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Article

# According to the Qur'an and the Gospels: The Death, Ascension, and Second Coming of Jesus (PBUH)

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## Abstract

This study examines the Qur'anic and Gospel accounts of Jesus' (ʿĪsā's) birth, life, death, and ascension, with a focus on the theological question of his supposed bodily return (*nuzūl al-Masīh*) before the Day of Resurrection. Its purpose is to determine whether the Muslim understanding of Jesus—shaped largely by narrations on the signs of the Hour—aligns with the Qur'an. Methodologically, it engages in comparative textual analysis of Gospel narratives, Qur'anic verses, classical and modern exegetical interpretations, and relevant ḥadīth reports. The paper first outlines the diverse and often contradictory Gospel accounts of the crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and ascension, noting their differences in sequence and detail. It then examines Qur'anic verses employing the terms *tawaffi* and *raf'*, assessing classical exegetical views that affirm Jesus' bodily ascension and modern interpretations that reject it, arguing instead for spiritual exaltation and death like other prophets. Special attention is paid to the reliability of *āḥād* reports on the *nuzūl*, their isnād weaknesses, and their tension with explicit Qur'anic statements about the suddenness of the Hour, the universality of death, and the finality of prophethood. The study concludes that the Qur'an contains no explicit statement supporting Jesus' bodily ascension or pre-Resurrection return; such beliefs are rooted in Christian theology and later Muslim narrations, not in definitive Qur'anic proof. Therefore, building a belief based on non-mutawātir hadith reports is not sound from the perspective of kalām methodology; rejecting the *nuzūl* view likewise cannot justly be equated with modernism or sectarian deviation.

**Keywords:** theology sects; crucifixion; tawaffa; resurrection; Ref of Jesus; Naughty Jesus

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## Introduction

The death of Jesus (ʿĪsā) and his return to earth before the Day of Judgment as one of its signs—known as the *nuzūl al-Masīh*—has been a matter of debate among scholars. Since the issue is related to how the relevant Qur'anic verses are understood, it is natural that differing opinions have emerged. The Qur'an contains no explicit statement that Jesus will descend to earth before the end of the world; however, the topic has been discussed based on hadith reports concerning the timing of the Hour and on exegetes' interpretations of related verses in light of these reports. With the rise of modern exegetical movements, the subject has once again come to the fore.

Recent studies on this topic have generally amounted to either a repetition of earlier exegetes' interpretations or a defense of their views. Rather than addressing the matter from a broad perspective, most of these works have taken the form of language- and grammar-based analyses, which have, in fact, made the issue more complex. For this reason, there is a need to present the matter in a clear and accessible manner, without being mired in overly intricate linguistic interpretations.

The discussion will first outline—briefly and concisely—how the death and ascension (*raf'*) of Jesus are presented in the Gospels, including the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, along with the points on which the Gospels agree or differ. It will then turn to the relevant Qur'anic verses and how they have been interpreted. After presenting the views of a few pre-modern exegetes on the death

and ascension of Jesus, the study will examine the interpretations of contemporary scholars who reject the notions of Jesus' bodily ascension and his descent before the Day of Judgment, focusing on how they understand the relevant verses.

Finally, the paper will briefly set out the evidence used by those who deny the bodily ascension and return of Jesus, drawing on readily accessible and widely available sources to provide representative examples. In addition to reviewing previous research, this study aims to present a concise and straightforward analysis for those interested in the topic.

The purpose of the paper is not to assess the truth or falsehood of the information about Jesus in the Gospels, but rather to determine to what extent the understanding of Jesus—shaped among Muslims under the influence of narrations concerning the signs of the Hour—aligns with the Qur'an. Accordingly, it seeks to provide clear, concise, and reliable information regarding the death, ascension, and return of Jesus.

## 1. The Name of Jesus (‘Īsā)

Muslims use the names ‘Īsā, Masīḥ, or Jesus the Messiah. According to Muslim linguists, the title *Masīḥ* is derived from the Hebrew and Syriac languages.<sup>1</sup> In Arabic, *Masīḥ*—derived from the verb meaning “to touch” or “to anoint by hand”—refers to a person anointed with oil to become a king or prophet. Such an act of consecration is a tradition found among Jews and Christians.<sup>2</sup> In terminology, it denotes “a person anointed with oil for a religious mission” and “one chosen by God to be entrusted with a specific task.”<sup>3</sup> In Western languages, the term *Christ* corresponds to *Masīḥ* (Messiah).<sup>4</sup> The title *Masīḥ* is an epithet of Jesus (‘Īsā). In the Gospels, other titles used for Jesus include *Messiah*, *Lord*, *Son of God*, *Son of Man*,<sup>5</sup> and *Yesu* (Jesus).

In most non-divine religions, there exists a belief in a future savior or *messiah*. In the prophetic tradition, every prophet would give glad tidings of the prophet who was to come after him. The term *messiah* was used for the coming prophet in the sense that he would both teach people their faith and guide them on the right path.<sup>6</sup> The Jews believed in the coming of a kingly messiah who would deliver them from oppression.<sup>7</sup> In the Qur'an, God states: “After I have given you the Book and wisdom, should a messenger come to you confirming what is with you, you shall surely believe in him and support him,”<sup>8</sup> thus taking a covenant from every prophet.

‘Imrān (peace be upon him) gave the glad tidings of a messiah who would come after him from his own lineage. For this reason, the wife of ‘Imrān vowed to dedicate the child she would bear to the service of the Temple for the sake of God.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Almaany Team, *Kāmūs ve mu'cemü'l-meânî müte'addidü'l-lugât ve'l-mecâlât* (Erişim 27 Temmuz 2024), “Īsâ”.

<sup>2</sup> Team, “المسيح”.

<sup>3</sup> Bekir Topaloğlu - İlyas Çelebi, *Kelâm Terimleri Sözlüğü*, İsam Yayınları Başvuru Eserleri Dizisi 646 (İstanbul: İsam Yayınları, 2015), “Mesih”, 213.

<sup>4</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Dinler tarihine giriş* (İstanbul: Kırkambar Yayınları, 1999), 308.

<sup>5</sup> Ömer Faruk Harman, “ĪSÂ”, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (TDV Yayınları, 2020), 22/465.

<sup>6</sup> Mehmet Aydın, “Faraklit”, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (TDV Yayınları, 1995), 12/165.

<sup>7</sup> Schimmel, *Dinler tarihine giriş*, 308.

<sup>8</sup> *Kur'ân-ı Kerîm Meâli* 3, çev. Halil Altuntaş - Muzaffer Şahin (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2009), Âli İmran 3/81.

<sup>9</sup> Bayraktar Bayraklı, “Hz. İsa geri gelecek mi?”, youtube, *bayraktarbayrakli.com* (09 Ocak 1998).

## 2. The Life of Jesus (‘Īsā)

There is a disagreeing series of dates as to when Jesus (‘Īsā) was born. Others give it at the close of 5 B.C.: others at Dec. 25: others at the commencement of 5 B.C., on Jan. 6. In the Quran, when Mary (Maryam) gave birth to Jesus ( 5 Large ogonek 8 Small ogonek 12 Primes (Primesavas) 14 Small letter H (Chriatiskaia ) 16 Strokes in (Storts in (D 3 Sentienti (TURN 9 Withdrawn (Withdrawn ), 10 Returned (RETURN edotacii 16 Primes (Primesavas) 18 Strokes in (Storts Dates are ripe in Palestine in September and October; thus perhaps Jesus (Jesus ‘Īsā) was born in September or October <sup>12</sup>.

Only few facts are available regarding the childhood and youth of Jesus ( 2/ 2 westward to the land of Ilias (Maydays) in the land of Fieri (Fatudays) in the land of Ilias (Maydays) in the land of Fieri (Fatudays)<sup>13</sup>. This can be due to the fact that in Christianity, emphasis has been given more on occurrences like that of following Jesus, his crucifixion, death, his resurrection and according to them, his ascension to God than on his earthly life. It is mainly these events above that are emphasized in the canonical Gospels.

Mary (Maryam) chose to seclude herself within her house to a spot in the east where she hung a screen in between her and the crowd. In the Gospel of Luke Mary was told by the angel Gabriel that she will have a son, and his name will be Jesus (‘Īsā). As Mary wondered, she asked, how is this possible, because I am not married. Angel answered, The holy spirit will fall on you and the power of the most high will cover you so, therefore he that shall be born shall be called the Son of God<sup>14</sup>.

