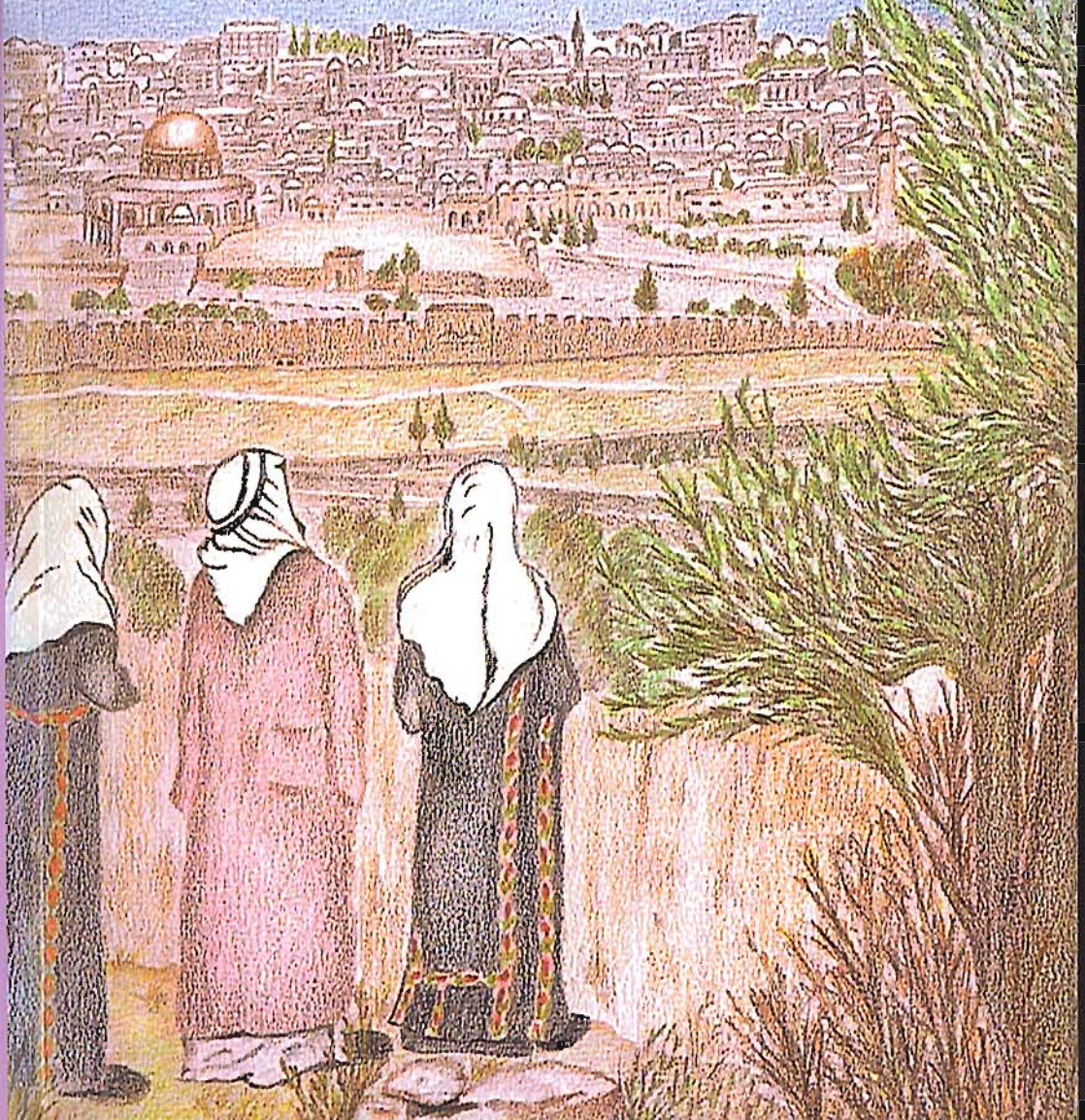


THE TRUE STORY OF JESUS



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JESUS

Rashid Ahmad Chaudhry

Islam International Publications Ltd.

The True Story of Jesus

by :*Rashid Ahmad Chaudhry*

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Contents

FOREWORD	5
CHAPTER ONE	7
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	7
CHAPTER TWO	11
GLAD TIDINGS OF A SON TO MARY	11
<i>THE BIRTH OF JESUS</i>	13
<i>HEAVENLY SIGN TO MARK THE BIRTH OF JESUS</i>	14
CHAPTER THREE	17
EARLY LIFE OF JESUS.....	17
CHAPTER FOUR.....	21
JESUS AS A PROPHET OF GOD	21
CHAPTER FIVE.....	25
THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS	25
<i>THE HOLY QUR'AN REFUTES TRINITY</i>	26
<i>THE TERM 'SON OF GOD'</i>	28
<i>JESUS'S ADVICE TO HIS DISCIPLES</i>	28
CHAPTER SIX	31
THE MIRACLES OF JESUS.....	31
CHAPTER SEVEN.....	37
THE ENEMIES PLAN TO KILL JESUS	37
<i>JESUS IN JERUSALEM</i>	38
<i>JESUS PRAYS IN GETHSEMANE</i>	39
<i>JESUS IS ARRESTED</i>	42

CHAPTER EIGHT	45
THE TRIAL OF JESUS	45
<i>GOD'S PROMISE TO SAVE JESUS FROM THE ACCURSED DEATH</i>	49
CHAPTER NINE	51
JESUS IS PUT ON THE CROSS.....	51
<i>JESUS IS SAVED</i>	53
<i>JEW'S SET A WATCH AT THE TOMB</i>	55
<i>JESUS ESCAPES AND MEETS HIS DISCIPLES</i>	56
CHAPTER TEN	59
CHRONOLOGY OF THE TRIAL OF JESUS.....	59
CHAPTER ELEVEN	67
JESUS MIGRATES TO OTHER COUNTRIES.....	67
<i>LOST TRIBES OF ISRAEL</i>	67
<i>JESUS TRAVELS TO THE EAST</i>	70
<i>JESUS IN PERSIA</i>	71
<i>JESUS IN AFGHANISTAN</i>	73
<i>JESUS IN INDIA</i>	74
<i>JESUS MEETS A HINDU KING</i>	74
<i>JESUS DIED IN KASHMIR</i>	76
CHAPTER TWELVE	79
THE TURIN SHROUD.....	79
CHAPTER THIRTEEN.....	83
THE SECOND ADVENT OF JESUS.....	83
GLOSSARY.....	89
REFERENCES.....	93

FOREWORD

Perhaps there is no other individual of any prominence in the history of religion about whom so many differences exist as about Jesus, son of Mary, may peace be upon him. The Jews, the Christians and the Muslims all hold different views about the birth of Jesus, the manner of his death and about the account of his life.

Christians believe that Jesus gave his life on the cross to save mankind from sin, was resurrected on the 3rd day and ascended to heaven.

The Jews believed that he died an accursed death on the cross.

The majority of Muslims believe that he was never put on the cross. It was somebody that resembled Jesus who was crucified while Jesus was lifted bodily to heaven where he is still waiting to come back to earth.

The views of the Ahmadi Muslims are based upon a rational approach that Jesus did not die on the cross. He was unconscious when taken down from the cross and was placed in a sepulchre where an ointment was applied to his wounds. Thus recovering from his wounds he migrated to the countries where the lost tribes of Israel had settled. Finally he reached Kashmir where his tomb is located.

The two main sources used in this book are the Bible and the Qur'an.

The "True Story of Jesus" is yet another book prepared by the members of the Children's Book Committee. The committee

was appointed by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV and has been working under his direct supervision and guidance.

The members of the committee are extremely grateful to Huzur for devoting so much of his valuable time to this project inspite of his extremely busy schedule of work.

We are also extremely grateful to Maulana Ata-ul-Mujeeb Rashid, Imam, London Mosque for going through the manuscript and giving valuable suggestions.

Muslims are advised to say “Alaihis-Salaam” (peace be upon him), whenever they read the name of Jesus or any other Prophet, and “Sal-Lallaaho Alaihi Wa Sallam” (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), when they read the name of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

We hope and pray that this booklet will be welcomed by children, teachers and parents alike.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On the edge of the Roman Empire there was a small country, Palestine. The Romans had conquered Palestine in the year 63 BC. In the northern part of this country, in a small hilly town called Nazareth, lived a little girl named Mary. Her father’s name was Imran and her mother’s name was Hannah. Hannah had made a vow before the birth of the child that she would dedicate her child’s life to the service of the Temple. She had hoped and prayed to give birth to a male child because in those days only male children were accepted in the service of the Temple. But when Mary was born instead, Hannah was perplexed and expressed her anguish to God saying, “Oh God! I have given birth to a girl”.⁽¹⁾ Allah told her that He knew better as to what she had given birth to.

