

## 6. Death and spiritual ascension of Jesus

### Death of Jesus.

Then the second verdict given by the Quran and Hadith in this respect was in existence as follows. The Holy Quran has said in clear and plain words that Jesus has died. The verse *fa-lammā tawaffaita-nī*<sup>1</sup> clearly indicates that Jesus has died, and it is proved in *Sahih Bukhari* from Ibn Abbas, and also in Hadith reports of the Holy Prophet, that *tawaffā* here means “to cause to die”. It is futile to argue that this word *tawaffaita-nī*, which is in the past tense, here really means the future, i.e. he is not dead yet, but shall die in the latter days. For, the meaning of the verse is that Jesus is pleading before God that his followers did not go astray during his life-time, but fell into error after his death. Hence, if it is supposed that Jesus has not died yet, then it has to be admitted concurrently that the Christians have not gone astray as yet, because it has been clearly said in the verse that the going astray of the Christians occurs after the death of Jesus. There can be no grievous dishonesty greater than denying such a clear decision.

### Sound Islamic authorities uphold death of Jesus.

The clear words of the Holy Quran prove nothing but the death of Jesus, and on the other hand the Holy Quran calls the Holy Prophet as *Khātam an-nabiyyīn*. The Hadith confirms both these teachings, and the Hadith reports also say that the coming

---

1. See note 4 on page 30. (Publisher.)

Messiah will be from this *Umma*, whatever nation he may belong to. In view of this, the question naturally arises that, in spite of such clear verdicts which prove that Jesus has died and that the coming Messiah will belong to this *Umma*, how did there come to be a consensus (*ijmā'*) on the belief that Jesus shall in reality descend from heaven in the latter days?

To this, the answer is that whoever claims that there is consensus in this matter is either highly ignorant or habitually dishonest and a liar. For, the Companions of the Holy Prophet did not need the details of this prophecy. In accordance with the verse *fa-lammā tawaffaita-nī*, they undoubtedly believed that Jesus had died. That is why at the time of the death of the Holy Prophet, *Hazrat* Abu Bakr, sensing that some people were doubtful about his death, explained most forcefully that no prophet was alive, and all had died. He read out the verse “messengers before him have indeed passed away”,<sup>2</sup> and there was none who rejected his statement.

Then in addition to this, an imam, scholar of Hadith and Quran, and righteous man of the calibre of Imam Malik believed that Jesus had died. Likewise, Imam Ibn Hazm, whose great status needs no elaboration, believed in the death of Jesus. Similarly, Imam Bukhari, whose book is known as the ‘most correct of all books after the Book of God’, believed in the death of Jesus. In the same way, those scholars, experts of Hadith and commentators of the Quran, namely, Ibn Taimiyya and Ibn Qayyim, who were the imams of their respective times, believed in the death of Jesus. The chief of the Sufis, Shaikh Muhayy-ud-Din Ibn al-Arabi, too, explains in plain and clear words in his commentary that Jesus died. Similarly, other outstanding scholars, masters of Hadith and commentators of the Quran, have been consistently bearing witness to this. All the leaders and imams of the Mu‘tazilah sect hold the same belief. Then what a fabrication it is to declare that Jesus’ going to

---

2. The Holy Quran, 3:145.

heaven alive and his subsequent return is a belief supported by consensus of all Muslims (*ijmā'*).

Rather, these are the ideas of the common people of the times when thousands of innovations had cropped up in the faith. This was the middling period which has been termed “the crooked way” (*faij a'waj*) by the Holy Prophet Muhammad. And regarding the people of that era of *faij a'waj* he has said: “*Laisū minnī wa lastu min-hum*”, i.e. “They are not of me and I am not of them”.

### **Belief that Jesus is alive contradicts the Quran.**

By adopting this belief that Jesus has gone up to heaven alive and has been living there in his earthly body for about nineteen hundred years, and shall return to the earth at sometime, these people have contradicted the Holy Quran in four respects.

**Firstly**, as has been explained, the Holy Quran mentions the death of Jesus in clear words, while these people believe him to be alive.

**Secondly**, the Holy Quran says in plain and clear words that no human being can remain alive anywhere but the earth, as it says: “*Fihā taḥyauna wa fihā tamūtūna wa min-hā tukhrajūn*”,<sup>3</sup> i.e. in the earth shall you live, in the earth shall you die, and from the earth shall you be taken out [at Resurrection]. But these people say that man can exist even outside this earth and the atmosphere, as Jesus has been alive in the heaven till today, almost the nineteenth century having passed over it. Even on the earth, which according to the Quran is the abode of man, no human being since the beginning to the present-day has ever lived for nineteen hundred years despite the availability of the provisions of life. So to live in heaven for nineteen hundred years, in spite of the fact that according to the Quran man cannot live even for a short while without the earth, is a belief greatly opposed to the clear teachings of the Quran, upon which our opponents are insisting without justification.

