

Published on Al-Islam.org (https://www.al-islam.org)

<u>Home</u> > <u>Ancient Prophets for a Modern World – The True Story of Jesus (P)</u> > <u>Glad Tidings of the</u> Advent of Ahmad > Disciples in the Quran

Glad Tidings of the Advent of Ahmad

One of the missions of all the previous prophets had been to announce and prophesy the advent of the forthcoming prophet(s). To this effect, Prophet Moses as well as many other Israelite Prophets prophesised the coming of Prophet Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon them).

Christian theologians quote from many passages of the Old Testament such as passages in the Psalms and the Book of Prophet Isaiah to prove the advent of Jesus. Muslim scholars also quote from the Bible to convince their Christian friends of the advent of Prophet Muhammad. The description about the seal of the prophets; Prophet Muhammad (S) had been so apparent in the Torah and the Gospel (Injil) that the People of the Book knew of his name and even the place where at his advent would occur. The holy Quran states:

"Those who follow the Messenger, the prophet who can neither read nor write, whom they find (His name) written with them in the Torah and the Gospel..." (7:157)

Similarly, quoting from Prophet Jesus (a.s) the holy Quran states:

"And (remember) when Jesus, son of Mary, said: O Children of Israel! I am the Messenger of Allah unto you, confirming the Torah which came before me, and give glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad. But when he (Ahmad) came to them with clear proofs, they said: This is plain magic." (61:6)

According with the above ayah Prophet Jesus introduced himself as a link between Prophet Moses and Prophet Muhammad (S). The above prophecy was so clear that with the advent of the Prophet of Islam many Jews and Christians embraced Islam as their religion although most of them denied the truth and accused the Prophet of being a magician.

The question is the name of the forthcoming prophet as quoted from Jesus was to be 'Ahmad' whereas the name of the Prophet of Islam is known to be Muhammad. W. M. Watt claims that Muslim children were practically never called Ahmad before the year 125AH₁.

Alfred Guillaume furthermore claims that the name Ahmad is not found in Ibn Is'haq or Ibn Hisham's Sirah Rasul, in their argument, dealing with the prophecy of the coming of a prophet after Jesus2. Contrary to the above claims there are many historical evidences proving that the Prophet of Islam from his very childhood was known by two names, Muhammad and Ahmad.

The first was chosen for him by his grandfather Abdul Mutalleb and the latter by his mother Aminah3. Among those who repeatedly used to call the Prophet of Islam Ahmad was his uncle Abu Taleb. The poetry book of Abu Taleb is available today and in many instances, he calls his nephew Ahmad. The following are some examples

"The wrongdoers attempted to kill Ahmad, but they did not find any leader for this atrocity. Although Ahmad brought them a religion of truth and he never brought a false religion."4

It is also narrated from Abu Taleb: "Surely Allah honoured the Prophet Muhammad and thus, the most honourable creation of God amongst people is Ahmad. 5"

Moreover, the Prophet of Islam is repeatedly addressed by the Almighty God in the night of Ascension as 'Ahmad'. All Muslims have also narrated the following from the Prophet, "Surely there are names for me, I am Ahmad and I am Muhammad and I am the Eraser the one by whom Allah erases the infidelity and I am the Raiser that people will rise in front of my feet and I am the End that there is no prophet after me6."

With regards to the claim of Mr. Watt, we agree that the name 'Ahmad' and 'Muhammad' were not common among Arabs prior to the birth of the Prophet of Islam; Nevertheless, as the advent of the last promised prophet was approaching some Arabian tribes began calling their children Ahmad or Muhammad hoping that their sons would be the promised Prophet.

For instance, Ahmad ibn Hafs al-Moghairah known as Abu Amr al-Makhzoomi the husband of Fatima; The daughter of Qais was one of the companions of the Prophet of Islam who accompanied Imam Ali (a.s) on his trip to Yemen7.

The Prophet of Islam in the Present Gospels

Before we make any investigation in the present Gospels about the prophecy of Prophet Jesus (a.s) about the forthcoming Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (S) we need to address the question of whether it is justifiable for Muslims to quote the Bible or quote from it to prove any of our claims.