Even in the Quran the report of the angel appearing and giving the good news to Mary (Maryam) about Jesus ( 1s2), and the manner of Mary (Maryam) to these news is similar to the scene firegiven in the Gospel of Luke<sup>15</sup>. Towards the time of her birth, Mary (Maryam) retired to some lonely spot, and sat under a palm tree. Being shocked in seeing a child born and not being married, a call was made to her by God warning not to grieve and inform her that in case anybody of the people happened to see her, she should reply to them that she had taken a vow of fasting to the Most Merciful and therefore that day she would not speak to anyone of the human beings. Mary then (Maryam) went back to her people, taking the child with her; and they cried out, and said, O sister of Aaron! Your father was no devil, neither was your mother straying<sup>16</sup>." Then Mary turned to the child, and gestured that they were to talk to him. On the popular outcry of, How can we harken to an infant in the cradle? Jesus (‘Īsā) said: I am the servant of God; He has sent me the Book and He has sent me a prophet. Whichever state I be in, He has blessed me, and He hath enjoined upon me prayer and almsgiving and the honouring of my mother as long as I live<sup>18</sup>."

The people who had spoken defamatory and abusive speeches against Mary (Maryam) became disceded and sectarian- just as those affected with Satan- when they heard the words which Jesus ( 5 9 9 o o e m a e d a t c o m p l 1 6 s n n o o 9 9 9 o o e n a t n u m 1 6 d o o c t m i p d i d o n t , t i t l e n n u m 1 6 a t d o o c t m i p m d n n u m 1 6 s n n o o 9 Notwithstanding the fact that we have an account of his birth the Quran does not tell of his life until during the prophetic life. Jesus was taken to the Temple by his Mother on the eighth day of his life when he was circumcised<sup>19</sup>. This was followed by the incident in which Jesus (‘Īsā) was taken to the Temple after which he delivered sermons at the age of twelve. Other than these stories, there is nothing said of his early life.

The Qur’an refers to Jesus (peace be upon him) with titles such as “Jesus, son of Mary,” “a righteous servant of Allah”, <sup>10</sup> “the Messenger of Allah,” <sup>11</sup> “the Messiah”,<sup>12</sup> and “the divinely sent Prophet.” <sup>13</sup> According to Christian belief, Jesus is the incarnate Word of God and, therefore, divine. God’s uncreated and eternal message took on flesh and lived among people as Jesus.<sup>14</sup> In the Qur’an,

<sup>10</sup> el-En’am 6/85.

<sup>11</sup> en-Nisâ 4/171; es-Saff 61/6.

<sup>12</sup> en-Nisâ 4/171

<sup>13</sup> el-Bakara 2/136.

<sup>14</sup> Harman, “ĪSĀ”, 22/466.

Jesus the Messiah is a created servant like the other prophets. He is neither a deity nor the Son of God.<sup>15</sup>

Both the Qur'an and the Gospels, when speaking of the mission of Jesus (PBUH), mention many of his miracles, such as healing the sick by God's permission, shaping a bird from clay and breathing into it so that it came to life, and the descent of a table spread from heaven.<sup>16</sup> The Gospels present the mission of Jesus (PBUH) as centered on miracles. The Qur'an states that Jesus is a "Word"<sup>17</sup> from God and "a Spirit"<sup>18</sup> from Him, that he is one of His prophets,<sup>19</sup> that he was strengthened by the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> and that he gave glad tidings of the coming of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).<sup>21</sup>

### 3. Hz. İsa'nın Ölümü

The chronology of the life of Jesus (İsā) is as follows: late 6 BCE or early 5 BCE – birth of Jesus; 27 CE – John the Baptist (Yaḥyā) begins his ministry; winter of 28 CE – baptism of Jesus; April 28 CE – participation in the Passover festival in Jerusalem; April 6, 30 CE – the Last Supper; April 7, 30 CE – death of Jesus; April 9, 30 CE – resurrection of Jesus.<sup>22</sup>

Accordingly, Jesus (PBUH) passed away at the age of 35 or 36, based on information provided by Christian sources. The Qur'an relates it as follows: "I supported you with the Holy Spirit, so you spoke to people both in the cradle and in maturity."<sup>23</sup>

The word "kehlā" in the verse, meaning "in maturity," refers to a man who is in the prime of his life and, in its linguistic usage, often denotes a married man.<sup>24</sup> This expression also brings to mind the possibility that Jesus (PBUH) may have been married; however, the Gospels make no mention of whether he married or not. The issue was brought into public discussion through Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code*, but the Vatican Church reacted strongly against this claim.<sup>25</sup>

#### 3.1. İncillere Göre Hz. İsa'nın Çarmıha Gerilmesi ve Ölümü

Prophetic mission of Jesus (PBUH) started with the baptism of the Jesus by John the Baptist (PBUH). His ministry is reckoned to have taken a duration of approximately three years. During his preaching and proclamation of the Gospel he said that the Spirit of the Lord (Holy Spirit) was upon him and that Kingdom of God was at hand. The Gospels indicate that the Scribes and the Pharisees were enraged by the miracle work by Jesus (PBUH) as well as his preaching. Incited by the Jews, Herod became the strong opponent of Jesus (PBUH). At this time, Jesus had his disciples on several missions to preach Gospel in other parts.

John recounts that as Jesus (PBUH) was on his way around in Judea and Perea in the surroundings of Jerusalem, he resurrected a man after he died four days earlier named Lazarus<sup>39</sup>. This incidence increased further the indignation of the Jewish religious leaders against him. Summoned by the high priest on his own motion, the Sanhedrin found the actions of Jesus threatening and started devising ways of killing him<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> et-Tevbe 9/30-31.

<sup>16</sup> el-Maide 5/110, 114.

<sup>17</sup> Âl-i İmrân 3/39, 45; en-Nisâ 4/171.

<sup>18</sup> en-Nisâ 4/171.

<sup>19</sup> en-Nisâ 4/157, 171; el-Mâide 5/75; es-Saf 61/6.

<sup>20</sup> el-Bakara 2/87, 253; el-Mâide 5/110.

<sup>21</sup> es-Saf 61/6; Yuhanna 14:16; 15:26; 16:7.

<sup>22</sup> Harman, "İSÂ", 22/467.

<sup>23</sup> El-Maide 5/110.

<sup>24</sup> Team, "Kehlâ".

<sup>25</sup> "Hz. İsa evli miydi? - Son Dakika Dünya Haberleri", *CNN TÜRK* (20 Eylül 2012); "Hz. İsa evliydi ve iki çocuğu vardı", *Posta* (25 Nisan 2018).

Jesus (PBUH) said that he was the Messiah in his preaching. Judas, one of his twelve disciples betrayed him treacherously as the Gospels say, and offered to sell him out to his enemies<sup>42</sup>. In the near future Jesus (PBUH) was taken to the Sanhedrin and placed on trial on charges of a crime whose aspects could not be discovered in his deeds. But when he went on to state that he was the Messiah, the Jews charged that he was deceiving the population, denying tribute to the state, and would be the Messiah king. They thus got Roman governor, Pontius Pilate to have him executed. Inquiries were privately made by the governor but he found the charges to be no political menace. But to escape falling out with the people he sent him to the governor of the region, Herod. Jesus (PBUH) was then referred back to Pilate, who in deference to the wishes of the Jews, gave orders to execute him. Jesus(PBUH) was crucified by the Jews in a site that was known as Golgotha<sup>45</sup>.

The Gospels shed light on the fact that Jesus (PBUH) was crucified on a Friday before noon together with two common criminals<sup>46</sup>. Jesus in the Gospel of Mark says in a loud voice, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? My God My God why hast Thou forsaken me? In Luke, on the cross, he utters in a loud voice the words, Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit, and then breathing out, he gave up his spirit<sup>48</sup>. The bodies were removed from the cross at three o'clock the same day since it was the Sabbath on the next day. Jesus (PBUH) was taken by a man bearing the name of Joseph of Arimathea who placed his body in a tomb that he had carved out of a rock.

### 3.1.2. The Resurrection of Jesus (PBUH) According to the Gospels

All four canonical Gospels agree that Jesus (PBUH) was crucified on a Friday, died on the cross at three o'clock in the afternoon, and was taken down the same day. However, they differ on many details—such as to whom he appeared at the tomb after his resurrection and how many days he remained on earth afterward. Here, without addressing all of these discrepancies, only the differing accounts concerning his resurrection after being placed in the tomb and his ascension to the heavens will be considered.

#### *The Resurrection of Jesus (PBUH) According to Matthew*

Two days after the burial of Jesus (PBUH), on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to visit the tomb at dawn. Suddenly, there was a great earthquake; an angel descended from heaven, rolled back the stone from the tomb's entrance, and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow. The guards, terrified of him, fainted. As the women hurried away to tell the disciples, Jesus suddenly appeared before them and greeted them. They fell at his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."<sup>26</sup>

#### *The Resurrection of Jesus (PBUH) According to Markos*

On the day after the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went to the tomb early in the morning at sunrise. As they were talking among themselves about who would roll away the stone for them, they suddenly saw that the stone had been rolled to the side. When they entered the tomb and saw a young man sitting inside, they were astonished. The man said to them, "Do not be amazed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. Look, here is the place where they laid him. Now go and tell his disciples that Jesus is going ahead of you into Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you."<sup>27</sup>

#### *The Resurrection of Jesus (PBUH) According to Luke*

On the first day of the week, the women went to the tomb. They saw that the stone had been rolled away and that no one was inside. While they were astonished at this, suddenly two men in shining white garments appeared. The two men said to the women, "Why do you look for the living

<sup>26</sup> Matta 28:1-10.