---

3. The Holy Quran, 7:25.

**Thirdly**, the Holy Quran clearly says that it is against the law of God that a man ascend to the sky, as it says: “Say: Glory to my Lord! am I anything but a mortal messenger.”<sup>4</sup> But our opponents raise Jesus to heaven with his earthly body.

**Fourthly**, the Holy Quran clearly states that the Holy Prophet Muhammad is the *Khātam al-anbiyā'* (Last of the Prophets).<sup>5</sup> But our opponents make Jesus the *Khātam al-anbiyā'*, and they say that the mention of the Messiah as “prophet of God” in *Sahih Muslim* and elsewhere refers to real prophethood.<sup>6</sup> Now it is obvious that if he were to come to the world possessing his prophethood, how could our Holy Prophet be called *Khātam al-anbiyā'*? While still a prophet how can Jesus be deprived of the qualities of prophethood?

In short, these people, by adopting this belief, have contradicted the Holy Quran in four ways. Then if it is asked, What is the proof that Jesus has ascended to heaven with his earthly body, they can neither produce any verse of the Quran nor show any Hadith report. All they do is to add the word *heaven* from themselves to the word *descent (nuzūl)* and thereby mislead the public. But it must be remembered that the word *heaven* is not to be found in any reliable, uninterrupted Hadith report, and the word *nuzūl* is used in connection with a traveller in the Arabic idioms, a traveller being called *nazīl*. Similarly in our country also the same idiom is used, that a visitor to a city is asked by way of respect, where has he descended? In such talk, no one imagines that the man has descended from heaven. If you go through the books of Hadith of all the sects of Islam, then to

- 
4. The Holy Quran, 17:93. This is what the Holy Prophet Muhammad is told to say in reply to his opponents who demanded that he show them the sign of ascending up to heaven. (Publisher.)
  5. The term *Khātam al-anbiyā'* commonly means the ‘Last of the Prophets’, and it is perfectly clear from the context that Hazrat Mirza is using it here in exactly this sense, as meaning the Last of the Prophets. (Publisher.)
  6. It is noteworthy that what Hazrat Mirza calls as *the wrong belief of his opponents* is now a belief held by the Qadianis. It is a basic belief of the Qadianis that the mention of the Messiah as “prophet of God” in *Sahih Muslim* means that he shall come as a real prophet. (Publisher.)

say nothing of an authentic report, you will not find even a fabricated report in which it is written that Jesus had gone up to heaven with his earthly body and then will return to the earth at some time. If anyone can produce such a Hadith report, I am prepared to pay that person a penalty of up to ***twenty-thousand rupees***, and in addition I shall repent and burn all my books. Let them satisfy themselves however they like.

It is a pity that our simple-minded *Ulama* have got entangled in this difficulty by just seeing the word *nuzūl* ('descent') in the Hadith reports. Without rhyme or reason they are entertaining hopes that Jesus, on whom be peace, will return from heaven, and it would be a day of a great spectacle and show as he is accompanied by angels on his right and left, bringing him down from heaven. It is a pity that these people read the books but with closed eyes. Angels, in fact, accompany every human being and according to trustworthy Hadith they cast the shadow of their wings on the seekers of knowledge. If the angels carry the Messiah, why should this be interpreted in a unique manner? From the Holy Quran it is even proved that every person is being carried by God the Most High: "We carry them in the land and the sea",<sup>7</sup> but is God seen by anybody? These are all metaphors, but a foolish party wants to see them literally, and they thus unduly provide the opponents [of Islam] with an opportunity for objection.

These unwise people do not understand that if the Hadith reports meant to say that the very same Messiah who had gone to heaven would return, then in this case the use of the word *nuzūl* was out of place. For such a case, i.e. when the return of someone is spoken of, the eloquent natives of Arabia use the word *rajū'* ('return') and not *nuzūl*. Then how can such an inarticulate and ill-suited word be attributed to that most eloquent of all speakers, and the most knowledgeable of men, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, on whom be peace and the blessings of Allah, who is the greatest of all eloquent speakers?