This implied that the girl was not an ordinary girl, rather God has bestowed on her those qualities which made her a very special and extra-ordinary child, even better than the boy, Hannah was hoping for. Mary was admitted to the service of God in the Jewish Temple as an exceptional case. The Temple was headed by Zachariah, the High Priest, who according to the Holy Qur’an, was also a Prophet of God. Thus according to God’s design, Mary was brought up under Zachariah’s holy and benign care. It is reported that right from her childhood she spent most of

her time in her chamber in the remembrance of God. Whenever Zachariah visited her, he found her with provisions. The gifts were evidently brought by the visitors to the Temple. Moreover God had granted her not only material things but also had given her such wisdom that even at an early age she could interpret the Scriptures and answer complex questions in such a manner which were really beyond her age. This surprised Zachariah and addressing her he said, "O Mary ! Whence have you got all this? ' She replied, ' From Allah, of course. Surely, He gives His bounties to whomsoever He pleases without measure' ." (2)

This pious reply of Mary made a deep impression on the mind of Zachariah and he prayed to God Almighty that he may also be blessed with a child as pious as Mary. Though he was very old and his wife was barren meaning that she was unable to bear a child, yet having full trust in Allah's Omnipotence, he prayed to God:

'My bones have become hollow and the hair of my head have turned white like flames, yet I have never been so doomed as to lose hope in Your Mercy. My wife is barren and I am apprehensive of the behaviour of my relations after my death. Grant me, therefore, an heir who may also inherit the blessings of the House of Jacob and make him one who should be pleasing in your sight'. God replied, 'O Zachariah', We give you glad tidings of a son whose name would be Yahya, a name which We have not given to anyone before'. (3)

Thus Yahya was born according to Allah's promise and God made him a Prophet to the Israelites. Yahya or John, the Baptist, as he is generally known in the Christian world, also happened to be a forerunner of Jesus, in fulfilment of the prophecy mentioned in the old Testament, which says: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes." (4)

The Jews believed that Prophet Elijah had ascended to heaven bodily and would descend before the advent of the Messiah. The fact was that Elijah was never taken up to heaven bodily and therefore could not have descended from heaven. The Biblical prophecy was fulfilled in the person of John, the Baptist, who came in the spirit of Elijah.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the name of Mary's father?
2. What was the name of Mary's mother?
3. Why was Hannah upset at the birth of Mary?
4. Who was the high priest at the Temple?
5. What did Zachariah find when he used to visit Mary's chamber?
6. What was Zachariah's prayer?
7. What was the name of the son born to him?
8. What did Jews believe about Elijah?
9. Who came as a forerunner of Jesus? Explain your answer.

CHAPTER TWO

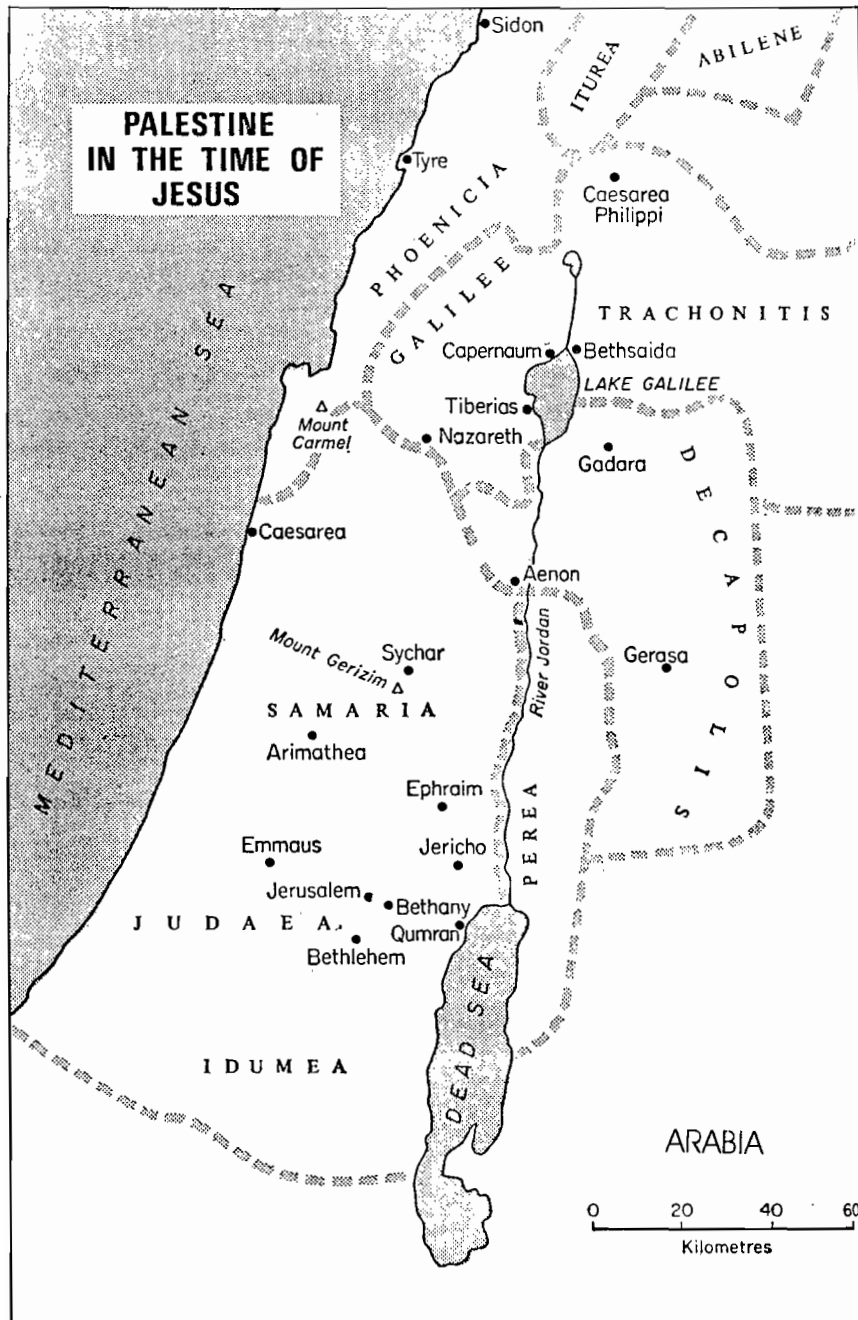
GLAD TIDINGS OF A SON TO MARY

Time went by and Mary grew up into a devoted, chaste and truthful woman. One day, while she was praying to God Almighty in seclusion, an angel, in the form of a very handsome man, appeared to her who conveyed a Divine message that she would have a son. The vision was so lifelike that Mary, being a virtuous woman, was taken aback as she was under the impression that a young man was standing before her. Therefore she said, “I seek refuge with Allah from you, if you be God fearing.” The angel said, “I am only a messenger from God, that I may bestow a righteous son on you.”⁽⁵⁾

This shocked Mary as she was a virgin. She said, “How can I have a son when no man has touched me and I am not an unchaste woman?” The angel said, “Thus it shall be. Your Lord says: ‘It is easy for Me ; and We shall do so. We may make him a Sign unto people and mercy from Us. This has been decreed’.”⁽⁶⁾

Thus Mary conceived the child without the agency of a male.

Angels appeared to Mary in her dreams yet again, and gave her the glad tidings of a son whose name would be Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary. She was told that he would be honoured in this world and in the next and would be granted nearness to God.



THE BIRTH OF JESUS

In order to avoid the scandalous talk of the people, she left the town and went to the hills around Bethlehem, the place where Jesus is said to have been born. The town of Bethlehem is about 70 miles from Nazareth and is situated at a height of about two thousand feet above sea level and is surrounded by fertile valleys. There were springs on the hills from which the town got its water supply. Palm trees grew in abundance. It was in this area that Mary stayed for the delivery of her child. It was now summer and there were ripe dates on the palm trees. It is stated in the Gospel of Luke that shepherds were out in the fields, keeping watch through the night over their flock.

As the time of Jesus's birth approached, Mary took rest under a palm tree, which was on the slope of the hill outside Bethlehem. In this sheltered place she gave birth to Jesus. As she went through the pains of child-birth, she exclaimed in agony, "Would that I had died before all this and had become a thing quite forgotten." At that moment she heard a voice from the side of the slope of the mountain. It was an angel who comforted her saying that she should not grieve. She was told that her Lord has provided a stream underneath her, wherein she may wash herself and the child. The angel said, "Take hold of the trunk of the palm tree and shake it; it will shed fresh ripe dates upon you. Thus eat and drink and be at rest. And if you see anyone approaching, call out, 'I have vowed a fast to the Gracious God; I will therefore not speak this day to any human being'."⁽⁷⁾

The birth of Jesus was extraordinary in the sense that he was born without the agency of a male. It was miraculous but not contrary to the laws of nature. This unusual form of birth was a warning to the Israelites that their spiritual progeny had come to an end because of their misdeeds and that there was none among them who was worthy to be the father of a Prophet of God. This in fact was a sign to show to the people that the time of the fulfilment of the great prophecy had come, whereby the Prophethood, in accordance with God's covenant with Abraham, would be transferred from the progeny of Isaac to that of his brother Ishmael, Jesus being the last Prophet among the Israelites. Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, who came after Jesus in the year 570 A.D, was a descendant of Ishmael.

HEAVENLY SIGN TO MARK THE BIRTH OF JESUS

It is stated in the Bible that soon after the birth of Jesus some men who studied the stars came from the east to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the baby born to be the 'king of Jews'?"⁽⁸⁾

This account, if it is true, tells us that a special star, known as the 'Star of Bethlehem' appeared in the sky, at that time, to mark the birth of a very special child who was to lead the Israelites. The people, who had the knowledge of stars, might have recognised the star and known that such a child had been born.

This indeed was an extraordinary sign, but we know from the history of religion that sometimes such heavenly signs appear to mark the events of great religious

importance. For example in present times the eclipse of the sun and that of the moon occurred in 1894 in the same month of Ramadhan according to the prophecy of the Prophet of Islam, to mark the advent of the Mahdi.

It is also related in the Bible that the star guided those wise men to the place where Jesus was born. This seems to be an exaggeration. We know from our own experience that heavenly bodies like stars and the moon cannot lead us to a particular place. They seem to move along with us wherever we go. Again the Bible says that the men came and worshipped Jesus. This cannot be a true account either. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a pious lady. She believed in one God and worshipped Him alone. Therefore she could not have allowed anyone to worship her child.

In spite of the fact that the Jews were waiting for the Messiah to appear, they rejected Jesus. They believed that the 'King of Israel' would come and lead them to victory over the Romans. They were expecting a mighty king who would come with power and glory. Therefore when Jesus, who was of humble origin, claimed to be the Messiah, he was rejected outright. The Jews were indeed mistaken. Jesus did not claim to be a worldly king. He explained that his kingdom had nothing to do with this world.

QUESTIONS

1. What did Mary say to the angel who appeared to her and what was the reply of the angel?

2. Where was Jesus born?
3. How far is Bethlehem from Nazareth?
4. Why did Mary leave Nazareth?
5. What time of the year was it when Jesus was born ?
6. Why do we call the birth of Jesus extraordinary?
7. What was God's covenant with Abraham?
8. Why did Jews reject Jesus?
9. Comment on the Biblical story that the star guided the wise men to the place where Jesus was born.
10. Comment on the Biblical story that the wise men worshipped baby Jesus.