As Muslims, we believe that the Quran is the last but not the only book revealed by Allah to mankind through His Messengers. The holy Quran is, however, the only holy book which remained intact from the time of its revelation to the present time and forever. The Quran is the only divine Scripture of which the full text is available in the original language in which it was revealed (Arabic).

Although we believe in the original Torah of Moses and Gospel of Jesus, we also believe, and numerous evidences confirm, that many additions, deletions and interpolations have occurred in the previous scriptures. The original Gospel of Jesus is lost to such an extent that Christians today do not even acknowledge any written Gospel for Jesus. Thus, what is available today is the recollection of passages of the original Gospel as remembered by the authors of the Gospels in addition to their own versions of the history of Jesus.

That however does not mean that as Muslims we totally reject the present Bible and do not accept a single passage of it. We ought to distinguish between literature of divine origin yet distorted throughout history, and the one which is a mere fiction. Let me give you a vivid example.

Prophet Jesus (a.s) is quoted in the Gospel according with Mark to have said: "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord and you shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with our whole mind, and with your whole strength." (Mark 12:29–39) Muslims have no problem accepting this quotation from Jesus and agree with its essence which is the chief Commandment of the Ten Commandments.

Criteria of Acceptance

The holy Quran provides the main criteria for accepting or rejecting the passages from the Bible. In Surat–ul Ma'idah the rule is stated as follows;

"And We have sent down to you (O Muhammad) the Book (this Quran) in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it and trustworthy in highness and a witness over it (all the scriptures). So, judge among them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging away from the truth that has come to you." (5:48)

This emphasises that Biblical passages must be examined and judged by the Quran, and if the Quran confirms and verifies the Biblical passages, then they can be accepted.

To this end, if the Bible contains apparent prophecies about the advent of Prophet Muhammad, and if the Quran confirms that fact, then there is no objection in referring to such prophecies. It is to this effect that the Imams of Ahlul-Bait in their debates with Rabbis or Christian scholars have quoted from the Bible.

Imam Ridha' (a.s) vs Jatheliq

Ma'moon; The Abbasid king of the 9th century AD ordered a debate between Imam Ridha' (a.s); The eighth Imam of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s) and the grand scholars of various religions.

Jatheliq was the Christian archbishop who was called to debate the Imam. When he entered the court of the Abbasid king, he complained to the king as to how he could debate with someone who may refer to

a Book (The Quran) that he does not acknowledge.

Upon hearing that Imam Ridha' (a.s) replied: "O Christian! What if I debate you with your Bible? Would you acknowledge that?" Jatheliq replied: "How would I be able to deny what the Bible says. Yes, indeed I will acknowledge even if it's against my wish".

Among the points that Imam Reza raised to Jatheliq was; "O Christian! Do you know the speech of Issa in the Gospel where he says 'Surely I am going to your Lord and my Lord and Parcletos is coming to witness for me in truth as I witnessed for him and he is the one who will explain everything for you and he is the one who will convict the world of the wrongdoings and he is the one who will break the pillars of Kufr (Atheism)."

Jatheliq replied, "You did not mention anything from the Gospel but I acknowledge it." Imam Ridha': "Are you sure you find this in the Bible?" He answered "Yes."8

The Glad Tidings of the Coming of Ahmad

Are there any passages in the present Gospels wherein the advent of Prophet Muhammad (S) has been prophesied? The Gospel according with John contains some passages that although they are made notoriously obscure in addition to some alterations, still the prophecy of Jesus about Prophet Muhammad (S) can be concluded from it. Chapter 14 of the Gospel of John reads:

"If you love me, keep my commands, and I shall ask the father and he will give you another paraclete to stay with you forever, the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it neither perceives nor understands him. You know him, for he remains with you and will be within you." (John 14: 15–17)

Chapter 16 also reads:

"However, I tell you the truth: My going is for your benefit; For if I do not leave, the Paraclete will not come to you; But if I go, then I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world regarding sin and righteousness and judgment regarding sin, because they do not believe in me; regarding righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no more and regarding judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

I have still many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now. When the spirit of truth comes, however, he will guide you into all truth; For he will not speak on his own account but he will say whatever he hears, and he will make known to you what is to take place. He will glorify me, for he will take from what is mine and will declare it to you." (John 16: 12–14)

The word 'Paraclete'

The key word in the above passages is the Greek term 'Paraclete'. The word occurs 5 times in the New Testament, all in writings of John. Four instances are in his Gospel and one in the First Epistle in which Jesus is a Paraclete. In the English translations of the Bible, the word 'Paraclete' is usually translated to 'Comforter', 'Advocate', 'Helper' and 'Intercessor.'