---

7. The Holy Quran, 17:70.

**Meaning of *raf'*.**

A great misconception under which these *Ulama* of little sense are labouring is that when they read in the Holy Quran the verse:

“They [the Jews] killed him [Jesus] not, nor did they cause his death on the cross, but he was made to appear to them as such”,<sup>8</sup>

and also the verse:

“Nay, Allah exalted him (*raf'*) in His presence”,<sup>9</sup>

then out of their height of ignorance they consider that the negation of murder, denial of killing on the cross, and the word *raf'* (‘exaltation’ or ‘ascension’) prove only that Jesus, having escaped from the hands of the Jews, went to heaven with his physical body. As if, besides heaven, God the Most High could find no place on earth to conceal him. In order to protect our Holy Prophet Muhammad from the hands of the disbelievers, a terrifying cave full of snakes was enough. But enemies of the Messiah would not have left him anywhere on the earth, whatever plan God the Most High may have devised to save him here, so God having become helpless against the Jews — God forbid — was compelled to choose heaven for him! The Quran does not even mention *raf' ilā-s-samā'* (raising to heaven), but rather it mentions *raf' ilā Allāh* (exaltation towards God) which happens for every believer.

**Which issue was the Quran settling?**

These people also do not ponder that if this is the true account, then when the Holy Quran recorded it what was the occasion for the revelation of these verses? What was the controversy between the Jews and the Christians concerning the ascension of Jesus to heaven with his physical body — the dispute which the Holy Quran intended to settle by these verses? It is clear

---

8. The Holy Quran 4:157.

9. The Holy Quran 4:158.

that one of the chief objects of the Holy Quran is to settle the differences between the Jews and the Christians with truth and justice. So it should be remembered that the conflict that existed between the Jews and the Christians in respect of Jesus, and which still exists, was concerning his spiritual ascension (*raf' rūḥānī*). The Jews had concluded from the crucifixion that Jesus did not experience spiritual ascension and that — God forbid — he is accursed. For, according to their faith, every believer ascends after death towards God the Most High, but the man who is killed by crucifixion does not ascend towards God the Most High, meaning that he is accursed. Hence it was this which was the argument of the Jews, namely, that as Jesus was crucified, it follows that he did not experience spiritual ascension and he is accursed. The unworthy Christians also considered Jesus to have been deprived of ascension for three days and held him to be accursed. Now the intention of the Holy Quran in narrating this is to testify to the spiritual ascension of Jesus. Hence God the Most High, by saying “they killed him not, nor did they cause his death on the cross”, denied the crucifixion, and from this it drew the conclusion that “Allah exalted him in His presence”, and thus decided the dispute.

### **Jews' attempt to prove Jesus accursed.**

Now consider in fairness, what relevance and connection does bodily ascension have here? There are hundreds of thousands of Jews living to this day. Ask their scholars and learned men whether they conclude from the crucifixion of Jesus that he did not experience spiritual ascension or that he did not experience bodily ascension? Similarly the Jews used to say that the true Messiah shall come when the prophet Elijah has returned to the world according to the prophecy of Malachi. Now God the Most High, on account of His perfect wisdom which cannot be fathomed by man, placed the Jews in this trial that the prophet Elijah whom they were awaiting did not descend from heaven, yet the son of Mary laid claim to be the Messiah. This claim then appeared to the Jews to conflict with the plain statements of the scriptures, and they argued that if he was right then, God

forbid, the Torah was false. But it is impossible that the Book of God could be false. So this was the whole basis of their denial. This was the reason why the Jews became staunch enemies of the Messiah, and began dubbing him as an unbeliever, apostate, antichrist and heretic. All the doctors of religion pronounced the decree of heresy against him. Among them were those who were pious, monks, and godly men. They all agreed on his heresy because they thought that he was departing from the literal teachings.

All this mischief took place merely because of the fact that Jesus had put forth the interpretation, regarding the second advent of the prophet Elijah, that it referred to a man resembling him in his traits and nature, and that man was John, i.e. Yahya, son of Zacharias. But the Jews did not like this interpretation. And as I have just written, they declared him a heretic who changed the literal meanings of the teachings. But since Jesus was, in fact, a true prophet, and his interpretation, however far-fetched it was on the face of it, was true in the eyes of God the Most High, consequently it also occurred to some people that if he was a liar, why were the lights of righteousness visible in him and why did he show signs like true messengers? So in order to dispel this notion, the Jewish religious leaders were always busy planning as to how to convince the public that this man — God forbid — was a liar and accursed. At last they thought of this plan that if he were crucified, then of course it would be clearly proved to everyone that he was — God forbid — accursed and deprived of the ascension which the truthful persons experience towards God. This would prove that he was a liar because it is written in the Torah that a person who is crucified is accursed, that is to say, he does not ascend towards God. So they acted accordingly, to their knowledge; in other words they crucified him.