CHAPTER THREE

EARLY LIFE OF JESUS

Jesus was an intelligent child. He was obedient and dutiful to his mother and was very kind to every one. Due to his pious upbringing he spoke words of wisdom from his early childhood. Whenever he was confronted with difficult and complex questions, his answers were so enlightening and wonderful which were not expected from a child of his age.

Jesus was merely a child when Mary decided to go back to her people. They were riding a donkey when they entered the town. When people learnt of their return they came out of their houses and surrounded Mary. They began to ridicule and taunt her and behaved mischievously towards her. They censured her for her sin, which they believed she had committed, by saying, "O Mary, surely you have committed a monstrous thing. Your father was not a wicked man, nor was your mother an unchaste woman!"⁽⁹⁾

There were many a rude remark from the people. Mary was deeply hurt but she did not say anything in reply. Instead she pointed towards Jesus meaning that such a blessed child who was already showing signs of being in communion with God, could not have been the fruit of sin.

They said, “How can we talk to one who is merely a child in the cradle?” meaning that the boy was too young to give them a meaningful explanation.

Jesus told them, “I am a servant of Allah. He has given me the Book and has made me a Prophet ; and He has made me blessed wheresoever I may be, and has enjoined upon me Prayer and almsgiving so long as I live ; and has made me dutiful towards my mother, and has not made me arrogant and graceless.”⁽¹⁰⁾

People were amazed to listen to such talk. It seemed that God had already informed Jesus, perhaps in his dreams, of the spiritual heights he was to climb. Many children because of their love of God are shown such signs. We read another example of such a case from the Holy Qur’an. Joseph, son of Jacob, when he was a small child, was also shown such dreams regarding his high spiritual status in the future.

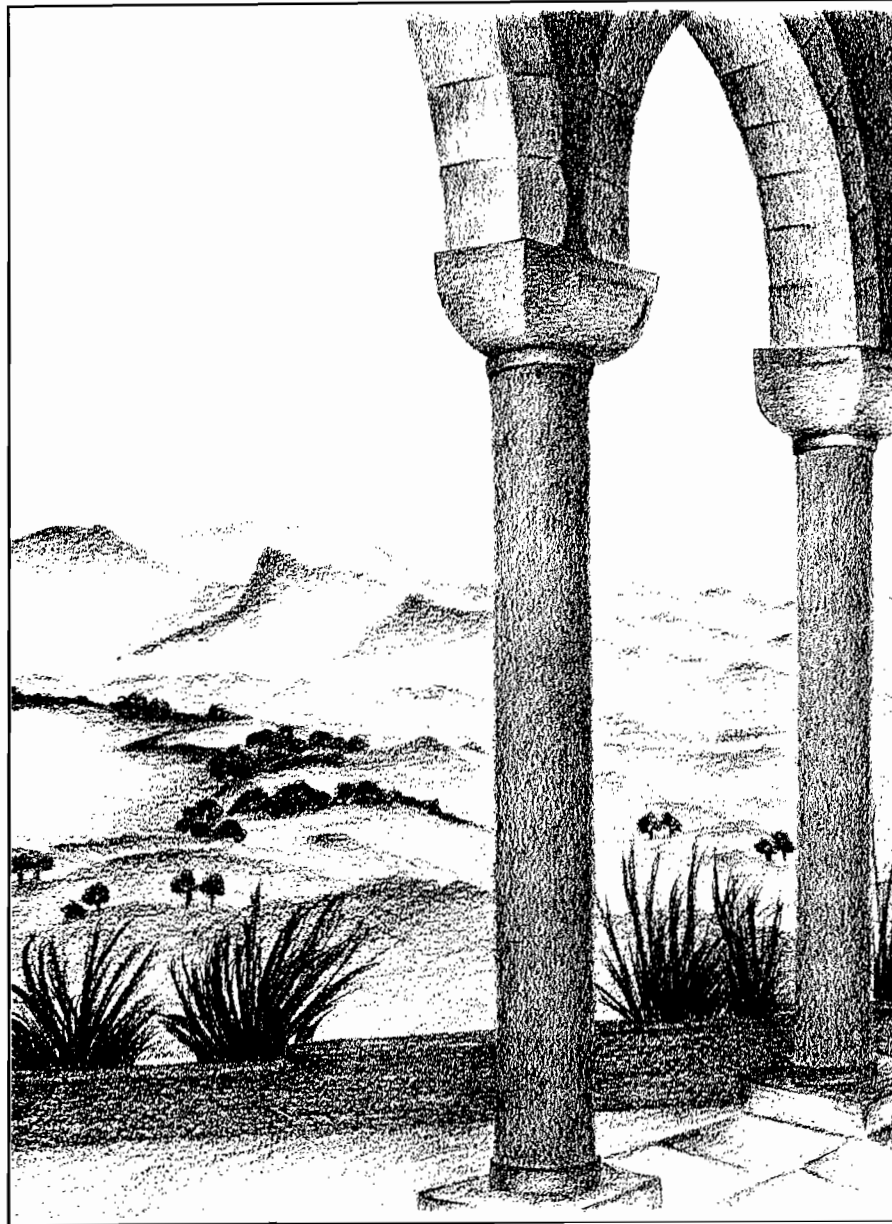
After listening to Jesus some of the people were very impressed and stopped bothering Mary any more, while others thought that Mary had put all this into the child’s mind which he was just repeating parrot fashion.

Jesus lived in Nazareth, a small secluded town amongst the hills of Galilee, the land of pastures, olive groves and vineyards. There is a curtain of obscurity over the period from his childhood to the time he was raised as a Prophet. We do not know much of this period of his life.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did people ridicule Mary when she returned with the child Jesus to Nazareth?
2. What was Mary’s response to the accusations?
3. What did Jesus say to the people?

JESUS AS A PROPHET OF GOD



If we look at the history of religion we find that the followers of every religion, with the passage of time, deviated gradually from the true path and began to wander in the wilderness of sin. The Jewish people were no exception. By the time of the advent of Jesus they had virtually become spiritually dead. They were corrupt and used to indulge in evil practices of all sorts. They were arrogant and very hard-hearted. One of their malpractices was that they interpolated the teachings of Judaism and twisted the laws of the Torah to their own advantage. They had indeed ceased to act upon the teachings of the Torah. They also believed that they were the favourites of Allah and therefore immune from any punishment. It is to these people that Jesus was sent as a Messenger of God, the Messiah they were waiting for. The task assigned to Jesus was to transform them once again into kind hearted people and bring them back to God.

When Jesus started his Divine mission and tried to deliver the message of God, the Jews did not listen to him and rejected him outright claiming that he was an impostor. Jesus explained the true spirit of the Torah, and tried to remove the misunderstandings about the law, but the Jews did not accept his explanations. On the contrary they charged him with abrogating the laws of the Torah. In

reply to these accusations Jesus told them, "Think not that I have come to abolish the Law and the prophets ; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. I tell you this; so long as heaven and earth endure, not a letter, not a stroke will disappear from the Law until all that must happen has happened. If any man therefore sets aside even the least of the Law's demands, and teaches others to do the same, he will have the lowest place in the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, whoever obeys the Law and teaches others to do the same, will be great in the kingdom of heaven. I tell you, unless you show yourselves far better men than the Pharisees and the doctors of the Law you can never enter the kingdom of heaven."⁽¹¹⁾

But the clergy among the Jews turned a deaf ear to his admonitions. The Jews also accused him of blasphemy saying, that he had claimed to be God. Jesus tried to convince them that they were mistaken and in no way had he claimed to be God, but they were adamant and wanted to put him to death, as death was the punishment of blasphemy according to them.

The Jewish divines also accused Jesus for not believing in the prophecy mentioned in the Scriptures about the second coming of Elijah. They believed that Elijah had gone to heaven, bodily as the Scripture stated, "A chariot of fire pulled by horses of fire came and Elijah was taken up to heaven by a whirlwind."⁽¹²⁾

It is also stated, "Behold! I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes."⁽¹³⁾

They therefore believed that Elijah would descend bodily from heaven before the advent of the Messiah, hence they used to taunt the followers of Jesus by saying, "Where is Elijah? How can Jesus claim to be the Messiah when we haven't seen Elijah yet descending from the sky?" Once, when his disciples told him that the Jewish clergy mockingly inquire of them about the descent of Elijah, Jesus said, "I tell you that Elijah has already come, and people did not recognise him, but treated him just as they pleased. So also the son of man will suffer at their hands. Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them about John the Baptist."⁽¹⁴⁾

Jesus, being guided by God, understood this prophecy correctly. He knew that Elijah was never taken up to heaven bodily and therefore would not descend bodily from heaven. He seems to have been informed by God that the prophecy was fulfilled in the person of John the Baptist and by the second coming of Elijah, it was meant that a person would come in the spirit and power of Elijah. Jesus understood that such prophecies were metaphorical and should not be taken literally. The Jews however refused to accept his explanation. They said that Jesus was an impostor who attributed things to God which God never said. Thus they became the sworn enemies of Jesus and began to persecute him and his followers as much as they could.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Jews taunt the followers of Jesus?
2. What were the beliefs of Jews about the second coming of Elijah?
3. How did Jesus interpret the prophecy?

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Christians believe that the Godhead is divided among three persons: God, the Father; God, the son and God, the Holy Ghost. This they call the Trinity. The fact is that Jesus did not believe in the concept of Trinity. This doctrine is not mentioned anywhere in the New Testament. The entire concept of the Trinity was foreign to the thinking of Jesus and to the early Christians. The early Christians believed Jesus to be someone who was sent by God. The term Trinity, therefore, seemed to have been concocted after the incident of crucifixion. As far as Jesus was concerned, he never commanded any person to worship him or claimed to be God. We cannot find a single reference in the New Testament where he had referred to himself as God or implied that he was God or instructed people to worship him as God. On the contrary we find that he believed in the absolute Oneness of God and he called his followers to worship one God.

