

The Quran and its Message

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Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

UNDERSTANDING THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS^(pbuh) FROM A QURAN'S PERSPECTIVE

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UNDERSTANDING THE CLAIM

004:157

"That they said (in boast), "Indeed **(Arabic: Inna)**, We killed Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, the Messenger of God". And they killed him not, nor did they crucify **(Arabic: Salabuhu)** him, but it appeared so to them **(Arabic: Shubbiha)**, and indeed those who differ in it are surely in doubt **(Arabic: Shakkin)**, with no (certain) knowledge **(Arabic: Ilmin)**, but only follow assumptions **(Arabic: Zani)**, for certainly they did not kill him"

The verse will be discussed in two main parts:

- (1) The claim of the Jews
- (2) God's response to the claim of the Jews by analysing some key Arabic terms.

(1) THE CLAIM OF THE JEWS

Two further points are key to note:

- (a) The usage of the Arabic term 'inna'
- (b) The claim of the Jews that they killed Prophet Jesus,^(pbuh) the Messenger of God

With regards (a) the use of the Arabic word 'inna' is intended to denote a certainty. This is usually translated into English as 'verily', 'indeed' or 'surely'. It is clear therefore that the Jewish claim is made with conviction.

The latter part of the claim that they killed 'the messenger of God' is clearly imbued with sarcasm. There is no doubt that those involved in the indictment of Prophet Jesus ^(pbuh) would never have believed him to be a messenger of God. Therefore, the claim that they killed Jesus ^(pbuh) 'the messenger of God' served no other purpose but to be sarcastic, to prop up an arrogant boast and to form part of the rebuke of the claim of Prophet Jesus ^(pbuh) and his followers (i.e. that Prophet Jesus ^(pbuh) was sent as a messenger of God).

In other parts of the Quran, we note similar rebukes involving the term 'messenger' as used by the disbelievers:

025:007

"And they say: **What sort of a messenger is this, who eats food and walks through the streets? Why has not an angel been sent down to him to be a warner with him?"**

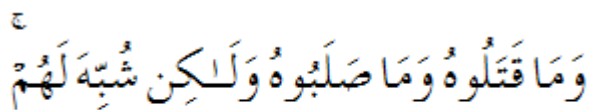
(2) GOD'S RESPONSE TO THE CLAIM OF THE JEWS BY ANALYSING SOME KEY ARABIC TERMS

God's initial response is two-fold.

- (a) They did not kill him
- (b) They did not cause Prophet Jesus ^(pbuh) to die 'in a well known manner' (Arabic: Salabuhu)

SALABAHU

The Arabic word that is commonly translated as crucify is 'Salabahu'



Salabuhu

Illustration - Joseph Islam

The word 'Salabahu' is formed from the Arabic root word: Sad-Lam-Ba which means:

*To put to **death** by crucifixion, to extract marrow from bones, to put to death in any well known manner of **killing**.*

Please see related article [1] below.

To be **crucified** one would need to 'die' on the cross / pole or stake. Death by this manner can range from a few hours to days and can be a result of blood loss, hypovolemic shock, infection related sepsis or by dehydration. However, for **crucifixion to be complete**, death would be necessary.

Therefore, the primary significance of the word 'Salabahu' means to put to **death** in a well known manner. This may mean by a process of crucifixion, but is not restricted to it.

For example we note the threat of Pharaoh in the following verse:

007:124

"I will certainly cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, then will I will crucify you all together (Arabic: uSALIBANNAkum)"

A popular translation above renders the word 'Salibanna' as crucify when all the Arabic implies is a 'well known manner of death' at the time of Pharaoh's reign **which may or may not** imply crucifixion on a cross.

WHAT IS AND IS NOT CONFIRMED BY VERSE 4:157

CONFIRMED

(1) Those asserting to have killed Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) in boast possibly implying indictment of Jesus^(pbuh) as a false messenger, **did not** kill him.

(2) Nor did they **cause Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) to die** by a well known manner of death.

(3) A re-confirmation at the end of the verse again - that they certainly did not kill him. Making this point twice also strongly rebukes the conviction of the false claims imparted by the Jews.

UNCONFIRMED

(1) Whether or not Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) was in fact indicted and put on the cross, as there is nothing in the Arabic to deny that he may have actually been put on the cross. The verse simply states that he did not **die** in the manner claimed by the Jews (i.e. by crucifixion and as a false messenger of God).

(2) Whether someone else took the place of Prophet Jesus,^(pbuh) or someone who resembled him. These Muslim interpretations are supported by [Islamic secondary sources](#). This is **not a claim** made by the Quran.

Furthermore, if we read the following verse (4:158) we obtain further context.

004:158

'Nay, he was raised/ elevated (Arabic: rafa'ahu) by God towards him (Arabic: ilayhi)'

The same term 'rafa' has been used for Prophet Idris.

019:057

"And we raised him (Arabic: waRAFA'nahu) to a position high"

The Arabic word 'rafa' in this context is a term consistently used in the Quran to denote 'elevation' (in degrees) or raising one to God's special grace.