<sup>27</sup> Markos 16:7.

among the dead?"<sup>28</sup> and told them that Jesus (PBUH) was not there. Among the women who went to the tomb were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women as well.<sup>29</sup>

*The Resurrection of Jesus (PBUH) According to Yuhanna*

On the first day of the week, early in the morning, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been removed from its entrance, and she ran to Simon Peter, telling him that the Lord had been taken from the tomb. Peter and another disciple then ran together to the place where Jesus' (PBUH) tomb was. They saw that his body was not there and that the linen cloths were lying on the ground.<sup>30</sup>

The Gospels present differing accounts of what Jesus (PBUH) said during the crucifixion and of the resurrection event. The Gospel of Mark records him as saying on the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" while the Gospel of Luke quotes him as saying, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit."

The accounts of those who went to the tomb are also told in very different and sometimes contradictory ways. The Gospel of Matthew states that at dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to visit the tomb, when suddenly there was a great earthquake, and an angel descended from heaven and rolled away the stone from the entrance. The Gospel of Mark, on the other hand, says that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went to the tomb at sunrise, saw that it was already open, and found a young man dressed in white sitting inside.

Meanwhile, the Gospel of Luke relates that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and other women went to the tomb early on the first day of the week, saw that the stone had been rolled away, and that the tomb was empty. As they were astonished and returning, they suddenly encountered two men in shining white garments, who told them where Jesus (PBUH) was.

The Gospel of John states that on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early in the morning, saw that the stone had been removed, and, finding no one inside, ran to tell Peter what had happened. Thus, one account mentions an earthquake, another speaks of the tomb being open with a young man inside but makes no mention of an earthquake, another describes women meeting two men in white after leaving the tomb, and yet another says only that Mary Magdalene went, saw the stone removed, and ran to report it to Peter.

The Synoptic Gospels state that two days after the crucifixion, Jesus (PBUH) rose again, met with his disciples, and then ascended to the heavens to be with God.<sup>31</sup> Matthew records this ascension with the words, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Mark and Luke simply state, "He was taken up into heaven." In the Gospel of John, after remaining among his disciples for eight days, his ascension is expressed with the words, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."<sup>32</sup>

Here, a brief comparison has been made to show that the accounts in the Gospels regarding the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus (PBUH) are not consistent with one another. Discussing the authenticity of the Gospels is not the subject of this article; the resurrection is a Christian belief, and the question of its truth or falsehood is a matter that concerns them.

The Synoptic Gospels state that before the return of Jesus (PBUH) to the earth, there will be wars; after famine, disasters, and great tribulations, false saviors will appear. Following those days, "the sun will be darkened, the moon will no longer give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky..."<sup>33</sup> After all these events, the Son of Man (Jesus) will come<sup>34</sup> and bring an end to the reign of the Antichrist.

<sup>28</sup> Luka 24:5.

<sup>29</sup> Luka 24:1-12.

<sup>30</sup> Yuhanna 20:1-18.

<sup>31</sup> Luka 24:50-53; Markos 16:19-20; Matta 28:16-20.

<sup>32</sup> Luka 24:50-53; Markos 16:19-20; Matta 28:16-20.

<sup>33</sup> Matta 24:29; Markos 13:24-25.

<sup>34</sup> Matta 24:4-30; Markos 13:24-31; Luka 17:23-24; 21:8-36.

According to the Gospels, neither the angels, nor Jesus (PBUH), nor anyone else can know the time of his coming. That time is known only by God (the Father).<sup>35</sup> The depictions of the return of Jesus (PBUH) resemble the scenes of the Day of Resurrection described in the Qur'an.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the Qur'an states that the time of the occurrence of the Day of Resurrection is known only by Allah, and that no one else possesses this knowledge.<sup>37</sup> What is related in the Gospels concerning the time of Jesus' (PBUH) return indicates that he will come not before the Day of Resurrection, but after it has taken place.

**Table 1.** Comparative Analysis of the Resurrection Narratives in the Four Canonical Gospels.

Aspect	Gospel of Matthew	Gospel of Mark	Gospel of Luke	Gospel of John
Who visits the tomb?	Mary Magdalene & "the other Mary"	Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James, and Salome	Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary mother of James, "and the others with them"	Mary Magdalene (initially alone)
Time of visit	At dawn	Very early, at sunrise	Very early in the morning	Early, while it was still dark
Status of the stone	Angel descends, causes earthquake, rolls stone back	They see the stone	Status of the stone	Angel descends, causes earthquake, rolls stone back
Figure(s) at the tomb	One angel (sitting on the stone outside)	One young man (inside, dressed in white)	Two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning	Two angels (after Peter & John leave, sitting where Jesus had lain)
Key Message	"He has risen... go to Galilee; there you will see him."	"He has risen!... He is going ahead of you into Galilee."	"Why do you look for the living among the dead?"	"Woman, why are you crying?... Who is it you are looking for?" (Asked by Jesus himself)
First Appearance	Jesus meets the women on their way back from the tomb	(The 'Longer Ending' adds appearances, but the original text ends at 16:8)	Jesus appears to two disciples on the road to Emmaus	Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene at the tomb

#### 4. The Death of Jesus (PBUH) and His Return to Earth According to Islam

The death of Jesus (PBUH) and his descent to earth before the Day of Resurrection as one of its signs—known as the *nuzūl ʾĪsā*—have been discussed in both Sunni and Shīʿī sources. Did Jesus die? When Allah says that He "took him up" to Himself, was he raised to the Divine Presence with both soul and body? Will he descend again to earth as a sign of the Last Hour? Is the *nuzūl ʾĪsā* possible according to the Qur'an? On the matters of Jesus' death, ascension, and return, various opinions have emerged among Muslims, which can generally be divided into two groups.

The first view holds that Jesus was taken up by Allah, soul and body together, into the Divine Presence. Those who hold this position interpret the relevant verses in the light of hadith reports, maintaining that Jesus is currently alive with both soul and body in the presence of Allah, and that he will descend again to earth before the Day of Resurrection. Ahl al-Sunnah theologians, the Salafiyah, and the Shīʿa share this view.<sup>38</sup> Abd al-Laṭīf al-Harputī (1842–1916) states that the

<sup>35</sup> Markos 13: 32; Matta 24:36.

<sup>36</sup> Ebu Muhammed Ali b. Ahmed İbn Hazm, *el-Fasl fi'l-mileli ve'l-ehvâi ve'n-nihal*, thk. Aburrhman Umeyra Muhammed İbrahim Nasr (Beyrut: Dâru'l-Cil, 1996), 2/ 129-132 arası sayfalara bakabilirsiniz.

<sup>37</sup> Ta Ha 20/15; el-A'raf 7/187.

<sup>38</sup> Ebû'l-Hasan Eşârî, *İlk dönem İslam mezhepleri*, çev. Mehmet Dalkılıç - Ömer Aydın (İstanbul: Kabcacı Yayınevi, 2005), 240; Mas'ūd İbn Ömer et-Taftazanî, *Kelâm İlmi ve İslam Akâidi- Şerhu'l-akâid*, çev. Süleyman Uludağ (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1991), 360; Abdullatif el-Harputî, *Tenkîhu'l kelâm fi akâid-i*

ascension and descent of Jesus (PBUH) are certain, and that the disagreement lies only in the manner in which these events took place.<sup>39</sup>

The second view holds that when Jesus (PBUH) was about to be killed by his enemies, Allah saved him from their hands and caused him to die a natural death, raising him to Himself in spirit. Proponents of this view argue that the Qur'an contains no statement indicating that Jesus will return to earth, that the *nuzūl ʿĪsā* is a Christian belief, and that the verses in the Qur'an associated with the descent have been misinterpreted.

According to the Qur'an, how did the death of Jesus occur? First, we will examine how the relevant verses have been understood, and then present, in turn, the evidences of the scholars who believe he died and those who believe he did not.

