

The Return of Jesus (part 2 of 5)

Description: The prophecies and portents in Islam of the descent of Jesus in the Quran and the prophetic narrations.

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Christians believe that Jesus is alive today, and many denominations believe him to be active. They also believe that he has been resurrected already, and that he will never die again. The Muslim position, however, is that he never died, and therefore is still alive. It says in the Quran, that the Jews claim:

"We killed Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, Messenger of God."

However, God denies this, as the verse continues:

"But they killed him not, nor crucified him; It was only a likeness shown to them: Most certainly they killed him not. Rather, God lifted him up to Himself." (Quran 4:157-8)

This action of lifting is literally an upward movement, physically being taken from the earth into heavens, just as he will be physically brought back on the wings of angels from the heavens to the earth when he returns. Christians estimate his age to be 31-33 years of age at ascension, because the synoptic Gospels are considered to describe approximately 1 year of his life. The Gospel of John purportedly describes 3 years of his life from the moment he began preaching, of which Luke says:

"And Jesus himself began to be about 30 years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph ... and (he) was led by the spirit into the wilderness." (Luke 3:23 and 4:1)

Muslim scholars agree. Hasan Basri said, "*Jesus was 34*, while Sa'eed ibn Mussayyib said, "*He was 33*," when he was lifted up to heaven.^[1]

"And there is none of the People of the Book but will believe in him before his death, and on the Day of Judgment, he will be a witness against them." (Quran 4:159)

God, here, is talking about the 'People of the Book' believing in Jesus before the latter dies well after he was lifted up into the heavens. The implication is that he is not yet dead. In fact, he is securely kept by God until he completes his appointed term. As God says in the Quran:

"It is God Who takes away the souls at the time of their death, and (the souls) of those that die not during their sleep. He keeps those for which He has ordained death and sends the rest for a term appointed." (Quran 39:42)

And:

"It is God Who takes away the souls at night, and has knowledge of all that you have done by day, and raises you up again that a term appointed be fulfilled; then will you be returned unto Him. Then He will inform you of all that you used to do." (Quran 60:60)

'The term appointed' denotes the numbered days of our lives, already known and confirmed by God. The word "to take away" is a promise made by God to Jesus which God will do when His messenger is threatened by disbelief. The Quran informs us that He told Jesus:

"Indeed I will take you (away) and lift you up to Myself and purify you from those who disbelieve..." (Quran 3:55)

Thus we have a promise of God fulfilled when he saved Jesus from crucifixion, and another that will be fulfilled when He returns Jesus to earth and he completes his life here - a promise confirmed in the revelation given to Mary at the annunciation:

"God gives you tidings of a word from Him, whose name will be Jesus Christ, son of Mary, held in honor in the world and in the hereafter, and one of those who are nearest (to God). He shall speak to the people in infancy and when middle-aged[2], and shall be of the righteous." (Quran 3:45-46)

Since middle-aged is older than the early thirties, this prophecy concerns his speaking to the people after his return. So this second promise (that everyone will believe in him before he dies) concerns his second mission when he descends to earth again. When he arrives, he will be the same age as he left, and then he will live for another forty years.[3] The Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said:

"There is no prophet between me and him (Jesus), and he shall descend. He... will stay in the world for forty years; then he will die and the Muslims will offer the funeral Prayer for him." (*Abu Dawood, Ahmed*)

The return of Jesus will be close to the end of time. In fact, his descent will be one of the major signs the final hour is due. The Quran discloses that:

"He (the son of Mary) shall be a known sign of the Hour; so have no doubt concerning it and follow Me." (Quran 43:61)

His appearance will be followed by only two or three other unmistakable portents. Among these are the appearance of the beast[4], the wafting of the believers from the earth[5], leaving only disbelievers behind, and the rising of the sun from the west.[6]

The ten major signs, among which is the second coming of Jesus, are summarized in one *hadeeth*: [7]

"The Hour will not come until you see ten signs: the smoke; the False Messiah; the Beast; the sun rising from the West; the descent of Jesus son of Mary; the Gog and Magog; and three tremors -

one in the East, one in the West, and one in Arabia, at the end of which fire will burst forth from the direction of Aden and drive people to the place of their final assembly." (*Ahmed*)

May God save us from disbelief and preserve us from being among those who witness the final moments.

Endnotes:

[1] Ibn Kathîr: *Stories of the Prophets*; The Story of Jesus, Elevation or Crucifixion, p 541

[2] The word used in the Quran is *Kahl*, which means 'middle-aged; elderly; rather old' (*Al-Mawrid al Waseet Concise Arabic-English Dictionary*). According to *Mokhtar Al Sihhah Lexicon*, it means above 35 and of grey hair (*sha'ib*).

[3] *Faslu'l-Maqaal fi Raf'i Isa Hayyan wa Nuzoolihi wa 'Qatlihi'd-Dajjal*, p. 20

[4] Prophesied in the *Quran*, 27.82: "And when the Word is fulfilled against them (the unjust), We shall produce from the earth **a Beast** to (face) them: it will speak to them."

[5] The Prophet said, 'At that time God will send **a pleasant wind which will waft (people) under their armpits. He will take the life of every Muslim** and only the wicked will survive, who commit adultery like asses, and the Last Hour would come to them.' (*Saheeh Muslim*)

[6] The Prophet said, 'The first of the immediate signs (of the Hour) to appear will be **the rising of the sun from the west** and the appearance of the Beast before the people in the forenoon. Whichever of these events happens first, the other will follow immediately.' (*Saheeh Muslim*).

[7] The signs in the narration are listed in a different order than they will actually occur..

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