Please see related article [2] below.

SO WHAT COULD HAVE 'POSSIBLY' HAPPENED?

A couple of possibilities are posited.

(1) NOT BY 'THEIR' HANDS

003:055

"Lo! God said "O Jesus! Indeed, I shall cause you to DIE (Arabic: Mutawaffika) and shall exalt / raise you to Me (Warafi-uka) and cleanse you from those who disbelieved; and shall place those who follow you superior to those who disbelieve on the Day of Resurrection. In the end, to Me you all must return and I will judge between you with regard to all in which you were differing"

Keeping consistent with the Quranic verses, it is quite plausible that Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) was indicted unjustly as a false Messiah and put on the cross with the intention of killing him (Please note the reference in the above verse of God cleansing him of those that were bent on denying him). However, his death (which is confirmed by the above verse) may not have been caused as a direct result of the crucifixion process. Rather, it came as a result of God ending his life very quickly by other natural causes.

Crucifixion (death) can take a very long time to complete and given all the Biblical sources which have not been used thus far in this argument, it does indeed appear that Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) died fairly quickly.

(2) PROPHET JESUS^(pbuh) WAS SAVED, MIGRATED AND LATER DIED A NATURAL DEATH

The idea of Prophet Jesus's^(pbuh) migration to places such as France (1st century Roman territory) or even the areas of Kashmir (Non Roman territory) are usually viewed as modern innovations, particular the latter which is ascribed to the Ahmadiyya movement.

It is important to remember that such an ascription to the movement is unsupportable when it is clear that research by some independent scholars and historians have reached similar conclusions who trace the genesis of such beliefs in the area far before the rise of the Ahmadiyya movement.

Some verses when read in light of the uncertainty of Prophet Jesus's^(pbuh) death may possibly be construed as an affirmation of his safe passage to other lands with mountainous backdrops and fresh rivers and springs. For example, one notes the following verse:

023:050

"And We made the son of Mary and his mother a symbol (of Our Grace). And We sheltered them (wa'awaynahuma) to an elevated resort / high ground, affording rest and security / tranquility and fresh water springs"

One notes the Arabic usage of 'awaynahuma' and the inherent verb, 'awa' denoting shelter, protection, refuge and retirement. It also can carry the nuance of 'covert' refuge.

(Mṣb;) the pronoun relating to a place of abode ;
(T, Ṣ, M, Mṣb, K;) *He betook himself to it, or repaired to it, for lodging, covert, or refuge ;*
(Mgh;) and [simply] *he got him or got himself, betook himself, repaired, or resorted, to it ;* (T, Mgh;) *he returned to it ;* (M;) *he took up his abode in it ; he lodged, or abode, or dwelt, in it.*
(Mṣb, K.) Hence, in the K̄ur [xi. 45], سَأْوِي إِلَى جَبَلٍ يَعْصِمُنِي مِنَ الْمَاءِ [I will betake myself for refuge to a mountain that shall preserve me from the water].

Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [1]

Another verse, particularly with the use of the Arabic "wakahlan" seems to indicate that Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) spoke in a relatively advanced age and that he could not have passed away in a relatively young age (circa mid 30s) as conventional thinking would lead one to believe.

One could posit the argument that 'mahdi' and 'wakahlan' denote two extreme points of Prophet Jesus's^(pbuh) life where he not only spoke as a young cradle child, but in contrast also in very advanced age (wakahlan).

005:110 (Part)

"Then will God say: "O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount My favour to you and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit, so that you did speak to the people in childhood and in maturity / old age (Arabic: wakahlan)...."

The term 'wakahlan' does seem to indicate mature age given that one's hair is expected to have become interspersed with silvery-white hair.

كَهْلٌ *Of middle age ; or between that age and the period when his hair has become intermixed with hoariness.*

Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [2]

Another phrase when recounting the favours bestowed on Prophet Jesus ^(pbuh) seems to suggest that no harm ever came to him and that he was afforded complete protection.

005:110

"...And when I restrained (Arabic: kafaftu) the Children of Israel from you when you came to them with clear proofs..."

Much literature and documentaries abound which put forth such a possibility. One such BBC documentary is shared below with the relevant parts of the videos shared first (Part 2/3 and 3/3)

Part 2/3

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69-WRf-NIOo>

Part 3/3

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsSJ6FwdaUg>

Introduction Part 1/3

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgC0fqkBNIO>

In the end, only God knows best.

Related Article:

- (1) [Understanding the Quranic term 'Salaba'](#)
- (2) [Is the Second Coming of Prophet Jesus ^{\(pbuh\)} Supported by the Quran?](#)

REFERENCES

[1] LANE. E.W, Edward Lanes Lexicon, Williams and Norgate 1863; Librairie du Liban Beirut-Lebanon 1968, Volume 1, Page 130

Highlights marked in red on the lexicon excerpt are my own insertions. They have no bearing on the original text other than they emphasise relevance to the topic at hand. These are merely illustrations and have solely been utilised for educational and explanatory purposes.

[2] Ibid., Volume 8, Supplement, Page 3004

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