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Jesus Will Return with Imam Mahdi

Biblical Eschatology is a study of things to come. The Second Advent of Jesus is one of the eschatological issues in Christian theology. Mainstream Christians believe that Jesus, forty days after his resurrection ascended to heaven and he will return to Earth at the end of time. One of the main Biblical references for the second advent of Jesus is in the Acts of the Apostles.

“Upon saying this and while they were looking on, he was taken up and a cloud carried him up from their view. And as they kept gazing intently toward heaven as he was going away from them, two men in white clothing were standing by them, who also said: Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing into heaven? This very Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come again in the same way you have seen him going to heaven.” (Acts 1:9–11)

For the past 2000 years, there has been an ongoing debate regarding the above and similar Biblical passages. Many Christians believe that Jesus will literally return. Others believe that the return of Jesus will not be physical, rather symbolic somehow. Others suggest that the church serves the same purpose. Most of the debates rotate around the above phrase ‘*In the same manner*’ as to whether it should be taken literally or figuratively.

The Return of Jesus in Islam

Muslim scholars irrespective of their denominations are quite unanimous that upon the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (May God hasten his reappearance) Prophet Jesus will also descend to Earth from the heavens. During that time, Jesus and Imam Mahdi will spread peace and justice on earth and the earth will attain unprecedented peace, justice and welfare. Jesus will be like the minister for Imam Mahdi and his main mission will be to correct the dogma of Trinity and to clarify his humane personality and servitude to God.

The Islamic doctrine of the descent of Jesus to earth is derived from a couple of Ayaat in the Quran and many hadith which are narrated by both Shi’a and Sunni narrators. The following are the most important reasons for this doctrine:

1. Jesus is still alive

As we learn in chapter 8, the holy Quran in a unique style denotes the false dogma of crucifixion. The holy Quran clearly states that Allah raised Jesus to Himself. Thus, Jesus has not tasted physical death yet. On the other hand,

‘Every creature shall have a taste of death’. (29:57)

In conclusion, Jesus must return to earth to live a physical life and die a physical death.

2. The People of the Book believe in Jesus before his death

The Almighty Allah states:

“And there will be none of the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) but must believe in him before his death and on the Day of Resurrection, he will be a witness against them.” (4: 159)

Most interpreters of the Quran agree that the above Ayah is regarding the time of the return of Jesus to earth. During that time, there will be no Jews or Christians but those who believe in Jesus as a Messenger of Allah and a human being. According with this interpretation, the pronoun in ‘Before his death’ returns to ‘Jesus’ not a Jew or a Christian.

Shahr bin Houshab narrated: *“Hajjaj bin Yusuf said to me: “There is an Ayah in the Quran that I’m baffled as to its meaning. I said: O Amir! Which Ayah is that? He said: “And there will be none of the People of the Book ...” By Allah! I have ordered the execution of many Christians and Jews and I have witnessed their death, but none of them believed in the humanity of Jesus before his death.”*

Shahr said: *“I said to Hajjaj: This is not the meaning of the Ayah. (He meant the pronoun in that phrase returns to Jesus not the Jews and Christians). The meaning of the Ayah is that Jesus will descend to earth before the Day of Resurrection and there will be no Jews or Christians but believers in Jesus and he will pray behind Imam Mahdi.”*

“Hajjaj asked from whom I had learnt that interpretation from. I replied: Imam Baqir, son of Imam Sajjad, son of Imam Husain, son of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib narrated this to me.” Hajjaj said: By Allah, you gained it from a pure spring.”

3. The followers of Jesus will be superior over disbelievers

Almighty Allah states:

“And when Allah said: O Jesus! I will take you and raise you to Myself and clear you of those who disbelieve, and I will make those who follow you superior to those who disbelieve till the Day of Resurrection. Then you (Believers and disbelievers) will return to Me and I will judge between

you in the matter in which you used to dispute.” (3:55)

The above Ayah is one of the controversial Ayaat in the story of Prophet Jesus. Some Christian preachers use this Ayah to prove the superiority of Christians over the adherents of all other religions whom they also call ‘*Disbelievers*’ until the Day of Judgment.

Christians assumed the Quranic phrase ‘***Those who follow you***’ equals Christians. Nothing can be farther from the truth. Christianity today is very different from the actual teachings of Prophet Jesus. The followers of Jesus were those who truly followed his teachings. According with the Quran, the dogma of Trinity is in full conflict with the teachings of Prophet Jesus. Thus, how could Trinitarians be regarded as the followers of Jesus?!

The examples of ‘***Those who follow you***’ from the time of Jesus till the advent of Islam are those sincere believers who believed in Jesus as a Messenger of Allah and followed his teachings. With the rise of Islam, Muslims who believe in Jesus as a Messenger of Allah are the true followers of Jesus. The disbelievers in return are those who never believed in Jesus as a Prophet such as the Jews or even the Christians who believed in the divinity of Jesus. Thus, Almighty Allah has made the true monotheists who believe in Jesus as His Messenger superior in their ideology over the disbelievers who do not believe in Prophet Jesus.

Another meaning for the Ayah is to say when Imam Mahdi (a.s) reappears and Jesus returns to earth, the true followers of Jesus who include all Muslims, Jews, Christians who truly followed Jesus will be superior to the disbelievers.

4. Prophetic narrations confirm the descent of Jesus

Numerous Narrations in both Sunni and Shi’a sources confirm and detail the descending of Jesus at the same time as Imam Mahdi. Renowned Sunni narrators such as al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Maajah, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Abu-Dawood and many others have narrated the Narrations of the return of Jesus at the time of Imam Mahdi and that he will pray behind Imam Mahdi.