**Table 2.** Summary of the Two Primary Theological Positions on Jesus's (PBUH) Death and Return.

Aspect	Position A: Bodily Preservation & Corporeal Return	Position B: Completion of Mission & Spiritual Exaltation
<b>Core Thesis</b>	God miraculously intervened to suspend death for Jesus, raising him bodily to a state of suspension. He will return physically to complete a specific eschatological role before tasting death.	God fulfilled His promise to Jesus by granting him a natural death, saving him from his enemies. His exaltation was spiritual, and his prophethood concluded within his own time.
<b>Status of Jesus (PBUH)</b>	Alive in a bodily form within a metaphysical realm (e.g., the "second heaven" or a state of <i>barzakh</i> ).	Deceased, like all other prophets. His soul is exalted with God, awaiting resurrection.
<b>Interpretation of Tawaffī (توفية)</b>	<b>Lexical:</b> To take in full, to receive completely. <b>Technical:</b> God <i>took</i> him—soul and body—without the event of biological death occurring. Often interpreted as a type of "sleep" ( <i>wafāt al-nawm</i> ).	<b>Lexical:</b> To complete, to take the full measure of something (i.e., a lifespan). <b>Technical:</b> To cause to die. The term is used in its primary Qur'anic sense of physical death (e.g., 39:42). The past-tense verb in 5:117 is decisive.
<b>Interpretation of Rafʿ (رفع)</b>	<b>Literal-Spatial:</b> A physical ascension from earth to heaven. A miraculous event altering the laws of nature.	<b>Metaphorical-Honorific:</b> An elevation in rank, status, and proximity to God. Analogous to the raising of Idris (19:57) or the station of martyrs (3:169). Denies a physical journey.
<b>Hermeneutical Priority</b>	<b>Harmonization:</b> Qur'anic verses are interpreted in light of the <i>āḥād</i> hadith tradition on the <i>Nuzūl</i> . The hadith provide the decisive context ( <i>asbāb al-nuzūl</i> ) for the verses.	<b>Qur'anic Primacy:</b> The apparent ( <i>ẓāhir</i> ) and consistent meaning of the Qur'an is established first. <i>Āḥād</i> reports that contradict these established principles are critically re-evaluated or rejected.
<b>View on Eschatological Descent (Nuzūl)</b>	A foundational article of faith. A literal, bodily return to kill the Dajjāl, break the cross, and establish justice under Islamic law.	A belief rooted in Judeo-Christian apocalypticism and non-definitive ( <i>ẓannī</i> ) narrations. It is theologically problematic and unsupported by the Qur'an's definitive teachings.
<b>Key Theological Challenges Addressed</b>	<b>Problem:</b> How to reconcile with the universality of death? <b>Response:</b> It is a specific divine exception, like the sleep of the Companions of the Cave.	<b>Problem:</b> How to reconcile with the finality of prophethood? <b>Response:</b> A return would either break the seal of prophethood or necessitate the demotion of a prophet, both untenable.
<b>Proponents</b>	The majority classical ( <i>jumhūr</i> ) position of Ahl al-Sunnah, Salafiyyah, and Shī'a scholarship.	Classical outliers (e.g., some Mu'tazila), Modern Reformists (e.g., Rashīd Riḍā,

*ehli'l Islām: Kelâmî perspektiften Islâm inanç esasları*, çev. İbrahim Özdemir - Fikret Karaman (Elazığ: Türk Diyanet Vakfı Elazığ Şubesi Yayınları, 2000), 290.

<sup>39</sup> Harputî, *Tenkîhu'l kelâm fî akâid-i ehli'l Islâm*, 290.

#### 4.1. The Crucifixion and Ascension of Jesus (PBUH) According to the Qur'an

The Qur'an does not mention the trial of Jesus (PBUH) before the court, but it rejects the claim of his crucifixion: "They said, 'We killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah.' But they neither killed him nor crucified him — though it was made to appear so to them. Those who differ about him are in doubt, having no (true) knowledge, following nothing but conjecture. Certainly, they did not kill him. Rather, Allah raised him up to Himself."<sup>40</sup>

Allah explicitly declares that the statement, "We killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary," is false. The phrase in the verse, "shubbiha lahum" (شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ), means "it was made to appear so to them," "it was made to resemble," or "it was likened," carrying the sense of something being shown in a way that caused them to think it was so.<sup>41</sup> The Gospel of Barnabas states that Jesus (PBUH) was not crucified; rather, it was Judas, the traitor, who closely resembled him, that was crucified in his place. Barnabas goes into considerable detail describing how Judas came to look like Jesus and how he was crucified instead of him.<sup>42</sup> Imam al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944)<sup>43</sup> and Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) likewise relate that the person who was crucified was not Jesus (PBUH), but rather someone who was made to resemble him.<sup>44</sup>

The phrase in the verse, "Those who differ concerning him are in doubt about it," indicates that the People of the Book were divided in their views regarding Jesus (PBUH). The Jews believed that they had killed him on the cross. Some Christians held that the one crucified was not Jesus, but a man who resembled him. Indeed, the Gospel of John states that Jesus carried the cross himself,<sup>45</sup> whereas the other Gospels say it was carried by a man named Simon of Cyrene, who resembled Jesus.<sup>46</sup>

According to another view, it was Jesus who was crucified; however, He did not die on the cross and was still alive when taken down. Another view holds that Jesus died on the cross, was later resurrected, and, after meeting with His disciples on multiple occasions, was taken up into heaven. Christian sources are not in agreement on this matter.<sup>47</sup>

The Qur'ānic expression "bal rafa'ahu Allāhu ilayhi" ("rather, Allah raised him up to Himself") has been interpreted in different ways. Some have held that Allah raised Jesus to Himself both in body and soul, while others have argued that this "raising" occurred spiritually — that is, his soul was taken, as in the case of other prophets — and that no bodily ascension took place. The discussion will now proceed as follows: first, the views of the exegetes who affirm the ascension of Jesus in both body and soul and who assert that he will descend as one of the signs of the Hour will be presented; thereafter, the Qur'ānic evidences cited by those who deny both the bodily ascension and the second coming will be examined.

<sup>40</sup> en-Nisa 4/157-158.

<sup>41</sup> Team, "شُبِّهَ".

<sup>42</sup> Barnabas, *Barnabas incili*, ts., 242.

<sup>43</sup> Ebû Mansur Muhammed b. Muhammed el-Mattūrîdî, *Te'vilâtü'l-Kur'an*, thk. Bekir-Muhammed Topaloğlu-Boynukalın (İstanbul: Darü'l-mizan, 2005), 4/101.

<sup>44</sup> Ebu'l-Fida İsmail bin Omer İbn Kesîr, *Tefsirü'l-Kur'ani'l-Azîm*, thk. Dr. Muhammed İbrahim el-Benna vd. (İstanbul: Kahraman, 1984), 2/449.

<sup>45</sup> Yuhanna 19:17.

<sup>46</sup> Matta 27:32.

<sup>47</sup> Ebu'l-A'lâ el-Mevdudî, *Tefhimü'l-Kur'an: Kur'an'ın Anlamı ve Tefsiri* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1991), 1/429.

#### 4.1.2. The Death and Ascension of Jesus According to the Exegetes

In the Qur'ān, following the foiling of the plot by the Jews who disbelieved in Jesus and sought to ensnare him, Allah promises Jesus: *"I will cause you to die, and raise you up to Myself; I will purify you from those who disbelieve, and they will not harm you."* In the verse from Sūrat al-Nisā, <sup>48</sup> it is stated that those who claimed, *"We killed the Messiah, Jesus,"* were lying, and that he was neither crucified nor killed. Allah declares that the person they claimed to have killed was someone made to resemble Jesus, who was seized and crucified in his place, while Jesus himself was raised up to Allah's presence.

How did Allah raise Jesus to Himself? How has this matter been understood? First, regarding the view that Jesus was raised to Allah's presence both in body and soul — not in the sense of death, but in the sense of being taken up — the following will present the approaches of some exegetes who hold this interpretation concerning the relevant verse:

Allah the Exalted said: *"O Jesus! I will cause you to die, raise you up to Myself, purify you from those who disbelieve, and place those who follow you above those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection."*<sup>49</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) states that the phrase *"innī mutawaffika"* (I will cause you to die) in the verse has been interpreted in various ways, some have understood it as *"death in the sense of sleep,"*<sup>50</sup> others as *"taking him alive into Allah's presence,"*<sup>51</sup> and yet others as *"causing him to die in the world before the actual event of death takes place."*<sup>52</sup> Some have also considered there to be *taqdīm* and *ta'khīr* (inversion) in the expression *"innī mutawaffika wa rāfi'uka ilayya"*, rendering its meaning as *"I will raise you up to Myself and, after bringing you back (to the world), I will cause you to die."*<sup>53</sup> Ibn 'Abbās interpreted *"innī mutawaffika"* as *"innī mumītuka"* — *"I will cause you to die."*<sup>54</sup>

After presenting these interpretations, al-Ṭabarī concludes that, due to the *tawātur* (mass-transmission) of the reports narrated from the Prophet, the soundest view is that *"I will take you from this world and raise you up to My presence."* Based on the Prophetic reports — such as, *"Jesus, son of Mary, will descend to the earth, kill the Dajjāl, then live for a certain period before dying, and the Muslims will perform his funeral prayer"*<sup>55</sup> — al-Ṭabarī maintains that Allah raised Jesus to Himself both in body and soul.<sup>56</sup>

Regarding death, al-Ṭabarī states that it is known that if Allah causes Jesus to die, it is not possible for him to die another death (i.e., to die twice), for Allah has declared that He creates His servants, causes them to die, and then resurrects them on the Day of Resurrection: *"It is Allah who created you, then provided for you, then will cause your life to end, and finally will give you life again..."*<sup>57</sup>

Accordingly, the meaning of the verse would be: *"O Jesus, I will take your soul while on earth, purify you from those who deny your prophethood, and raise you up to My presence."*<sup>58</sup> From al-Ṭabarī's statements, it is understood that Jesus has not yet died; rather, he will descend near the end of time,

<sup>48</sup> en-Nisa 4/157-158.