We find that the expression 'Lord' was used for him in the Bible but there is no evidence that those who made use of this expression with reference to him believed or meant to convey that he was God. It was used as a synonym for master. Jesus taught people to worship God, the only Lord. When asked "Which commandment is the most important of all?", Jesus replied, "The most important one is this,

'Listen, O Israel! The Lord, our God is the only Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second most important commandment is this:

'Love your neighbour as you love yourself'. There is no other commandment more important than these two."⁽¹⁵⁾

As for himself, he always looked upon himself as human.

According to the Holy Qur'an he stated, "I have come to you with a Sign from your Lord."⁽¹⁶⁾

It is clear therefore that he was only a Messenger of Allah.

The New Testament also confirmed this. Jesus is reported to have said, "I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father Who sent me has commanded me what I must say and speak."⁽¹⁷⁾

and "What I teach is not my own teaching, but it comes from God, Who sent me."⁽¹⁸⁾

He had also said on another occasion, "I have come down from heaven to do not my own will but the Will of Him Who sent me".⁽¹⁹⁾

Thus it is clear that he regarded himself as a Messenger of God and not God or son of God.

THE HOLY QUR'AN REFUTES TRINITY

The Holy Qur'an states:

"O People of the Book! exceed not the limits in your religion, and say not of Allah anything but the truth. Verily, the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only a Messenger of God and a fulfilment of His word which He

sent down to Mary, and a mercy from Him. So believe in Allah and His Messengers, and say not, 'They are three'. Desist, it will be better for you. Verily, Allah is the only one God. Far is it from His Holiness that he should have a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and sufficient is Allah as a Guardian."⁽²⁰⁾

At another place it states:

"And when Allah will say, O Jesus, son of Mary, didst thou say to men, 'Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah'? he will answer, 'Holy art Thou. I could never say that to which I had no right. If I had said it, Thou wouldst have surely known it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy mind. It is only Thou Who art the Knower of hidden things.

I said nothing to them except that which Thou didst command me 'Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord'. And I was a witness over them as long as I remained among them, but since Thou didst cause me to die, Thou hast been the Watcher over them ; and Thou art Witness over all things. If Thou punish them, they are Thy servants; and if Thou forgive them, Thou surely art the Mighty, the Wise."⁽²¹⁾

It is evident from the above verses that Jesus, when he will be questioned by God on the Day of Judgement, will declare that he did not tell his people to worship anyone but God. The verses also prove that Jesus had died like any other human being.

THE TERM 'SON OF GOD'

The term 'son of God' used for Jesus in the New Testament should not be taken literally, rather it was used metaphorically, meaning someone who is a beloved of God and the one who has a close relationship with Him. In fact the same title has been used in the Old Testament for earlier Prophets. For example it is written that 'Israel is My first born son'.⁽²²⁾

At another place it is written about David, "I will make him My first born son, the greatest of all kings."⁽²³⁾

Similarly God said about Solomon, "He will be My son, and I will be his Father."⁽²⁴⁾

When we read the New Testament we find that the people are mentioned as children of God. It says: "That ye may be children of your Father which is in heaven."⁽²⁵⁾

The Holy Qur'an denounces the Christian dogma that Jesus is a son of God. It says; "And they say, 'The Gracious God has taken unto Himself a son.' Assuredly, you have done a most monstrous thing. The heavens might well-nigh burst thereat, and the earth cleave asunder, and the mountains fall down in pieces. Because they ascribe a son to the Gracious God. It becomes not the Gracious God that He should take unto Himself a son."⁽²⁶⁾

JESUS'S ADVICE TO HIS DISCIPLES

As is the case with every Prophet of God, Jesus was opposed in his mission. People tried to put an end to his message, but in spite of all this, the number of his admirers continued to grow gradually. People came from far and

wide to ask for his blessings. The first to become his disciples were poor people like fishermen. Soon he had a number of followers who helped him in delivering the Divine message to the Israelites.

He told his disciples that they should acquire their earnings lawfully and honestly and that their earnings should also be spent in the service of the needy and the poor. He taught them meekness and humility. He laid great stress on mercy and forgiveness. Jesus exhorted them to convey the message of God, facing all sorts of hardships bravely. He told them that they could not succeed unless they were prepared to sacrifice their honour and wealth in the cause of Allah, and give up their personal comfort for the sake of Allah. He is reported to have said, "Do not store up riches for yourselves here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal. Instead, store up riches for yourselves in heaven where moths and rust cannot destroy, and robbers cannot break in and steal. For your heart will always be where your riches are."⁽²⁷⁾

He warned them of the persecutions they were to face in the name of religion. He said, "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and tell all kinds of evil lies against you because you are my followers. Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven."⁽²⁸⁾

The followers of Jesus suffered greatly at the hands of the Jews but remained steadfast. Indeed they had to make many sacrifices for their beliefs, which they did willingly. They were sincere helpers in the cause of Allah, believing in the mission of Jesus and making no secret of their faith.

But there were some who were weak hearted. The Bible describes some disciples in particular who showed weakness in their faith at the time of trial.

As Jesus was sent specifically to the Israelites, he expressly instructed his disciples not to preach to anyone but the Israelites. He is reported to have said, "Do not go to any Gentile territory or any Samaritan towns. Instead, you are to go to those lost sheep, the people of Israel. Go and preach, The 'kingdom of heaven' is near."⁽²⁹⁾

QUESTIONS

1. What do Christians mean by the Trinity?
2. Is there any mention of Trinity in the Bible?
3. Give two reasons to prove that Jesus was not God.
4. What does the term 'son of God' mean? Explain by giving examples from the Bible.
5. What does the Holy Qur'an say about the Christian dogma that Jesus was 'son of God'?

CHAPTER SIX

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

It was the habit of Jesus to talk in parables, a way of talking which was predicted in the previous scriptures to be a characteristic of his speech. Jesus showed miracles to his people just like other Prophets of God showed miracles to their people.

The Holy Qur'an tells us some of the miracles performed by Jesus. It says that Allah had sent Jesus as a Messenger to the Children of Israel with a message, "I come to you with a Sign from your Lord, which is, that I will fashion out for you a creation out of clay after the manner of a bird, then I will breathe into it a new spirit and it will become a soaring being by the command of Allah; and I will heal the night blind and the leprous, and I will give life to the dead, by the command of Allah."⁽³⁰⁾

This does not mean that Jesus literally created some birds and gave life to some people who were dead, because such a belief is totally opposed to Qur'anic teachings. The Holy Qur'an tells us categorically that no one except God Almighty can create things from nothing and is capable of reviving people from the dead. These verses therefore meant that Jesus would train his followers in such a way that they would undergo a complete transformation in their lives. The people who would believe in him would be

spiritually revived. Earthly people would be transformed to heavenly people and would soar high in the spiritual sky like birds.

According to Islamic teachings miracles are extraordinary events in the sense that no human being, without divine help, can produce them but they are not against the laws of nature. It is also said that Jesus healed some sick, blind and deaf people and some lepers by the touch of his hands. It may have been so in some cases, but he certainly restored the sight of the people who were spiritually blind, gave hearing to those who were spiritually deaf, and healed those who were spiritually sick.

The Bible, too, mentions some miracles. It is said that on one occasion there were five thousand people with Jesus and there was very little food for them to eat. Jesus fed them on five loaves and two fish.

On another occasion there were four thousand people. "Jesus asked his disciples, 'How much bread have you'? 'Seven loaves and a few small fish,' they answered.

So Jesus ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks to God, broke them, and gave them to the disciples; and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and had enough. Then the disciples took up seven baskets full of pieces left over. The number of men who ate was four thousand, not counting the women and children."⁽³¹⁾

The number seems to be exaggerated because it seems very strange that after witnessing a miracle of such a nature, people, who were present there, did not accept him and become his disciples.

Miracles of no less wonder were bestowed upon earlier Prophets of Israel, and even on persons of lower spiritual status.

For example Samson is described in the Bible to have performed impossible deeds under divine inspiration. It is related that when Philistines attacked the town of Lehi, The men of Judah asked them, 'Why are you attacking us'? They answered, 'We came to take Samson prisoner and to treat him as he treated us'. So three thousand men of Judah went to the cave in the cliff at Etam and said to Samson, 'Don't you know that the Philistines are our rulers? What have you done to us'? He answered, 'I did to them just what they did to me'?

They said, 'We have come here to tie you up, so that we can hand you over to them'. Samson said, 'Give me your word that you won't kill me yourselves'. 'All right', they said, 'we are only going to tie you up and hand you over to them. We won't kill you'. So they tied him up with two new ropes and brought him back from the cave.

When he got to Lehi, the Philistines came running towards him, shouting at him. Suddenly the power of the Lord made him strong and he broke the ropes round his arms and hands as if they were burnt threads. Then he found the jaw-bone of a donkey that had recently died. He

bent down and picked it up and killed a thousand men with it. So Samson sang

‘With the Jaw-bone of a donkey
I killed a thousand men;
With the jaw-bone of a donkey
I piled them up in piles’.⁽³²⁾

Again it is related that Samson became very thirsty, so he called to the Lord and said, “You gave me this great victory; am I now going to die of thirst and be captured by these heathen Philistines? Then God opened a hollow place in the ground there at Lehi, and water came out of it. Samson drank it and began to feel much better”.⁽³³⁾

There are numerous stories in the Bible telling us the miracles performed by different people. How far they can be taken as true happenings, one cannot say.

Christians today emphasise that Jesus being born without the agency of a father is a great miracle and he should be regarded as Divine. No doubt it was a great miracle but the Bible mentions even greater miracles. For example it is related, “For this Melchizedek, the king of Salem, priest of the Most High God. . .

He is without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the son of God he continues a priest for ever”.⁽³⁴⁾

However unbelievable this account appears, Christians today have no answer to the criticism that if Jesus being born without a father is regarded as God, why is the king of Salem, who was born without father and mother, not

regarded as a higher God. The fact is that Jesus did not claim to be God or the son of God, instead he claimed to be a true Messenger of God, a Prophet to the Israelites.