The term is so ambiguous that the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia after suggesting various translations concludes that "It would be the best that instead of translating we simply transfer the word 'Paraclete'". The term 'Paraclete' in John 2:1 without doubt is a title for Jesus.

But Christians in general argue that the Paraclete in the Gospel of John is meant as a title for the Holy Spirit that, they believe, descended to the disciples on Pentecostg. Father Raymond E. Brown however argues in Appendix V of *'The Anchor Bible'* that the Paraclete cannot be *'The Holy Spirit'*.

The above-mentioned passages of the Gospel of John have been for long the subject of ongoing debates between Muslim and Christian scholars.

Analysis of the word 'Paraclete'

I believe the debate over the term 'Paraclete' is quite futile. The word 'Paraclete' is a Greek term. Although scholars are not unanimous about the language that Jesus used to speak, we know that Jesus did not speak Greek because the Aramaic and Hebrew speaking people in the time of Jesus considered it sinful to speak any other language.

The Greek term 'Paraclete' is really the distortion of 'Periklytos' or 'Paraklytos'. Both words mean 'Praised' or 'Celebrate', the meaning and character of Prophet Muhammad. Also, according with the present–day Aramaic scriptures, the word for Muhammad would read 'Paragleyta' or 'Paraklytos' in Greek and 'Menahem' in Hebrew.

In the ancient Aramaic scriptures, before these changes, it read 'Ahmad', then Munahammana which is the Aramaic/Syriac rendering for the name 'Muhammad'. These are names, not simply words. Unless, one discovers the distortion occurred in the term, the passage remains notoriously obscure and the debates about it will be in vain.

It is due to this obscurity of the distorted Greek word 'Paraclete' that even the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia fails to provide a clear translation for it. Similarly, it is perhaps due to this ambiguity that Allamah Tabatabaei; The most renowned exegete of the holy Quran in the 20th century, suggests that the present Gospels contain no prophecy about the advent of the Prophet of Islam.

Supporting Points from the Johannine Literature

Ironically Christians quote from many obscure passages of the Old Testament to prove the advent of Jesus, yet when Muslims exercise the same method, they bluntly deny it.

"That indeed is a division most unfair". (53:22)

Nonetheless, if one still argues about the word Paraclete that it does not, even in its original Aramaic sense, mean Ahmad, there are many supporting points that can provide a meaningful prophecy for the advent of Prophet Muhammad. Let's examine how much the passages that John has narrated in his Gospel apply to the Prophet of Islam (S):

1. Regarding the coming of Paraklytos

1/1: The Paraklytos will come (but only if Jesus departs) (15:26, 16:7,8,13) The Holy Spirit was already there and had been with the Prophets including Jesus. According with the Bible when Jesus was being baptised by Prophet John (Yahya), the Holy Spirit happened to be present at the River Jordon. {Mark 1: 4–11} So, how could Jesus say: "But if I don't go away the Paraklytos shall not come to you".

1/2: The Paraklytos comes forth from the father. (15:26) This implies that the forthcoming Prophet like Jesus himself would be sent by Allah.

2. Identification of Paraklytos

2/1: He is called 'another Paraklytos' (14:16) This can only be correct if Paraklytos is a name or a title for a male human who will be another Messenger of God. For obviously there can be no 'Another Holy Spirit'.

2/2: He will speak only what he hears and nothing on his own. (16:13) The Messengers of God spoke only what was revealed to them from God. Thus, Jesus proclaimed: "For I have not spoken of my own accord, but the Father who sent me. He has given me a command what I should say and what I should speak." (John 12:49) Similarly, Almighty Allah proclaims the following about the Prophet of Islam:

"Nor does he speak of his own desire. It is only a Revelation revealed." (53:3-4)

2/3: He is the spirit of truth. (14:17) John in his First Epistle relates the spirit of truth and the spirit of error to human characters. (1John 4–6). Thus, the spirit of truth can refer to an honest and very righteous person. Historically, there is no doubt that Prophet Muhammad (S) even before he received the revelation was well known as a trustworthy and honest person.