### **Christians also declared Jesus ‘accursed’.**

The matter also became dubious to the Christians. They too thought that the Messiah was in fact crucified, and then this

belief led them to adopt another doctrine, that he was also accursed. But in order to hide the curse and to remove its stigma, the plan was devised to make him the son of God the Most High — a son who carried on his head the curses for all the sinners of the world, becoming himself accursed in place of the other accursed ones, and then died the death of the accursed, i.e., he was crucified. For, it had been an ancient custom among the Israelites that professional criminals and murderers were killed only by crucifixion. Because of this association, death by crucifixion came to be counted as an accursed death. But the Christians fell under a great misconception in that they declared their mentor, guide and prophet as accursed.

They would be highly ashamed when they ponder over the point that the meaning of ‘curse’ (*la‘nat*), according to the dictionary, requires that the accursed man be actually cut off from God. For, curse is an act of God which comes into play as a result of that act of man when, having deliberately renounced faith, he cuts off all connections with God the Most High, so that he forsakes God and God forsakes him. Hence when even God forsakes him and rejects him from His presence, treating him as an enemy, in that case that reprobate is called accursed.

It is essential that one described as accursed should forsake God and God forsake him; that the accursed man become an adversary of God and God become his adversary; that the accursed man become entirely deprived of the knowledge of God, blind and misguided, and not even an iota of love for God remain in his heart. That is why, according to the dictionary, ‘the accursed one’ is a name of Satan.

Hence it is evident that Jesus is absolutely clear of the calumny — God forbid — of being called an accursed one and being considered deprived of ascension towards God. However, the Christians, out of their folly, and the Jews, out of their mischief, declared him accursed, and as I have written, the word *la‘nat* (‘curse’) is an antonym of the word *raf‘* (‘ascension’). Hence this would imply that he, God forbid, did not proceed

towards God after death but towards hell. For an accursed one, i.e. a person who has not ascended towards God the Most High, goes to hell. This is an agreed belief of the Muslims and the Jews. For this very reason the Christians had to adopt the belief that Jesus remained in hell for three days after death. In any case, both these communities greatly dishonoured a true prophet.

**Quran removes allegation of curse from Jesus and teaches his spiritual ascension.**

Hence God the Most High desired to exonerate Jesus from this allegation. So, firstly, God declared in the Holy Quran that the Messiah, son of Mary, was in fact a true prophet, worthy of regard and was among those drawn nigh to God. Then it also dispelled the evil thought of the Jews and the Christians that he was killed by crucifixion and became accursed. It said:

“They killed him not, nor did they cause his death on the cross, but he was made to appear to them as such”,<sup>10</sup>

and added:

“Nay, Allah exalted him in His presence.”<sup>11</sup>

Thus in this way it removed that calumny of being accursed and deprived of ascension which had been levelled against him by the Jews and the Christians for six hundred years. So the reason for the revelation of these verses is precisely that the Jews and Christians of that time considered Jesus as accursed and it was absolutely essential that the error of those mischief-makers and imbeciles be made manifest and the Messiah exonerated of their false charge. To fulfil this need, therefore, the Holy Quran gave the decision that the Messiah was not killed on the cross. Since he was not killed on the cross, the objection that he did not ascend towards God and, God forbid, became accursed, was proved to be entirely wrong. In fact, as He does with others who have nearness to Him, God honoured him with the distinction

---

10. The Holy Quran 4:157.

11. The Holy Quran 4:158.

of ascension. By this verdict, God the Most High declared both the Christians and the Jews to be false in believing Jesus to be accursed and not ascended.

**Bodily ascension was not the issue.**

Now from all this deliberation it is clear that the exoneration of Jesus, and his being truthful and not false, did not depend on bodily ascension. Not ascending bodily did not imply that he was false and accursed. For, if bodily ascension is a requirement for being truthful and near to God, then in accordance with the belief of these ignorant scholars, it would mean that only Jesus attained nearness to God and that all other prophets, who did not ascend towards God with the physical body, are — God forbid — deprived of nearness to God. And as bodily ascension had no significance nor was it necessary for a prophet to go bodily to heaven in order to be proved to be true and a near one of God, then why should the Book of God open this needless, meaningless and irrelevant controversy? It was not the object or the aim of the Jews to debate the bodily ascension of the Messiah. They would not have gained anything from such a debate. Their entire aim, for which hostile passion had been stirred up in their community, and which still persists, was only that they should conclude from his crucifixion that he did not attain spiritual ascension. That is why they crucified him, as they thought.