<sup>49</sup> Āli Īmran 3/54.

<sup>50</sup> Ebû Cafer Muhammed b. Cerir et-Taberī, *Câmi'ü'l-beyan an âyî Kur'an*, thk. Abdullah b. Abdülmuhsin et-Türkî (Kahire: Darü Heçr, 2001), 5/448.

<sup>51</sup> Taberī, *Taberī Tefsiri*, 5/448.

<sup>52</sup> Taberī, *Taberī Tefsiri*, 5/450.

<sup>53</sup> Taberī, *Taberī Tefsiri*, 5/451.

<sup>54</sup> Taberī, *Taberī Tefsiri*, 5/450; Fahreddin Muhammed er-Râzî, *Mefatihü'l-ğayb* (Beyrut: Darü'l-Fikr, 1981), 4/282.

<sup>55</sup> eş-Şeyh Mansur Alî Nâsif, *et-Tac el-Cami' lil-üsûl fi ehâdisi'r-Rasul* (Beyrut: Darü'l-fikr, 1997), 5/358.

<sup>56</sup> Taberī, *Taberī Tefsiri*, 5/451.

<sup>57</sup> Er-Rum 30/40.

<sup>58</sup> Taberī, *Taberī Tefsiri*, 5/452.

kill the Dajjāl, live for a certain period, and then die. Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373)<sup>59</sup> and Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī (d. 745/1344)<sup>60</sup> likewise stated that the *tawaffī* mentioned here does not refer to death in the ordinary sense.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), by interpreting the phrase "innī mutawaffika" in connection with the expression "falammā tawaffaytanī" in Sūrat al-Mā'idah, stated that the verse could bear various meanings, such as: "I will complete your lifespan and then cause you to die," "I will cause you to die (in the sense of physical death)," "When Allah took him up to the heavens, He caused him to die," and "According to the reports transmitted from the Prophet, he is alive, and one day he will descend to the earth, kill the Dajjāl, and then die a natural death."<sup>61</sup> Rāzī, in line with the last view mentioned, holds the opinion that Jesus (ʿĪsā, peace be upon him) was taken up to God with both body and soul and that, when the appointed time comes, he will descend to the earth and thereafter die.

Al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), citing as evidence for the phrase "mutawaffika" the verse in Sūrat al-Zumar, "wa-llatī lam tamut fī manāmiḥā" "He takes the souls of those who have not died during their sleep."<sup>62</sup> interpreted it as referring to death in the sense of sleep. Accordingly, he explained that Jesus was put to sleep when he was taken up to the heavens, and that when the time comes for him to descend from the heavens, he will be awakened, live on earth for a certain period, and then be caused to die.<sup>63</sup>

Imām al-Māturīdī, however, interprets the expression "mutawaffika" not on the basis of related reports but by considering the meaning assigned to the term by the Qur'an itself. He states that the phrase "mutawaffika" denotes death in the sense of the taking of the soul, just as it occurs for all other human beings. This, he explains, serves as a rebuttal and a denial of those who regard Jesus (ʿĪsā, peace be upon him) as a deity or the son of God and who deem his death impossible.<sup>64</sup> The second possibility is that, in saying "innī mutawaffika" ("Indeed, I will take your soul"), Allah Himself declares that He will seize the soul of Jesus (ʿĪsā, peace be upon him) while he is among his enemies, and will honor him by drawing him to Himself and purifying him from the disbelievers. The expression "wa-rāfi'uka ilayya" is for the purpose of exaltation and honor, not to indicate a place, as claimed by the *Mushabbihah*.<sup>65</sup> Here, Allah uses the term *rafa'a* to convey exaltation and honor. There are examples of this usage in the Qur'an, such as in the words of Prophet Abraham (Ibrāhīm, peace be upon him): "Indeed, I am going to my Lord; He will guide me."<sup>66</sup> This means, "I will go to a place over which none but Allah has authority." Al-Māturīdī does not state that Jesus (ʿĪsā, peace be upon him) was taken up to God with both body and soul.

Until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the great majority of our exegetes sought to interpret the expression "**innī mutawaffika**" in light of the relevant ḥadīths, as indicated by al-Ṭabarī and al-Rāzī. Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır also explained it in line with the interpretation set forth by al-Ṭabarī and al-Rāzī.<sup>67</sup> There are numerous reports concerning the descent of Jesus (ʿĪsā, peace be upon him). One of the most well-known is the narration of Abū Hurayrah: "The Hour will not be established until the son of Mary, Jesus, descends as a judge, a dispenser of justice, and a just leader. He will break the

<sup>59</sup> İbn Kesîr, *Tefsîrû'l-Kur'ani'l-Azîm*, 2/449.

<sup>60</sup> Ebû'l-hayyân el-Endülüsî, *en-Nehrû'l-mâd mine'l-bahri'l-muhîṭ*, thk. Ömer el-Es'ad (Beirut: Darü'l-cîyl, 1995), 2/344.

<sup>61</sup> Râzî, *Mefatihü'l-ğayb*, 4/281.

<sup>62</sup> ez-Zümer 39/42.

<sup>63</sup> Ebû'l-Kâsım Mahmut b. Ömer ez-Zemahşerî, *Tefsîrû'l-keşşâf* (Riyad: Darü'l-akide, 1994), 1/562.

<sup>64</sup> Matürîdî, *Te'vilâtü'l-Kur'an*, 2/315.

<sup>65</sup> Matürîdî, *Te'vilâtü'l-Kur'an*, 2/316.

<sup>66</sup> Es-Saffât 37/99.

<sup>67</sup> Muhammed Hamdi Elmalılı Yazır, *Hak Dili Kur'an Dili* (İstanbul: Eser, 1979), 2/272; Daha geniş bilgi için Harputî, *Tenkîhu'l kelâm fî akâid-i ehli'l İslâm* eserinin s.290 vd. bakılabilir.

cross, kill the pig, and abolish the jizyah; and when he descends, wealth will become so abundant that no one will be in need of it.”<sup>68</sup>

Various reports state that Jesus (‘Īsā, peace be upon him) will descend before the Day of Resurrection as one of its signs. After the appearance of the Dajjāl, Jesus will descend at dawn from the white minaret in Damascus, establish justice, break the cross, kill the pig, abolish the jizyah, and perform the pilgrimage. His breath will kill the disbelievers, and after slaying the Dajjāl, he will live for seven, twenty-four, or forty years. Like all other Muslims, he will die when a wind blows from the direction of Damascus.<sup>69</sup> However, most of these reports are in conflict with one another.

There have also been those who maintained that Jesus (‘Īsā, peace be upon him) was not crucified, that the one who was crucified was someone made to resemble him, and that Allah Most High caused him to die in order to protect him from the harm of the disbelievers and then drew him to Himself. They argue that there is no evidence in the Qur’an for his return to earth before the Day of Resurrection; on the contrary, they hold that he died like all other human beings and will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment along with the rest of mankind. Among those who supported this view was Rashīd Riḍā (1865–1935), a student of Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849–1905) and the author of *Tafsīr al-Manār*. Shaykh Maḥmūd Shaltūt, the Shaykh of al-Azhar, whose fatwā in the present century brought the issue of Jesus’ descent back into discussion, was also among the scholars who rejected the belief in his return. The following section will present the approaches of those who hold this view toward the relevant Qur’anic verses.