It seems the prefix 'Holy' in Chapter 14 verse 26 is added to the 'Spirit' for it is not consistent with other parts of the passage. At the time of Prophet Jesus, the position of Prophethood belonged to Jesus. With

the advent of Prophet Muhammad (S) he took over that position and declared it to the world (16:14). With the advent of Prophet Muhammad (S.) the position of Jesus would be upheld and his teachings shown to be true.

3. His role in relation to the Disciples

3/1: He will teach them everything (14:26) Christians usually argue that the idea of a Prophet some 600 years after Jesus would be too late for the disciples. Ironically however the Catholics claim that the Paraclete comforts the Church by guaranteeing her inerrancy and fostering her sanctity.

The Catholic Encyclopaedia states: "There is no reason for limiting to the Apostles themselves the comforting influence of the Paraclete as promised in the Gospel." In fact, Jesus was sharing his prophecy with the faithful community of his time, insomuch as Moses and Isaiah did.

Therefore, it should not be taken that they were the only or direct address of Jesus. The teaching of Islam is the most comprehensive of all and the Prophet of Islam (S) taught the world all that was required by humanity for their prosperity both here and in the hereafter.

3/2: He will glorify Jesus. (16:14) The history of religions has recorded none other than Muhammad (S), the Prophet of Islam who has uncompromisingly borne witness to the birth of Jesus through the Virgin Mary; Attested the miracles performed by Jesus by the Leave of God, and has declared Jesus as a *'Messiah'* and the righteous Prophet.

Jesus' Disciples

'Disciples' were those who chose to follow Prophet Jesus and to listen to his teachings. They are also called *'Apostles'*. According with the Bible they called him *'Rabbi'* or *'Teacher'*. Historically we know very little about Jesus' disciples. The Gospel of Matthew and Luke have mentioned their names (Chapter 6).

The Twelve Disciples were followers of Jesus whom he had chosen to become his core group, the people he talked things over with and depended on. Ironically, however, the Bible records that one of his disciples named Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver! Similarly, according with the Gospel of Mark prior to the so-called crucifixion of Jesus all his disciples forsook him and fled. (Mark 14:50)

Disciples in the Quran

The disciples of Prophet Jesus are mentioned five times in the Quran and their faith has been always praised. The holy Quran states about their sincerity and submission to Allah:

"Then when Jesus came of know of their (Jews) disbelief, he said: Who will be my helpers in Allah's Cause? Al-Hawariyyun (The disciples) said: We are the helpers of Allah; we believe in

Allah, and bear witness that we are Muslims." (3:52)

According with a narration from Imam Ridha' (a.s) the name 'AI-Hawariyyun' (Literally means whitening) is given to them for they used to cleanse themselves from sins and struggling in cleansing others by teaching and preaching. 10 Islamic literature does not confirm the betrayal of Jesus by any of his disciples. Nay, an authentic Hadith indicates that one of his disciples following the request of Jesus offered himself to be killed instead. 11

- 1. (G. Parrinder, Jesus in the Quran, p.99)
- 2. (The Life of Muhammad p. 103–104)
- 3. (Sirah al-Halabi)
- 4. (Deewan Abu Taleb p.25–29)
- 5. (Tarikh ibn Asaker vol. 1 p.275)
- 6. (Al Bukhari, Majma'ul Bayan vol.9 p.357, Beharul Anwar vol.16 p.129)
- 7. (Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, al-Isabah vol.4, p. 139)
- 8. Al-Tabrasi, al-Ihtejaj vol.2 p.411.
- 9. 50 days after the ascension of Jesus.
- 10. Al-Bahrani, al-Borhan vol.2. p.40.
- 11. Ibid p.41.

Source URL:

https://www.al-islam.org/ancient-prophets-modern-world-true-story-jesus-p-mansour-leghaei/glad-tid ings-advent-ahmad#comment-0