QUESTIONS

1. One of the miracles described in the Holy Qur’an is that Jesus created some birds. How would you explain this?
2. A Christian says to you, “Jesus was born without the agency of a father, so he should be regarded as God”. What arguments would you put forward to say that he cannot be regarded as God?

CHAPTER SEVEN

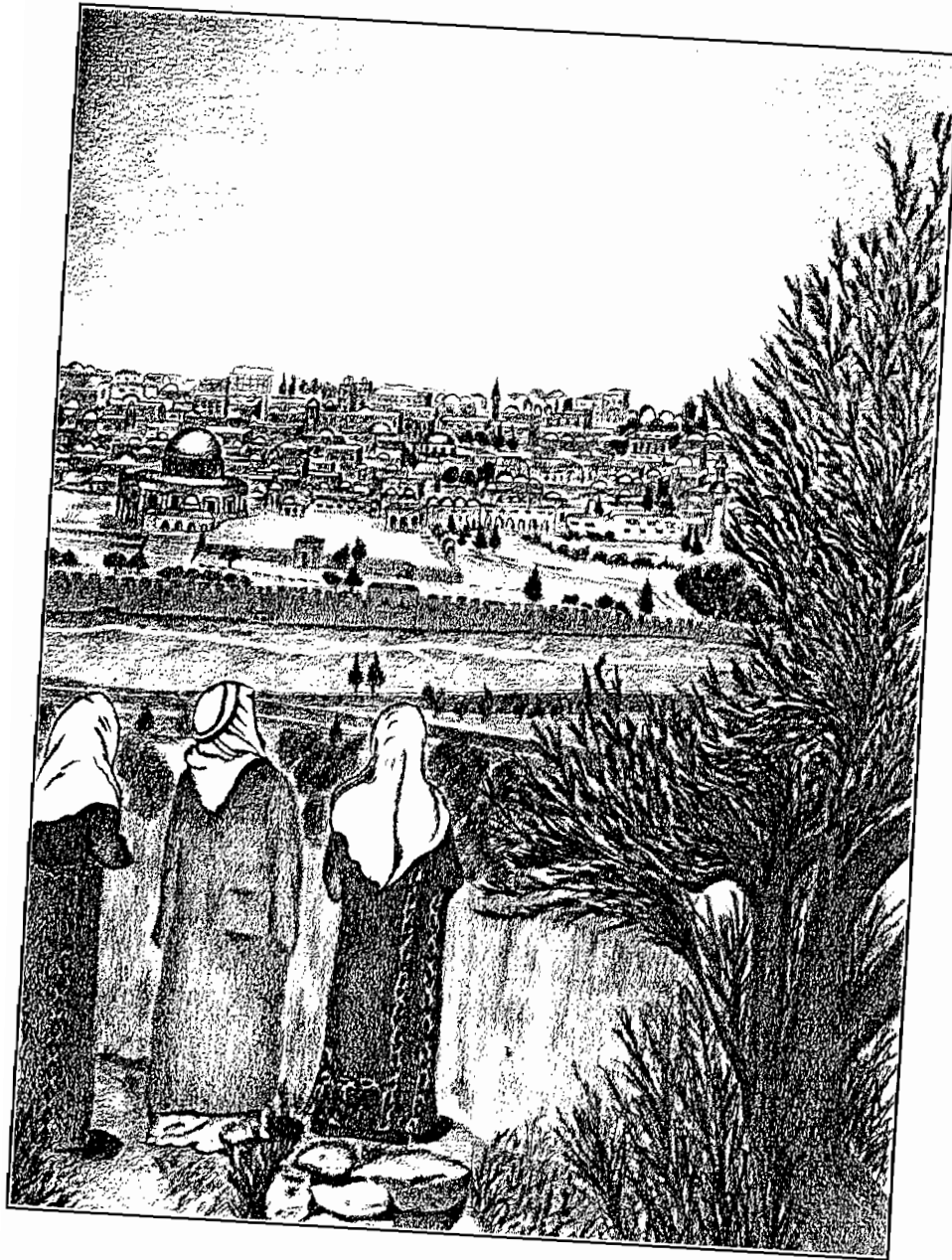
THE ENEMIES PLAN TO KILL JESUS

The history of religion tells us that whenever God sent His Messengers to this world, the majority of the people opposed them and tried to put an end to their message. Jesus was therefore no exception. His message was entirely based on peace and love, yet the Jewish clergy of his time were threatened by the spiritual revolution brought by Jesus. They realised that his teachings were direct challenge to their own leadership. They were desperate to do something to save their leadership as they feared that it was going to be replaced by the leader appointed by God. They were thus greatly annoyed and wanted to get rid of Jesus.

They accused him of changing the accepted religious practices and said that his teachings were leading people astray.

Moreover they were enraged as he often rebuked them for their hypocrisy and the absurd practices and ceremonies to which they had become accustomed.

Jesus told people, "Be on your guard against the teachers of the Law, who like to walk about in their long robes and love to be greeted with respect in the market place; who choose the reserved seats in the synagogues and the best places at feasts; who take advantage of



widows and rob them of their homes, and then make a show off saying long prayers ! Their punishment will be all the worse”⁽³⁵⁾.

The Jewish clergy therefore turned against Jesus. They were determined to put an end to his message and bring about his ruin.

JESUS IN JERUSALEM

We now, take up the story of the arrest of Jesus, his subsequent trial and orders of crucifixion by Pontius Pilate, his survival from the cross and meeting his disciples, as mentioned in the Bible.

As the Passover festival was drawing near, large numbers of people began preparations to visit Jerusalem to commemorate the delivery of the Jews from slavery in Egypt many hundreds of years earlier. This is an important Jewish festival. The Orthodox Jews abstain from eating leavened bread during the festival. Instead they use unleavened bread usually in the form of matzoth.

By eating matzoth they recall the unleavened bread eaten by the Israelites during their flight because they had no time to prepare raised bread. During Passover, meals are also prepared and served using sets of utensils and dishes reserved strictly for the festival.

It is said that Jesus went to Jerusalem on this occasion. He rode a donkey provided by his disciples and entered Jerusalem. The crowd greeted him, listened to him and was very impressed by what he had to say.

The Bible tells us, “When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was thrown into an uproar. ‘Who is he’?, the people asked. ‘This is the Prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee’, the crowds answered.”⁽³⁶⁾

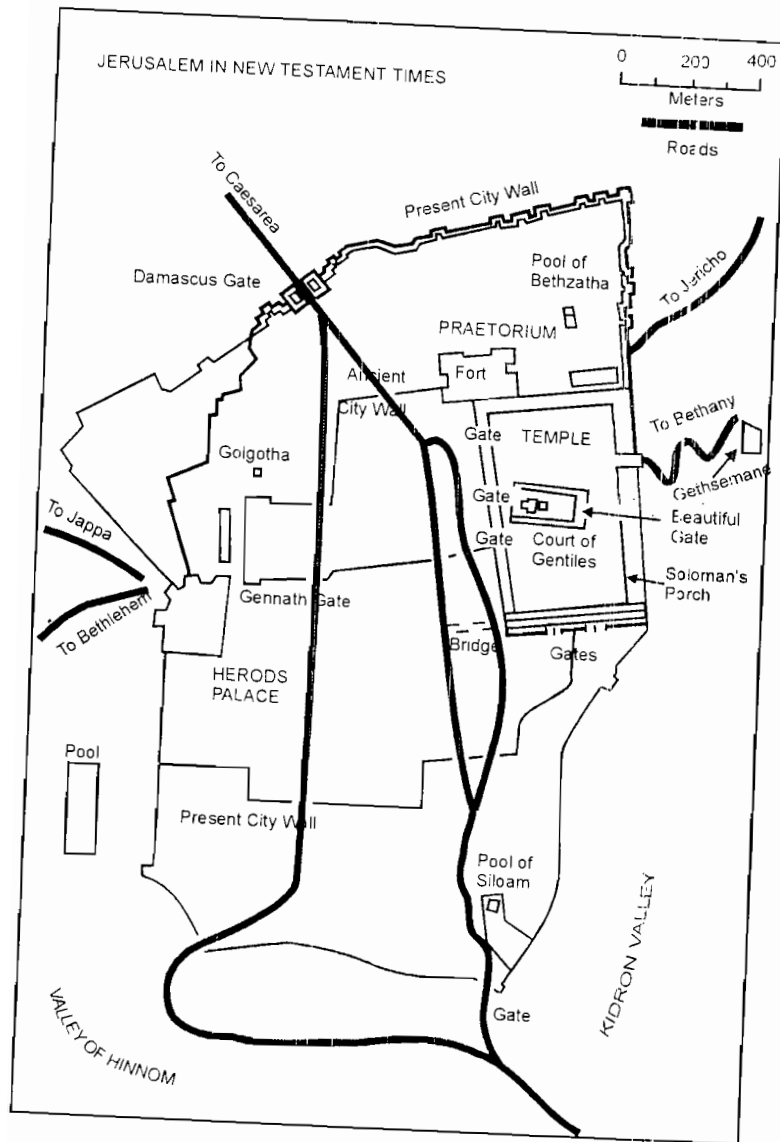
The chief priests and the teachers of the Law heard the reports of his growing influence and became very worried. It is possible that they had persuaded the authorities to arrest Jesus while he was in Jerusalem.

“The chief priests and the elders met together in the palace of Caiaphas, the High Priest and made plans to arrest Jesus secretly and put him to death. ‘We must not do it during the festival’, they said, ‘or the people will riot’.”⁽³⁷⁾

Jesus was aware of their plans. He took necessary precautions but remained in Jerusalem and continued delivering the message of God to the people. One day he and his disciples had their meals together secretly at one of his disciple’s house. When the feast was over they moved hurriedly through the narrow streets towards the city gate. They wanted to be away from the city in order to avoid being arrested. As they came out of the city, they headed towards Gethsemane, a garden on the slope of the Mount of Olives, a hill on the east side of Jerusalem, opposite the Temple.