Rashīd Riḍā states that the expression "إني متوفيك" is a promise of delivering Jesus (‘Īsā, peace be upon him) from the plots of the Jews, and that this promise was indeed fulfilled, for they did not achieve their aims. The verb **et-tawaffā** in the lexicon means “to take something in full,” and for this reason it has been used in the sense of killing (death in the literal sense). Thus, in the verse “Allah takes the souls at the time of their death...”<sup>70</sup> and in another verse, “Say: The Angel of Death who has been assigned to you will take your soul (*yatawaffākum*) and then you will be returned to your Lord,” the term is employed in this meaning.<sup>71</sup>

The verse’s phrase "إني متوفيك" means, “I will certainly cause you to die (the death of the body), and after death I will raise you to a lofty station in My presence” — just as it is said about Prophet Idrīs: "وَرَفَعْنَاهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا" (“We raised him to an exalted station”).<sup>72</sup> Allah also declares that the martyrs are alive in His presence<sup>73</sup> and are in an exalted station.<sup>74</sup> Rashid Rida also cites as evidence Ibn ‘Abbās’s view that the word **توفى** here, as it appears literally, means “death.” He explains that the intended meaning of **رفع** is the deliverance of Jesus from the disbelievers; indeed, the continuation of the verse states that Jesus was saved from the schemes of the disbelievers and purified from them.<sup>75</sup> Ibn ‘Āshūr states: “‘*Inni mutawaffika*’ in its literal sense means ‘I will cause you to die’; *tawaffāhu Allāh* means that Allah decreed his death. When this verse is considered together with the phrase ‘*falammā tawaffaytanī*’ in *Sūrat al-Mā’idah*, I wish to point out that the *wafāt* mentioned here refers to the well-known

<sup>68</sup> Nāsif, *Tac*, 5/358.

<sup>69</sup> Ebū Abdullah Muhammed bin İsmail el-Buhārī, *el-Cāmi ‘u’ş-ṣaḥīḥ*, nṣr. Muhammed Züheyr b. Nasr (Şam-Beyrut: Darü ibn Kesir, 1422/2001), “Büyü”, 102, “Enbiya”, 49; Ebu’l Hasan en-Nisâbü’rî el-Müslim, *Saḥīḥ* (Riyad: Dârü Tayyibe, 1426), “İman”, 242, 243, 247, “Hac”, 216, “Fiten”, 34, 39, 110.

<sup>70</sup> Ez-Zümer 39/42.

<sup>71</sup> Es-Secde 32/11.

<sup>72</sup> Meryem 19/57.

<sup>73</sup> Âli İmrân 3/169; el-Bakara 2/154.

<sup>74</sup> Muhammed Raşid Rıza, *Tefsîrü’l-menâr* (Kahire: Darü’l-menâr, 1947), 3/316.

<sup>75</sup> Rıza, *Tefsîrü’l-menâr*, 6/20.

death of the body.”<sup>76</sup> Ibn ‘Āshūr states that there is no sound narration indicating that Jesus did not die, and that the existing narrations should be interpreted in light of the Qur’anic verses.<sup>77</sup>

Now, the evidences will be presented for those who argue that Jesus was caused to die in this world, that he will not come as a sign of the Last Hour before the Resurrection, and that Allah’s drawing him to Himself signifies the spiritual exaltation and honoring of his soul.

**Table 3.** Classical Exegetical Interpretations of Key Qur’anic Terms Regarding Jesus’s (PBUH) End.

Qur’anic Term & Verse	Primary Interpretation (Bodily Ascension View)	Alternative Interpretation (Spiritual Exaltation View)	Key Proponents (as cited in the paper)
إِنِّي مُتَوَفِّيكَ (innī mutawaffika) Āl ‘Imrān 3:55	To take/cause to die in the sense of sleep ( <i>wafāt al-nawm</i> ), or to take fully (soul and body) without the experience of death.	To cause to die a natural, physical death.	<b>Bodily:</b> Al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, Al-Rāzī, Al-Zamakhsharī <b>Spiritual:</b> Al-Māturīdī, Rashīd Riḍā, Ibn ‘Āshūr
رَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ (rāfi‘uka ilayya) Āl ‘Imrān 3:55	To physically raise/ascend Jesus’s living body to heaven/the divine presence.	To elevate in rank and status; to honor the soul after death. A spiritual, not spatial, elevation.	<b>Bodily:</b> Al-Ṭabarī, Al-Rāzī <b>Spiritual:</b> Al-Māturīdī, Rashīd Riḍā, Modern scholars
بَل رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ (bal rafa‘ahu Allāhu ilayhi) An-Nisā 4:158	Confirmation of a physical ascension, saving Jesus from crucifixion.	Confirmation of spiritual exaltation after God caused him to die, saving him from the plot.	<b>Bodily:</b> Majority Classical Tafsīr <b>Spiritual:</b> Modern Critical Tafsīr

#### 4.1.3. Qur’anic Evidences Cited for the Rejection of Jesus’s Return to Earth

The relevant verses imply that Jesus died in the same manner as other human beings are caused to die. Commentators have explained that the word *توفيك* in the verse and *توفيتني* in another verse both derive from the root *توفي*, which they interpret as “to seize” or “to take away.”<sup>78</sup> However, in the lexicons, the expression “when Allah took his soul, He caused him to die” is given, and likewise, in *al-Ṣiḥḥāh*, *توفي* is defined as “when He took his soul.”<sup>79</sup> The Qur’an states: “اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنْفُسَ جِئًا مَّوْتَهَا” — “Allah takes the souls (of the dying) at the time of their death...”<sup>80</sup> The word *توفي* is also used in the sense of “death” in other verses: “Those whose souls the angels take while they are wronging themselves...”<sup>81</sup>

The Qur’an contains no statement to the effect that “Jesus was raised bodily to heaven.” When the expressions “He raised him to Himself”<sup>82</sup> and “I will cause you to die and raise you to Myself”<sup>83</sup> are considered together, the conclusion that emerges is “that he was first caused to die, and then — in spirit — elevated to the presence of Allah. This occurred not centuries later, but during the attempt to kill him or shortly thereafter.”<sup>84</sup>

One of the evidences cited for the belief that Jesus will descend again to earth is the verse: “There is none of the People of the Book but will surely believe in him before his death; and on the Day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them.”<sup>85</sup> The verse employs an expression that encompasses all the People

<sup>76</sup> Muhammed ettāhir b. Muhammed İbn Aşur, *Tefsirü ‘t-tahrir ve ‘t-tenvir* (Tunus: 1984, الدار التونسية), 3/257.

<sup>77</sup> İbn Aşur, *Tefsirü ‘t-tahrir ve ‘t-tenvir*, 2/259.

<sup>78</sup> Taberi, *Taberi Tefsiri*, 5/452.

<sup>79</sup> Team, “توفي”.

<sup>80</sup> ez-Zümer 39/42.

<sup>81</sup> En-Nisa 4/97; en-Nahl 16/28.

<sup>82</sup> En-Nisa 4/158.

<sup>83</sup> Āli İmran 3/55.

<sup>84</sup> Hayreddin Karaman, *Kur’an yolu: Türkçe meâl ve tefsir. 3* (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 2007), 2/176.

<sup>85</sup> en-Nisa 4/158.

of the Book, not just a specific group. According to this interpretation, when Jesus descends to earth at the end of time, only those among the People of the Book alive at that moment would have the opportunity to believe in him, while those who lived and died before his coming would not have had the chance to see him and believe. The verse, however, is open to different interpretations. Therefore, it cannot serve as conclusive proof for establishing a definitive belief on this matter.<sup>86</sup> In Sūrat Āl 'Imrān, Allah says: *"I will make those who follow you superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection."*<sup>87</sup>

In Sūrat al-Nisā', referring to the Jews, it is stated: *"Except for a few of them, they will never believe."*<sup>88</sup> When this verse is considered together with the previous one, it nullifies the interpretation that Jesus will descend near the end of time and that all of the People of the Book will then believe in him.<sup>89</sup>

One of the evidences for Jesus's death is the phrase "when You caused me to die" in Sūrat al-Mā'idah. On the Day of Resurrection, when Allah says, *"O Jesus! Did you say to the people, 'Take me and my mother as two deities besides Allah?'"* Jesus will respond: *"My Lord, glory be to You! If I had said such a thing, You would have known it. I only conveyed to them what You commanded me. But when You caused me to die, it was You who watched over them,"* thus presenting his case.

*"But when You caused me to die, it was You alone who observed their condition."*<sup>90</sup>

The expression in the verse is in the past tense, indicating an action that has already taken place. The phrase *"when You caused me to die"* refers to the death of the body; Allah caused him to die and took his life.<sup>91</sup> If Jesus were to return to this world before the Resurrection, the future tense would have been used instead. In that case, he would have witnessed the Christians who deified him and his mother and adopted the Trinity as a belief, recognized the falsehood of this, and declared it. He would not have spoken unaware of the fact that the Christians had taken him and his mother as deities.

Our exegetes have generally sought to reconcile the verses on this subject with the ḥadīths concerning the descent of Jesus.<sup>92</sup> To this end, they have interpreted the expressions متوفيك and توفيتني as referring to his being taken up — body and soul — into the Divine Presence, and have stated that he will descend before the Resurrection as one of its signs.<sup>93</sup> The reports regarding the descent of Jesus state that he will come down to earth as a sign of the Hour, and that after living for twenty-four or forty years, the Day of Resurrection will take place.<sup>94</sup> This is clearly an appointment of a specific time for the Day of Resurrection. However, God states that the coming of the Hour will be sudden, and that no one, including the prophets, can know its time: *"They ask you about the Hour—when will it come to pass? Say, 'Its knowledge is only with my Lord. None but he will reveal its time... The Hour will come upon you suddenly."*<sup>95</sup> In another verse, regarding the Hour, it is said:

<sup>86</sup> Karaman, *Kur'an yolu*, 2/177.