Ibn Jouzi in his book ‘*Tathkeratul-Khawwas*’ narrated: “*Mahdi and Jesus will reunite. When it’s the time for Prayers, Mahdi will ask Jesus to lead the Prayers, but Jesus will say: You are more preferred to lead the Prayers. Then Jesus will pray behind him.*”

According with the Narrations of his return Jesus will break the cross and abandon the meat of the pig. He will also abolish the Jazyah for the People of the Book of his time will have no excuse to adhere to their false principles. They must either convert to Islam and hence no Jazyah will apply to them or will be executed by Jesus. Jesus will live on the earth for 40 years before he dies. Imam Mahdi will pray on his body and will attend his burial in public.

The Return of Jesus and the Seal of Prophethood

One of the theological problems about the return of Jesus is the paradox between this concept and the seal of Prophethood. Undoubtedly, Prophet Muhammad was the last Prophet and Messenger of God. With Prophet Muhammad, prophethood ceased to continue. Then how could one of the previous prophets return to earth after Prophet Muhammad?

The answer to the above paradox is that Prophet Jesus will not return to earth to bring a new Shari'a Law. Thus, he will pray behind Imam Mahdi. In fact, Imam Mahdi who is the 12th and the last successor of the Prophet of Islam will lead the world. The main purpose of the return of Jesus to earth is for him to prove to the Jews and the Christians the truth about himself.

'Christians'

The names by which the disciples were known among themselves were '*Brethren*', '*The faithful*', '*Elect*', '*Saints*' and '*Believers*'.

The title '*Christian*' for the followers of the teachings of Jesus is historically a Greek-given name not a God-given name. In Greek, the adjectival ending -ianos denoted the adherents of an individual or party. So, adherents to Christ were called Christianos which is developed in English to Christians. The name '*Christian*' was first given by the Greeks or Romans, probably in reproach, to the followers of Jesus.

There is no record of any disciple calling another believer a Christian or of Jesus applying that designation to himself. Luke in Acts (11:19-30) writes that "*The disciples were called Christians,*" not that "*the disciples called themselves Christians.*" According with the Acts (11:26) the title of '*Christian*' was first used at Antioch for the disciples.

When disciples under the persecution of the Jews sought refuge in Antioch which was a Greek city, they were named in reproach by pagan Greeks as '*Christians*' meaning those who believe in the one who claimed to be the Christ. In the early stages of Christianity to be called '*Christian*' would most probably equal execution.

Although this title initially carried some negative sense, over time Christians accepted it, as to them it would be an honour for them to be related to Christ (The Messiah; Al-Maseeh in Arabic). Hence, the title was universally accepted. On the other hand, the Jews who did not believe Jesus was the Messiah scorned the followers and the disciples of Jesus as "*The sect of the Nazarenes*" (Acts 24:5) meaning the followers of the one who was merely born in Nazareth.

The only God-given title for the followers of the teachings of Jesus is given by Allah in the holy Quran. The holy Quran has never referred to the followers of Jesus as Christians (Al-Maseehiyoun in Arabic) or Nazarenes. The term used in the Quran for his followers is '*Nasara*' meaning the helpers, the singular of

which is *'Nasrani'* meaning *'The helper'*.

Just like the term used for those believers in Medina who supported Prophet Muhammad and hence were called *'The helpers'*. The reason as to why the holy Quran is calling the adherents of Jesus *'The Helpers'* stems from a conversation between Jesus and his disciples.

According with the Quran when Jesus began his mission he asked his disciples who would be helping him in the cause of God. The holy Quran states:

“O, you who believe! Be you helpers (in the Cause) of Allah as said Jesus, son of Mary, to the disciples: Who are my helpers (in the Cause) of Allah? The disciples said: We are Allah’s helpers.” (61: 14)

Therefore, contrary to the name given to the followers of Jesus by the Romans or the Jews, the Quranic title for them is a God-given name and designates their devotion to Allah. Another title used frequently in the Quran for both the Christians and the Jews, is the appellation of ***'People of the Book'*** which is a very honourable title confirming that they historically belonged to the community of the faithful people who originally had a divine Scripture.

The Characteristics of the 'Nasara'

In the story of Prophet Moses (a.s) I dealt with the status of the People of the Book in the Quran. The People of the Book are sometimes condemned in the Quran not merely because they are Jewish or Christians. They were castigated due to their wrong actions.

The Quran, whilst emphasising that Christians did, theologically, go astray by believing in the erroneous dogma of the Trinity, respects and admires their good deeds and moral behaviour. Almighty Allah in Surah al-Ma'edah (Chapter 5), Ayah 82 states:

“And you will surely find the nearest in love to the believers (Muslims) those who say: We are Nasara (Christians). That is because amongst them are priests and monks, and they are not proud.” (5:82)

This love and compassion is a Godly gift to them, as Allah in Surah al-Hadid (Chapter 57) Ayah 7 states:

“And We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him (Jesus) compassion and mercy.” (57:7)

On the other hand, however, Muslims are commanded not to trust and make close friendships with the Jews and the Christians. Allah in Surah Ma'edah (Chapter 5) Ayah 51 states:

“O, you who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians as friends (Or protectors or helpers),

they are but the friends (Or protectors and helpers) of each other. And if any amongst you take them as friends, then surely, he is one of them. Verily, Allah guides not those people who are the wrong-doers.”

The message of this Ayah is like the following Ayah in which relying u (on the wrong-doer) is forbidden.

“And incline not toward those who do wrong, lest the Fire should touch you, and you have no protectors other than Allah, nor you would then be helped.” (11: 113)

Thus, God condemns only the wrong-doers whoever they may be.

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