JESUS PRAYS IN GETHSEMANE

When they arrived at Gethsemane, “Jesus went off from them about the distance of a stone’s throw and knelt down



and prayed, 'Father', he said, 'if you will take this cup of suffering away from me. Not my will, however, but Your Will be done.' An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. In great anguish he prayed even more fervently ; his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Rising from his prayer, he went back to the disciples and found them asleep, worn out by their grief. He said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you will not fall into temptation' .”(38)

“Once more Jesus went away and prayed, 'My Father, if this cup of suffering cannot be taken away unless I drink it, Your Will be done'. He returned once more and found the disciples asleep; they could not keep their eyes open. Again Jesus left them, went away and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then he returned to the disciples and said, 'Are you still sleeping and resting?

Look! The hour has come for the 'son of man' to be handed over to the power of sinful men' .” (39)

It is said that Judas, a companion of Jesus betrayed him and led the soldiers to Gethsemane. “Judas, the traitor knew where it was, because many times Jesus had met there with his disciples. So Judas went to the garden, taking with him a group of Roman soldiers, and some temple guards sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees ; they were armed and carried lanterns and torches” .”(40)

JESUS IS ARRESTED

“The Roman soldiers with their commanding officer and the Jewish guards arrested Jesus, bound him and took him first to Annas. He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.”⁽⁴¹⁾

He questioned him in his own way. “Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest.”⁽⁴²⁾

“Annas had no official position but he was a former high priest and a leading Sadducee. He was obviously a man of great influence. Perhaps this trial was an informal investigation held to formulate proper charges.”⁽⁴³⁾

“The chief priests and the whole council tried to find some false evidence against Jesus to put him to death; but they could not find any, even though many people came forward and told lies about him”.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Finally the council condemned Jesus to death on religious grounds of blasphemy. Under Roman rule, however, it was necessary to obtain confirmation of this sentence and its execution from Pilate.

“A death sentence passed on Jesus under Jewish law by a religious court would certainly have influenced the ordinary people against him and it might even have been expected to exert a certain moral pressure on the Roman judge who was to have the final word”.⁽⁴⁵⁾

“The men who were guarding Jesus mocked him and beat him. They blindfolded him and asked him, ‘ Who hit you’? Guess ! And they said many other insulting things to him.”⁽⁴⁶⁾

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Jews plan to kill Jesus?
2. Where was Jesus arrested?
3. Which disciple, according to the Bible betrayed Jesus?
4. What was the prayer of Jesus at that critical moment?

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE TRIAL OF JESUS

“Early in the morning all the chief priests and the elders made their plans against Jesus to put him to death. They put him in chains, led him off, and handed him over to Pilate, the Roman governor.”⁽⁴⁷⁾

They told him that Jesus had committed an act of blasphemy against God. Moreover they accused him of changing the accepted religious practices and said that his teachings were leading people astray. It appears from these statements that the Jewish religious leaders of that time believed that the punishment prescribed for blasphemy was death, that is why they pleaded with Pilate to put Jesus to death. Strangely some of the Muslim clergy of today also believe that the punishment for blasphemy should be death. The Government of Pakistan, influenced by the mullahs, has enacted a law which prescribes the only punishment for such a crime as death. It seems therefore that the Muslim clergy of today ignore the teachings of the Holy Qur'an which does not mention any such punishment, instead they seem to follow the Jewish laws.

When Pilate heard the charges against Jesus he said to them, “Then you yourselves take him and try him according to your own law”. They replied, “We are not allowed to put anyone to death.”⁽⁴⁸⁾

“They continued to accuse Jesus, ‘ We caught this man misleading our people telling them not to pay taxes to the Emperor and claiming that he himself is the Messiah, a king. Pilate asked him. ‘Are you the king of the Jews’?”

‘So you say’, answered Jesus”⁽⁴⁹⁾

Jesus said, “My kingdom does not belong to this world; if my kingdom belonged to this world, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish authorities. No, my kingdom does not belong here.”⁽⁵⁰⁾

“Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, ‘I find no reason to condemn this man.’

But they insisted even more strongly, ‘With his teaching he is starting a riot among the people all through Judaea. He began in Galilee and now has come here.’

When Pilate heard this, he asked, ‘Is this man a Galilian?’ When he learnt that Jesus was from the region ruled by Herod, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.” “Herod asked Jesus many questions, but Jesus made no answer. The chief priests and the teachers of the Law stepped forward and made strong accusations against Jesus. Herod and his soldiers mocked Jesus and treated him with contempt; then they put a fine robe on him and sent him back to Pilate.”⁽⁵¹⁾

Pontius Pilate was convinced beyond any doubt that Jesus was innocent, therefore he tried to set him free but the Jews protested violently.

“Pilate called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people and said to them, ‘ You brought this man to me and said that he was misleading the people. Now, I have

examined him here in your presence, and I have not found him guilty of any of the crimes you accuse him of. Nor did Herod find him guilty for he sent him back to us. There is nothing this man has done to deserve death. So I will have him whipped and let him go’.”⁽⁵²⁾

The Jews insisted that he was a traitor and therefore should be hanged.

“The governor looked at the multitudes of the Jews standing around and when he saw many of the Jews weeping, he said, ‘Not all the multitude wishes him to die’ But the elders of the Jews said, ‘ For this purpose has the whole multitude of us come, that he should die’.”⁽⁵³⁾

They put so much pressure on Pilate that he could not set Jesus free though he was still anxious to save his life. During the trial, his wife, who had seen a vision concerning the innocence of Jesus, sent a message to him, saying, “Have nothing to do with that innocent man, because in a dream last night I suffered much on account of him.”⁽⁵⁴⁾

At this Pilate made a further attempt to persuade the Jews to agree that Jesus should be released. He gave the enraged crowd an option either to save the life of Jesus or that of a notorious criminal called Barabbas. The Bible tells us that, “At every Passover Festival the Roman governor was in the habit of setting free any one prisoner the crowd asked for. At that time there was a well known prisoner named Jesus Barabbas. So when the crowd gathered, Pilate asked them, ‘Which one do you want me

to set free for you? Jesus Barabbas or Jesus called the Messiah'?"⁽⁵⁵⁾

They answered 'Barabbas' because the chief priests and the elders had persuaded the crowd to ask Pilate to set Barabbas free and have Jesus put to death. "When Pilate asked them, 'What crime has he committed?' They started shouting at the top of their voices, 'Crucify him' ".⁽⁵⁶⁾

They even threatened to write to Caesar that Pilate had set free a person who claimed to be a king which meant that Pilate himself was also a rebel against the emperor.

"When Pilate saw that it was no use to go on, but that a riot might break out, he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, 'I am not responsible for the death of this man ! This is your doing.' The whole crowd answered, 'Let the punishment for his death fall on us and our children'!".⁽⁵⁷⁾

"So Pilate passed the sentence on Jesus that they were asking for. He set free the man they wanted, the one who had been put in prison for riot and murder."⁽⁵⁸⁾

This act on the part of Pilate amounts to a confession that Jesus was indeed innocent and that the cruel Judgement passed by him was under duress. It is quite clear from the Biblical account that the Jewish community had colluded against Jesus and were determined to have him punished. So a decision by Pilate contrary to the wishes of Jewish clergy would have resulted in a riot.

Friday afternoon was fixed for crucifixion. Jesus prayed: "Father, my Father ! All things are possible for you. Take this cup of suffering away from me." He prayed fervently

because the truth of his claim was at stake. Jesus knew that if the Jews succeeded in their attempt to kill him by crucifixion, they would proclaim him to be an impostor whose falsehood had finally been proved on the authority of divine scripture, which says, 'A hanged man is accursed by God.'⁽⁵⁹⁾

GOD'S PROMISE TO SAVE JESUS FROM THE ACCURSED DEATH

The prayers of Jesus were accepted and God assured him that he would be saved from the accursed death on the cross.

According to the Holy Qur'an, God said to him, "I will cause thee to die a natural death and will exalt thee to Myself, and shall clear thee of the charges of those who disbelieve."⁽⁶⁰⁾

The Bible too seemed to have given a similar message. When the Jews demanded a sign from Jesus, he replied, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign; But none will be given to it except the sign of the Prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the son of man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."⁽⁶¹⁾

It is interesting to note that the story of Jonah was also told in the Holy Qur'an but it does not mention that he remained in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

The Holy Qur'an says:

"Surely Jonah was one of the Messengers of Allah. When he fled to the laden ship ; And he cast lots with the crew of the ship and was of the losers. And the fish swallowed him while he was blaming himself. And had he not been of those who glorify God, he would have surely remained in its belly till the Day of Resurrection. Then We cast him on a bare tract of land, and he was sick."⁽⁶²⁾

QUESTIONS

1. To which court was Jesus brought for trial?
2. What charges were brought against Jesus by the Jews?
3. What dream did Pilate's wife has regarding Jesus?
4. Who was set free by Pilate on the occasion of Passover?
5. Mention a Qur'anic verse which shows that Jesus did not die on the cross.
6. When the Jews demanded a sign, which sign did Jesus mention to them?

CHAPTER NINE

JESUS IS PUT ON THE CROSS

On Friday morning, the day fixed for the crucifixion, there was a huge commotion in the city. Most of the enemies of Jesus were looking forward to see him humiliated and disgraced publicly.

According to the Bible a crown of thorny branches was put on his head and he was beaten and spat at.

Jesus was taken to Golgotha, the place of execution, about 600 metres away. A great crowd followed him through the streets, jeering at him and hurling insults at him. The Gospel of John tells us that he carried his own cross.

According to a Jewish custom, which was fully endorsed by the Roman law, nobody was permitted to remain on the cross on the Sabbath. The Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday and remains up to the sunset on Saturday.

In those days the hands and feet of the condemned persons were nailed to the wooden cross, and no food was served to them, so they used to die of hunger and thirst. Death was the result of a slow process which sometimes took three or four days. It was also a practice that the soldiers would break the leg bones of the victims to ensure their death.

The cross was put up on the hill of Golgotha, outside the city wall of Jerusalem. A crowd had gathered there to witness the scene. Mary, the mother of Jesus, some disciples and well wishers of Jesus were also present.