<sup>87</sup> Āli 'Imrān 3/55.

<sup>88</sup> En-Nisa 4/155.

<sup>89</sup> İbn Aşur, *Tefsirü't-tahrir ve't-tenvir*, 6/24.

<sup>90</sup> el-Maide 5/117.

<sup>91</sup> İbn Aşur, *Tefsirü't-tahrir ve't-tenvir*, 8/117.

<sup>92</sup> Râzî, *Mefatihü'l-ğayb*, 4/281; Taberi, *Taberi Tefsiri*, 5/451.

<sup>93</sup> Nâsif, *Tac*, 5/358.

<sup>94</sup> Süleyman bin Eş'as el-Ezdî es-Sicistânî Ebu Davud, *Sünen*, thk. Şuayb Arnavud-Muhammed Kamil (Lubnan: Dâru Risale el-Alemiyye, 1420), "Kitabü'l-fiten", 14 (4324).

<sup>95</sup> El-A'raf 7/187.

“I was almost going to conceal it from Myself.”<sup>96</sup> This expression is used for a secret that a person keeps solely to themselves and does not disclose to anyone.<sup>97</sup>

In the Gospels, the Hour of the Day of Resurrection is also stated as follows: “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son (Jesus), but only the Father.”<sup>98</sup>

In the reports transmitted in the hadith collections, there are various and conflicting accounts concerning where Jesus will descend, how many years he will live in this world, the Prophet’s meeting with him during the Mi‘rāj, his descent upon the white minaret of Damascus on the wings of two angels,<sup>99</sup> his descent upon a bridge set upon the clouds, the Antichrist melting before him like ice melts, his following the Muslim leader in prayer, and his burial in either Jerusalem or Medina after his death. These reports depict Jesus as a hero wielding power in a realm of legends and fantasy, but such portrayals are incompatible with human nature and with the divine law (sunnah) God has established for human life.

One of the objections raised is that the majority of these reports were transmitted by narrators of People of the Book origin, such as Ka‘b al-Ah̄bār and Abū Hurayrah. During the period of compilation, this subject was not regarded as directly related to the fundamentals of religion, and thus it did not receive much meticulous attention. Another point is that these reports contain inconsistent statements that cannot appropriately be attributed to the Prophet. For example, regarding the place where Jesus will descend, one report says he will descend from the white minaret of Damascus, while another says he will descend upon a bridge set upon the clouds. One states that he will live for seven years, another for twenty-four, and yet another for forty years. One report says he will be buried in Medina, while another claims he will be buried in Jerusalem.<sup>100</sup>

Another objection is that God sends a prophet when there is a need. Six hundred years after the death of Jesus, the Prophet Muhammad was sent in response to such a need. Is there anything lacking in the divine religion today that would require the coming of a new prophet? God says: “Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen Islam as your religion.”<sup>101</sup> After Jesus, the religion and the scripture had been distorted, and in response to this need, God sent Muhammad as a prophet with a new divine message. At present, humanity has no need for a new prophet or a new divine book.

Another point is that if Jesus were to descend to earth again, he would either come as a prophet or as a member of the community of Muhammad. If he were to come as a prophet, this would contradict the verse in Sūrat al-Ah̄zāb: “Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of God and the seal of the prophets.”<sup>102</sup> For the coming of Jesus would imply that Muhammad is not the final prophet. In order for a new prophet and a new message to be needed, the religion and scripture would have to have been corrupted. On the other hand, if he were to come as a follower of Muhammad, this would imply that he had been stripped of his prophetic mission, and there is no such thing as the dismissal or demotion of prophets from their mission.<sup>103</sup>

God has decreed death for all human beings. This is a divine law (sunnah) that He has established for mankind. All people, including the prophets, are subject to it, and Jesus is no exception. As God says: “It is Allah who created you, then provided for you, then will cause you to die, and

<sup>96</sup> Ta ha 20/15.

<sup>97</sup> Taberi, *Taberi Tefsiri*, 16/34 vd; Team, “أكاد أخفيها”.

<sup>98</sup> Matta, 24:36.

<sup>99</sup> Müslim, *Sahih*, “Kitabü’l-fiten ve eşrati’s-saat”, 2937.

<sup>100</sup> Abdülkerim Hatib, *Kur’an-ı Kerim, Tevrat ve İncillerde Hz. Mesih* (Kahire: Darü’l-kütübü’l-hadise, 1966), 537-539.

<sup>101</sup> El-Maide 5/3.

<sup>102</sup> El-Ahzab 33/40.

<sup>103</sup> Mehmet Okuyan, “Hz. İsa Gelmeyecek!”, youtube, [www.youtube.com/c/KuranveİslamTv](http://www.youtube.com/c/KuranveİslamTv) (02 Eylül 2015).

then will bring you back to life..."<sup>104</sup> Every soul shall taste death. No one has been exempted from this. For a human being, there is only one death.<sup>105</sup>

It may be asked where Jesus died, where he was buried, and where his grave is located. However, asking how Jesus died is unnecessary, for God says: "I will purify you from those who disbelieve."<sup>106</sup> Accordingly, God did not will for the body of Jesus to fall into the hands of his enemies. We only know how and where John the Baptist and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) passed away; beyond these, we have no such knowledge.

It may be claimed that God exempted Jesus from death in the way that other people die. However, Jesus himself uses the expression "the day I will die": "Peace be upon me the day I was born, the day I will die, and the day I will be raised to life again."<sup>107</sup> It may be argued that in the verse the expression "the day I will die" (*yawm amūtu*) is used in the future tense, which would mean that Jesus has not yet died and will die at some point in the future. However, the same expression is used in the same sūrah for John the Baptist: "Peace be upon him the day he was born, the day he will die, and the day he will be raised to life again."<sup>108</sup> In this verse as well, the phrase "the day he will die" (*yawm yamūtu*) is used in the future tense. For both prophets, the time of death is expressed in the future form. If it is said of Jesus that he has not died yet and is still alive because of this wording, then the same expression is also used for John the Baptist—could it then be claimed that he, too, has not yet died and that his death is still in the future?<sup>109</sup>

Another point is that God addresses the Prophet Muhammad, saying: "We did not grant immortality to any human before you. So if you die, will they live forever?"<sup>110</sup> Jesus lived six hundred years before our Prophet. If Jesus were still alive, God could have stated his being alive as an exception in the Qur'an. Since Jesus was also a human being, he is subject to the same divine law (sunnah) that applies to other prophets and human beings.<sup>111</sup>

One of the evidences that Jesus passed away and was elevated not bodily but only spiritually is the word *rafa'a*. In the Qur'an, this word is used metaphorically for human beings in the sense of spiritual exaltation and the raising of ranks, whereas for material objects it is used in the literal sense of lifting or elevating from the ground.<sup>112</sup> In the spiritual sense: "And did We not exalt your renown?" and "We raised him to a high position."<sup>113</sup> "...It is He who has raised some of you above others in degrees, so that He may test you through what He has given you."<sup>114</sup> In the physical sense of raising: "And [mention] when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House with Ishmael..."<sup>115</sup>

Regarding Joseph, it is said: "And he raised his parents upon the throne."<sup>116</sup> In the verse about Jesus, the expressions *rafa'ahu Allāhu ilayhi* ("God raised him to Himself") and *rāfi'uka ilayya* elevation and

<sup>104</sup> er-Rum 30/40.

<sup>105</sup> Taberi, *Taberi Tefsiri*, 5/452.

<sup>106</sup> Âli İmran 3/55.

<sup>107</sup> Meryem 19/33.

<sup>108</sup> Meryem 19/15.

<sup>109</sup> Bayraklı, "Hz. İsa geri gelecek mi?" (09 Ocak 1998).

<sup>110</sup> el-Enbiya 21/34.

<sup>111</sup> Süleyman Ateş, "Hz. İsa ölmüş müdür? Tekrar yeryüzüne gelecek midir?", <http://www.dinicevaplar.com> (13 Mart 2019).

<sup>112</sup> Almaany Team, *المعاني El-Ayatü ve's-Süverü Ellî Veredet Fihâ Kelimetü... Fi'l-Kur'an'l-Kerim* (Erişim 17 Ağustos 2024), "رفع".

<sup>113</sup> Meryem 19/57.

<sup>114</sup> el-En'am 6/165.

<sup>115</sup> el-Bakara 2/127.

