foretold in Isaiah 53:3-12 and Psalm 22:14-18, where we read:

'He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Surely He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

And they made His grave with the wicked—and with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor *was any* deceit in His mouth.

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief... By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities...He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

"Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."

These are just a few of the many prophecies, which were fulfilled in Jesus. They are more than just some rational facts or an argument to prove the trustworthiness of the Bible. They carry a message. In it God reveals and demonstrates His love for us. We will react to it in

some way. It may be in a hostile manner, indifferently, or responsive. The message of Jesus beckons us to turn to him in love.

Remember, Jesus said: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in ...!".

Will you let him?

You, the reader, may still find in your heart and mind some open questions. If they are genuine, they need and will have to be answered in time. We, the partners of the Life Challenge team, are offering to help you in any way we can. We do not represent any particular church or religious sect, but are believers from various backgrounds, but we all love and honour God and His Word

To help you get an overall view of what the Bible is all about, a little book by the name of 'al-Kitab' ('the Book') has been compiled. It is available in a number of languages.. You find it on the internet ><http://www.bybelmedia><.

If you happen to be a Muslim and wrestle with problems like the concept of the 'Son of God', the 'Gospel of Barnabas', the alleged falsification of the Bible or the like, you may write to us for a free copy of the booklet 'Dear Abdallah'. Our address is:

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QUESTIONS FOR THE READERS (see old version)

Title: THE MESSAGE

Compiled by G. Nehls

For the cover I suggest (somewhat matching the style of 'Dear Abdallah') an attractive photography of a medieval biblical manuscript in decorated script. The titles, like that of of 'Dear Abdallah', should be superimposed..

The back of the cover may be used to advertise 'Al-Kitab' and 'Dear Abdallah' or 'One God One Message'.