The Torah is quite clear on this point, that whoever is hung on wood, that is to say, crucified, is accursed, i.e. he does not attain nearness to God. In other words, he does not ascend towards God, but is instead cast down to join the lowest of the low. Hence the word ‘cross’, and its consequence which is explained as curse, is loudly testifying that all the tumult raised by the Jews at that time was just this, that crucifixion proved the Messiah to be accursed, and being accursed proved the absence of ascension. So it was the false allegation that had been made which was to be decided by God. On the other hand, if the consequence of crucifixion, according to the Torah, had

been set forth as being that a man who is crucified is deprived of bodily ascension, then it was possible that God the Most High would have raised the Messiah bodily to heaven, removing all doubt.

However, as things stand, this idea is entirely beside the point and has no connection whatsoever with the real controversy and its outcome. The dignity of God the Most High is above this, that He should involve Himself in an argument about this absurd, meaningless and irrelevant matter. God's teachings point out the paths of attaining salvation and Divine nearness, and they repel and remove from the prophets those accusations which call into question their attainment of nearness to God and salvation. But ascending to heaven with this body has no connection with salvation and Divine nearness. Otherwise, it has to be admitted that, with the exception of the Messiah, all other prophets are — God forbid — deprived of salvation and Divine nearness, and such an idea is plain unbelief.

Our ignorant *Maulavis* do not give even this little thought, that all this dispute about ascension (*raf'*) or otherwise began with the question of the cross. That is to say, the Torah has declared that those killed by crucifixion are deprived of spiritual ascension. Now if the Torah is interpreted to mean that the one crucified is deprived of *bodily* ascension, then how does the lack of such ascension harm the prophets and all the believers? However, if it is supposed that bodily ascension is essential for salvation then it has to be admitted — God forbid — that with the exception of Messiah, all the prophets are deprived of salvation. And if bodily ascension has no connection at all with salvation, faith, goodness and ranks of nearness to God, as in fact is true, then how misguided is it that, by changing the real purpose and meaning of the Quranic word *raf'*, and ignoring the reason for its revelation, it should be taken to mean *bodily ascension* at one's own whim! The Holy Quran also says that God the Most High had wanted to give *raf'* to Bal'am, but he

leaned towards the earth.<sup>12</sup> Would you say here also that God the Most High intended to lift Bal‘am to heaven in his physical body? So let everyone remember that in the Holy Quran, everywhere, *raf‘* means spiritual ascension; and not adopt the path of disbelief.

### ***Raf‘* of prophets and believers.**

Some ignorant people refer to the verse of the Holy Quran: “And We raised him to an elevated state,”<sup>13</sup> and relate a concocted story based on it, of their own, that this man was Idrīs whom Almighty Allah had lifted to heaven bodily. However, let it be remembered that this tale also, like the story of Jesus, is an error on the part of our ignorant *Ulama*. The fact is that here also spiritual ascension is meant. All believers, messengers and prophets are granted spiritual ascension after death, while the unbeliever does not receive spiritual ascension. Accordingly the verse: “The doors of heaven will not be opened for them,”<sup>14</sup> points towards the same. Had Idrīs gone to heaven in his physical body, then according to the plain verdict of the words of the verse: “therein shall you live,”<sup>15</sup> his living in heaven is prohibited just as the stay of Jesus in heaven is prohibited. For God the Most High has given an absolute decision in this verse that no human being can live in heaven, and it is the earth which is the place for all men to live in.

In addition to this, in the second part of this verse which is: *fī-hā tamūtūn*, i.e. on the earth you shall die, it has been clearly stated that every person shall die on the earth. Hence, because of this, our opponents will perforce have to believe that Idrīs too will descend from heaven at some time. But the fact is that no one in the world holds this belief, and it is strange that even the tomb of Idrīs exists on the earth just as does the tomb of Jesus.

---

12. See the Holy Quran 7:176: “And if We had pleased, We would have exalted him thereby (*rafa‘-nā*); but he clings to the earth.” (*Publisher.*)

13. The Holy Quran 19:57.

14. The Holy Quran 7:40.

15. The Holy Quran 7:25.

**Jesus cannot return if dead.**

Some *Ulama*, when they find no way out of these solid proofs, say, let us suppose that Jesus has died, but does Allah the Most High not have the power to bring him to life again in the latter days? But we say that, apart from the fact that the return of the dead to life and their coming to live in the world is absolutely forbidden according to the Holy Quran, and the verse: “then He withholds those upon whom He has passed the decree of death,”<sup>16</sup> bars this return of the soul, even if we assume the impossible hypothesis that Jesus will come to life and return, we should be given an indication from some Hadith report or a saying of a Companion as to which grave will split open, out of which he will emerge alive.

---

16. The Holy Quran 39:42.