“People, passing by, shook their heads and hurled insults at Jesus.”⁽⁶³⁾

“In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the Law and the elders jeered at him. He saved others but he cannot save himself ! Isn’t he the king of Israel? If he comes down off the cross now, we will believe in him”!⁽⁶⁴⁾

“Even the bandits who had been crucified with him insulted him in the same way”.⁽⁶⁵⁾

Jesus prayed to God and said, “Forgive them, Father! They don’t know what they are doing”.⁽⁶⁶⁾

As related in the Bible, soon after Jesus was put on the cross, the whole country was covered with darkness which lasted for three hours. After remaining for a few hours on the cross Jesus cried in anguish, “Eli, Eli, Lema Sabaqtani?” which means, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?”⁽⁶⁷⁾

Then he said ‘ I thirst.’

“A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth.”⁽⁶⁸⁾

Soon after his head drooped and he seemed to have gone into a coma. “Jesus was in shock and hypotensive, and lost consciousness because of diminished blood supply to the brain. His ashen skin and immobility were mistaken for death and there is no doubt that the bystanders believed he was dead.”⁽⁶⁹⁾

It seemed that an earthquake shook the whole city at that moment. The Bible says; “The earth shook and the rocks were split.”⁽⁷⁰⁾

The people were terrified and took to their heels.

As the Sabbath was approaching, the soldiers broke the legs of the two bandits. They were alive. They died when their legs were broken, but when they came to Jesus, they thought that he had already died. However “one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear and at once blood and water gushed out.”⁽⁷¹⁾

Surprisingly the legs of Jesus were not broken.

The rushing of blood and water from his body was a proof that Jesus was alive at that moment and not dead, as medical science tells us that blood and water cannot gush forth from a dead body. If he was dead and his heart had stopped beating, such active bleeding as causing the blood to gush out would be impossible.

JESUS IS SAVED

One of the followers of Jesus who had not yet become his disciple openly, but believed in him at heart, was Joseph of Arimathea. He was a rich and influential man and was very close to Pilate. The body of Jesus was handed over to him.

The Bible tells us that “Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate wondered if he were already dead and summoning the centurian; he asked him

whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the Centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph.”⁽⁷²⁾

Thus under Joseph’s supervision the disciples removed the body, wrapped it in a linen shroud, and placed it in a tomb which had been dug out of solid rock. Then they rolled a large stone across the entrance to the tomb. The tomb was spacious enough to accommodate Jesus and one or two attendants to sit and take care of him. It appears that only a few close disciples knew that Jesus was alive. The rest of his disciples, like everybody else, were under the impression that he died on the cross. The Bible mentions coming and going of these disciples to the tomb but everything was done with great caution and in secrecy.

The Bible tells us that

“The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed, and saw the tomb, and how his body was laid; then they returned and prepared spices and ointments.”⁽⁷³⁾

It also tells us that Nicodemus, another follower of Jesus, and a great physician of that time, “who at first had gone to see Jesus at night, went with Joseph taking with him about thirty kilograms of spices, a mixture of myrrh and aloes”⁽⁷⁴⁾.

In fact the ointment which had been prepared in advance was applied to his wounds. All the ingredients of this ointment have properties of healing wounds and subduing pain.

This wonderful ointment known as ‘Marham-i-Isa’ or the OINTMENT OF JESUS is recorded in many medical

books throughout history such as the famous medical treatise known in the western world as Canon of Avicenna⁽⁷⁵⁾. This book was used as a medical textbook in Europe for centuries.

They also smoked the grotto with aloes and other herbs which have tonic qualities to bring Jesus back to consciousness.

Thus “Jesus lay in the tomb over the Sabbath. He would not regain consciousness for many hours, and in the meantime the spices and linen bandages provided the best dressing for his injuries.”⁽⁷⁶⁾

After a short time in the sepulchre Jesus had recovered sufficiently to be able to walk.

JEWES SET A WATCH AT THE TOMB

The Jews themselves were not sure of the death of Jesus. They remembered the prophecy that Jesus had made that he would show them the miracle of Jonah and would come out of the heart of the earth alive. Therefore the chief priest and the Pharisees went again to Pilate and said to him, “Your Excellency, we recall how that impostor said, that he would rise again after three days. Will you give orders for the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day?”⁽⁷⁷⁾

“Take a guard”, Pilate told them, ‘go and make the tomb as secure as you can.’ ‘So they went and made the sepulchre secure by sealing the stone and leaving the guard on watch’.”⁽⁷⁸⁾

JESUS ESCAPES AND MEETS HIS DISCIPLES

In spite of the watch and despite the sealings of the tomb, Jesus left the sepulchre before the third day had dawned. As related in the gospel of Matthew, there seemed to be another violent earthquake which rolled the stone away. "The guards were so afraid that they trembled and became like dead men."⁽⁷⁹⁾

"Very early on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, and Salome went to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they were saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?' And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back - it was very large."⁽⁸⁰⁾

Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side dressed in a white robe- and they were amazed. He told them, "He is going to Galilee ahead of you ; there you will see him, just as he told you."⁽⁸¹⁾

After leaving the sepulchre Jesus is known to have been seen by many of his disciples at different times. Even when some of his disciples were taken by surprise and disbelief, Jesus proved to them that he was the same person who was put on the cross and not a ghost. He seemed to have been moving away from Jerusalem in the direction of Galilee. He avoided public contact intentionally. As he set upon his Journey, he met two disciples who were going to a village named Emmaus, about eleven kilometres from Jerusalem. They did not recognise him at first. "As they came near the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were

going farther."⁽⁸²⁾ He did not want to go into the village for fear of being recognised.

On another occasion he met some disciples. "They were terrified, thinking that they were seeing a ghost. But he said to them, 'Why are you alarmed? Why are these doubts coming up in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet and see that it is I myself. Feel me, and you will know, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you can see I have. He said this and showed them his hands and his feet. They still could not believe, they were so full of joy and wonder ; so he asked them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of cooked fish, which he took and ate in their presence".⁽⁸³⁾

The Bible also tells us that when Thomas one of his disciples, learnt that Jesus was alive and well, he said, "Unless I see the scars of the nails in his hands and put my finger on those scars and my hand in his side I will not believe."⁽⁸⁴⁾

So when he met Jesus along with other disciples, Jesus showed him where the nails were and told Thomas to thrust his finger into the place where the nails were, and into his side, so as to see for himself that he was alive with the same body and not a ghost.

Thus the prophecy that Jesus made was proved to the letter. Just as Jonah entered the whale's body alive, remained in it alive though unconscious, and came out of it alive, so Jesus entered the tomb alive, remained there alive, though unconscious, and came out alive.

QUESTIONS

1. Where was the cross set up?
2. What is meant by the statement “Eli Eli Lima Sabaqatani”?
3. Why did people think that Jesus was dead?
4. How long did Jesus remain on the cross?
5. How can you say that Jesus was alive but was in a coma when taken down from the cross?
6. Who was Joseph of Arimathea? Where did he take the body of Jesus?
7. How long did Jesus remain in the tomb?
8. Where did Jesus go after he recovered from his wounds?
9. Why did the disciples think that he was a ghost?
10. How did Jesus remove their fears and told them that he was not a ghost?
11. Jesus prophesied that he would come out alive from the heart of the earth just as Prophet Jonah came out alive from the belly of the whale. Explain how this prophecy was fulfilled?

CHAPTER TEN

CHRONOLOGY OF THE TRIAL OF JESUS

The events leading up to and including the trial of Jesus are of great importance, but they are not easy to ascertain.

“The Gospels appear to report two different trials of Jesus. One was before the Jewish authorities, when he was charged with a religious offence. The other was before the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate, where he was charged with a political offence. Probably the Jews had no authority to carry out a death sentence themselves, and this was why they needed the support of the Roman prefect.

It certainly makes good sense to suppose that Jesus’ enemies would make much of the charge of blasphemy before a Jewish court and then change to a charge of political revolt as the one most likely to secure the death sentence from a Roman official.”⁽⁸⁵⁾

“In Mark, and Matthew who probably used him, Jesus is arrested by a group of unspecified status which is organised by the high priest. He refers to this band as if they were a homeguard sent out to catch a bandit by the local authority of a city. He is brought to the high priest and accused by witnesses before the ‘chief priests and all the council’. The witnesses cannot agree, Jesus tells the high priest that he is the Messiah and that the ‘son of man’

will soon be seen coming in clouds of glory; the high priest exclaims at this blasphemy and the meeting adjudges him fit to die. A second meeting in the morning holds a consultation, doubtless as to how have him killed, and concludes by handing him over to Pilate.”⁽⁸⁶⁾

“Luke’s account is subtly different. Jesus is arrested by the Temple police ; he is taken to the high priest’s house but there is no night time meeting of any council. Only at a morning meeting does a council ask him questions: first, is he Christ? second, is he the ‘son of God’? The whole company then brings him to Pilate.”⁽⁸⁷⁾

“In the fourth Gospel events take a very different course Jesus is never questioned at all before a council of Jews. He is taken first to the house of the high priest’s father-in-law Annas, where he is questioned only about his disciples and his teaching From there he goes to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, and from there to Pilate’s residence.”⁽⁸⁸⁾

According to the Bible it seems that the trials of Jesus before Pilate and possibly before Herod had all happened in the course of Friday morning, which is hard to believe. “It is difficult to imagine that Jesus was brought before Pilate much earlier than six o’ clock in the morning when the Jewish day began. Yet within three hours everything is decided and Jesus is at the place of execution. In the interval Pilate had heard the charges against Jesus, has interrogated him, has listened and responded to a plea to release a prisoner according to custom and the people have chosen Barabbas; he has yielded to the demand that Jesus

should be crucified, and ordered him to be flogged; the soldiers have taken him away and had their sport with him, and then have led him at a slow pace some distance outside the city to Golgotha. Pilate must surely have condemned Jesus with extraordinary haste, which is not what the other sources convey.