<sup>116</sup> Yusuf 12/100.

exaltation.<sup>117</sup> Nowhere in the Qur'an is there any statement that Jesus was taken up to the heavens or into the Divine Presence with both body and soul.<sup>118</sup> The word *rafa'a* is also used for Idris: "And We raised him to a high position."<sup>119</sup> Did God raise Idris to the heavens with his body? Has such a thing been stated? In the Book of Genesis, it is said that Idris (Enoch) was taken up to heaven.<sup>120</sup> Likewise, in the New Testament, in the Book of Hebrews, it is stated: "Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away."<sup>121</sup> This raises the following question: God has used the word *rafa'a* for both Jesus and Idris. The Jews and Christians have claimed that both prophets were taken up by God into His presence. Can we then also say that Idris was raised—body and soul—into the presence of God, and that he is living there with both body and soul, or that he will return to earth before the Day of Resurrection?

Another point is that God raised Jesus to Himself in spirit. This is not unique to Jesus; God has drawn the souls of all prophets to Himself. The presence of souls with God is a figurative concept. In everyday language we also say, "so-and-so has returned to his Lord" or "has reached the highest companionship (*rafiq al-'alā*)." These expressions do not bring to mind the idea that someone has ascended to God with both body and soul.

One of the supposed proofs for Jesus' bodily ascent to heaven is the reports that the Prophet Muhammad saw Jesus and John the Baptist during the *Mi'rāj*. If this event is taken as evidence that Jesus was raised to heaven with body and soul, then it would likewise indicate that John the Baptist is also in heaven with body and soul—and by extension, that other prophets are there in the same way.<sup>122</sup>

As for the reports concerning the descent of Jesus, these are not *mutawātir* in terms of transmission but rather *āḥād* reports. When *āḥād* reports contain information that contradicts the rulings of Qur'anic verses, their authenticity as hadith is viewed with doubt. Since the Qur'an clearly states that Jesus was caused to die and informs us that the Hour will come suddenly, it is not easy to accept the texts of these reports as sound. The information transmitted on this matter most likely originated from the People of the Book and was passed on to Muslims.<sup>123</sup>

In fact, the Gospels also state that the coming of Jesus will occur after the darkening of the sun and moon and the falling of the stars—an event which, as the Qur'an describes, is the occurrence of the Day of Resurrection itself, not something preceding it. In the Qur'an, this is expressed as: "When the sun is rolled up and darkened, when the stars fall and fade, and when the mountains are set in motion..."<sup>124</sup>

**Table 4.** Analysis of Hadith Reports on the Descent (Nuzūl) of Jesus (PBUH).

Aspect of Nuzūl Narratives	Contradictions & Issues	Theological Conflict with Qur'anic Principles
Place of Descent	White Minaret of Damascus vs. A bridge upon the clouds.	-
Duration of Stay	7 years vs. 24 years vs. 40 years.	Implicitly appoints a time for the Hour (if he dies, then Resurrection comes).
Final Resting Place	Buried in Medina vs. Buried in Jerusalem.	-

<sup>117</sup> Team, "رفع".

<sup>118</sup> Muhammed Esed, *Kur'an Mesajı-Meal Tefsir*, çev. Cahit Koytak - Ahmet Ertürk (İstanbul: İşaret Yayınları, 1999), 1/177; Karaman, *Kur'an yolu*, 2/176.

<sup>119</sup> Meryem 19/57.

<sup>120</sup> Başlangıç, 5:22-24.

<sup>121</sup> İbraniler, 11:5

<sup>122</sup> Rıza, *Tefsîrü'l-menâr*, 6/21.

<sup>123</sup> İlyas Çelebi, "İSÂ", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (TDV Yayınları, 2000), 22/473.

<sup>124</sup> et-Tekvîr 81/1-3.

<b>Nature of Return</b>	As a prophet? vs. As a follower of Muhammad's law?	<b>As Prophet:</b> Contradicts finality of prophethood (33:40). <b>As Follower:</b> Implies demotion of a prophet's status.
<b>Transmission (Isnād)</b>	Mostly <i>Āḥād</i> (singular-chain) reports, not <i>Mutawātir</i> (mass-transmitted). Many narrators are converts from People of the Book (e.g., Ka'b al-Aḥbār).	Belief in unseen matters ( <i>īmān bi-l-ghayb</i> ) should be based on definitive proof ( <i>qat'ī</i> ), which <i>āḥād</i> reports do not provide.
<b>Core Concept</b>	Predicting specific events before a "sudden" Hour.	Contradicts verses stating the Hour's suddenness and that its knowledge is with God alone (7:187, 20:15, 33:63).

## Conclusion

According to the Qur'an and the Gospels, the birth, life, and death of Jesus were filled with miracles. His birth without a father is likened to the creation of Adam, as God Almighty says that the creation of Jesus is like that of Adam. Jesus' speaking from the cradle was an event that disrupted the expectations of the Jewish rabbis and clergy. Being saved from the evildoings of the Jews while still in the cradle was among God's greatest favors to him. God foiled all the plots of the Jews who sought to kill him, and took his soul, raising him to Himself.

Jewish and Christian sources claim that Jesus died on the cross. According to Christians, Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected in the tomb where he was laid. The Gospels narrate the resurrection of Jesus with conflicting accounts. One of the proofs that the crucified person was not Jesus is the statement attributed to him in the Gospel of Mark: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" For it is contradictory for a prophet—or, according to Christian belief, someone who sacrificed himself for the forgiveness of humanity's sins—to utter such words. It would be entirely contrary to the truth to claim that Jesus, far exalted above such notions, as the son of God or as possessing a divine nature, would say such a thing.

The Qur'an declares that the Hour of Resurrection is a matter of the unseen, known only to God; no prophet or archangel knows when it will occur, and it will come suddenly. Something that occurs suddenly is a surprise; it cannot be described as "sudden" if it has signs and indications beforehand. Therefore, reports describing events to occur as signs before the Hour, especially when presented as precursors of the Resurrection, are in contradiction with the content of the verses and are questionable. Belief cannot be established solely on the basis of such reports.

The Qur'an states that Jesus, like Adam, was born without a father, and that he, like all other humans, will die (or has died) and will be resurrected. However, according to the apparent meaning of the verses, this resurrection is not before the Hour but, like the resurrection of others, after it. God Almighty addresses the Prophet Muhammad, saying that immortality has not been granted to any person before him and that every soul shall taste death. No one is exempted from this rule.

A person is born, dies, and will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection. In Islam, this is a divine law. Every soul will taste death and will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment to give account for the life they lived in this world. Jesus, like all prophets, is subject to this divine law. God has exempted no one from it, except in cases He has revealed through revelation. He has informed us through revelation that He created Adam without a father or mother, Jesus without a father, caused the Companions of the Cave to sleep for a long time, and protected Abraham from burning in the fire—thus leaving no room for doubt.

The Qur'an contains no explicit statement that Jesus was taken into the Divine Presence or to the heavens with both body and soul, nor any explicit evidence that he will descend to earth before the Hour. The interpretation that Jesus was raised to the Divine Presence with body and soul is based on the influence of certain reports. Muhammad is the last prophet, the Seal of the Prophets. Will Jesus return to this world as a prophet or as someone whose prophethood has ended? There is no such thing as the termination or demotion of a prophet's mission. If he were to return as a prophet, it would contradict the concept of *khātam al-nabiyyīn* (Seal of the Prophets).

The relevant Qur'anic verses state that the plots of those who sought to harm Jesus were thwarted, that he was purified from them, and that God said: "O Jesus, I will cause you to die and raise you to Myself," which He then fulfilled. The elevation (*raf'*) of Jesus is not a bodily ascension, but a spiritual exaltation like the honor bestowed upon other prophets, or like the state of martyrs who are alive with God. Just as we are told not to call them dead, for they are alive with God, so too is Jesus alive with God.

The claim that God raised Jesus to Himself with body and soul implies—God forbid—attributing a physical location to God. If God physically raised Jesus to Himself, then either God resides in a physical place, or Jesus is beyond spatial constraints in order to be with God. In either case, this contradicts God's transcendence beyond time and space, and opposes the doctrine of divine oneness (*tawhîd*).

Most of the reports related to this subject are problematic in terms of their chains of transmission and also contradict the Qur'anic verses in content. Since they are not *mutawâtir* and thus do not yield certain knowledge, forming a belief based on them does not seem sound from the perspective of kalâm methodology. When a verse and a hadith appear to be in conflict, the ruling of the verse takes precedence. Preferring the verse does not mean entirely discarding the hadith. The belief that Jesus will return to earth to establish divine sovereignty is a Christian doctrine and has no connection with Islamic theology or creed. Accusing scholars who hold that Jesus was not raised to heaven with body and soul and that there will be no descent before the Hour of being "modernists," "sectless," or "Qadiyanis" is not a fair or just position.

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