According to Matthew, the wife of Pilate sends to tell him of a dream she has had and begs him not to proceed against Jesus, and so reluctant is the governor to act that he sends for water and publicly washes his hands to signify his guiltlessness.

Luke introduces another element of delay. Pilate, learning that Jesus is a Galilean, has him sent to Herod Antipas, in residence at his palace in Jerusalem.”⁽⁸⁹⁾

Moreover the Biblical account that Jesus was handed over for crucifixion as soon as the trial ended is hard to believe because the preparation for crucifixion could only start after the crucifixion orders. Surely ample time was needed for preparation.

Obviously all these activities cannot possibly fit on a Friday morning.

Again there is a problem of the Passover festival which we have to solve in this connection. “On the particular week that Jesus was crucified, the Passover was also being celebrated, and this in itself was a special holy day.

Putting together this information with what we learn from the Gospels, it seems that the synoptic writers thought that the Friday was the Passover Festival, whereas

John believed that the Passover fell on the Sabbath in that particular year. ”⁽⁹⁰⁾

Now if we accept that Friday was the Passover as was told by Mark, Matthew and Luke then we cannot envisage the trial, by the Jews or by Pilate, to have happened on a festival day.

“It is most unlikely that Jesus would have been judged, condemned and crucified in the middle of such an important feast as the Passover. In particular, it is unlikely that a Roman governor would have been so foolish as to take the great risk involved in the public execution of a popular figure at a time when Jerusalem was crowded with pilgrims. To have done so would have defiled the day of the great festival, and could easily have sparked off a riot among the Jews.

It would have been against Jewish Passover laws for Jesus to be tried in the middle of a festival. All forms of work were prohibited on the Passover, and this includes the work of the Sanhedrin”⁽⁹¹⁾.

Taking the view of the fourth Gospel into account, which said that Passover was on Saturday, the above objections hold good as all those activities could not have happened in so short a time. It seems that St. John was aware of this problem that no trial could have happened on a festival day, so he tried to resolve it by suggesting that the Passover festival fell on Saturday and not on Friday.

It can be suggested, however, that in order to put Jesus to death the Jews might have ignored their religious laws. This doesn't seem to be the case as we know that Jews

were always keen to follow their religious laws. The fourth Gospel tells us that the Jews did not enter the Roman court for fear of becoming unclean on the eve of Passover. Moreover “it is also significant that, of all the charges made by the first Christians against the Jews, they never accused them of breaking the law in order to have Jesus executed.”⁽⁹²⁾

It appears from these Biblical accounts that Jesus was arrested on Thursday evening and questioned by the Jewish authorities during the night. According to Mark and Mathew he faced the Jewish Council during the night and again early in the next morning, after which he was taken to Pilate. According to Luke, however, he faced the Jewish Council only in the morning.

Some Christian scholars have disputed this and said that there could not have been a night time meeting of the Jewish Council. One of them says:

“As has been pointed out very convincingly by most Jewish scholars, the historical authenticity of an overnight meeting on this occasion of the full Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish Council, is extremely doubtful. No normal Sanhedrin meeting ever took place at night and the difficulties of summoning appropriate representatives from their beds at festival time would have been far greater than simply holding Jesus overnight, or indeed over several nights had there been any legitimate trial .”⁽⁹³⁾

The same argument can be put forward for any meeting conducted before day break.

“The rabbinic treatise on the Sanhedrin, written c.200 states that its meetings could not be held on a Sabbath or any festival day, let alone by night”.⁽⁹⁴⁾

Moreover “It has been pointed out, in questioning the accuracy of the account that it would have been unlikely for the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish court for dealing with matters relating to the Law to have met in the high priest’s house, seeing that it had its own proper place of assembly.”⁽⁹⁵⁾

“Historians have even begun to argue that no such formal Sanhedrin i.e night time meeting of the Jewish council endured in Judea throughout its rule by Herod and his Roman successors”.⁽⁹⁶⁾

We, therefore, conclude that no night time meeting of the Sanhedrin was held.

After taking into consideration the sequence of events according to the Bible and the requirements of the Jewish law, it seems unlikely that after the arrest of Jesus on Thursday, the full meeting of the Sanhedrin, comprising seventy one members, could have taken place before Sunday, as Friday was the Passover and Saturday, being the Sabbath, no Jewish trial could have taken place on those days.

Assuming that the Sanhedrin met on Sunday, the verdict of crucifixion could not possibly have been delivered until Monday, following a mandatory 24 hours as required by the Jewish Law. Jesus must then have been taken to Pilate for the Roman trial. If Jesus was also sent to Herod for trial, this may have occupied a further day. It seems

therefore that Pilate possibly gave orders for crucifixion on Wednesday.

All Gospels agree that Jesus was put on the cross on Friday. It could not have been the Friday immediately after his arrest on Thursday as it was a festival day according to the three Gospels. So it must have been the following Friday. Evidently the Gospel writers have confused the issue. They thought that Jesus was tried and put on the cross a day after his arrest, while it seems more logical that he was put on the cross on the following Friday, which was not a holy day for the Jews.

By fixing Friday it seems that Pilate was deliberately trying to minimise the time Jesus would be on the cross, as he knew that all bodies have to be taken down from the cross before sunset, the next day being the Sabbath.

In view of all what has been discussed above, a possible diary of events could be as follows:-

- Thursday - Arrest of Jesus.
- Friday - Passover Festival.
- Saturday - The Sabbath.
- Sunday - Jewish Council Meeting.
- Monday - Verdict of the Jewish Council.
- Tuesday - Trial by Pilate/Herod.
- Wednesday- Trial by Pilate and Verdict of Crucifixion.
- Thursday- Remained in custody.
- Friday - Jesus put on the cross, taken down and placed in a sepulchre.
- Saturday - Remained in the sepulchre.

Sunday - Left the sepulchre in the morning for Galilee.

QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by Sanhedrin?
2. Why do you think that the meeting of Sanhedrin could not have taken place at night or on a festival day?
3. What does the term 'synoptic writers' mean?
4. Which day was mentioned by the 'synoptic writers' as Passover day?
5. Which day was mentioned by the fourth Gospel as Passover Festival day?
6. Why did Pilate give orders for Jesus to be crucified on Friday?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

JESUS MIGRATES TO OTHER COUNTRIES

While still in Palestine Jesus had given sufficient indications, though in parables as was his habit, that in the future he would have to leave Palestine for another country.

As he was moving away from Palestine, the question arose, as to where Jesus should go. This has already been answered by Jesus himself; "I have been sent only to those lost sheep, the people of Israel"⁽⁹⁷⁾

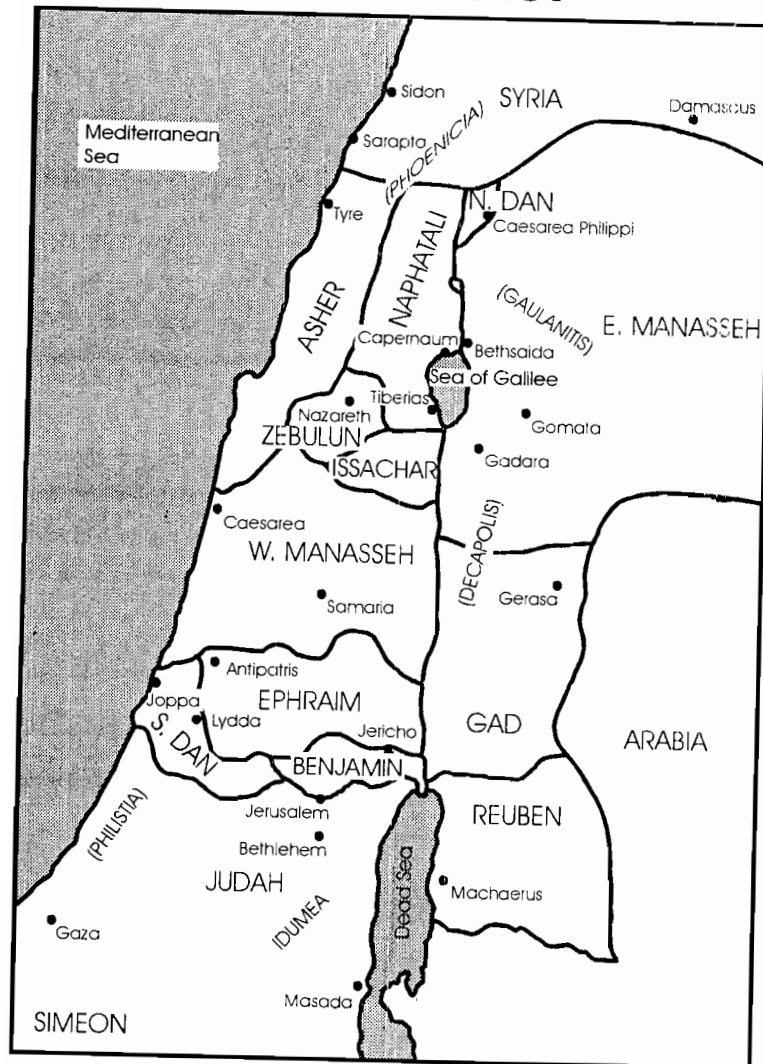
"I have other sheep, that are not of this fold, I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock and one shepherd."⁽⁹⁸⁾

Obviously Jesus would now go in search of the lost tribes of Israel. In order to evade arrest he had to move away from the danger. Both the Jews and the Roman authorities were his enemies. He thus followed the same ancient route which was taken by the Jews during their historic dispersion.

LOST TRIBES OF ISRAEL

If we glance at the history of Jews, we find that they were divided into twelve tribes. All of them lived peacefully under Hadhrat Dawood (David) and after his death under Hadhrat Sulaiman (Solomon) who were both

The 12 Tribal Territories



Names of the 12 Tribes

- | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|
| 1 Asher | 5 Gad | 9 Naphtali |
| 2 Benjamin | 6 Issachar | 10 Reuben |
| 3 Dan | 7 Judah | 11 Simeon |
| 4 Ephraim | 8 Manasseh | 12 Zebulun |

Prophets of God as well as their kings. According to the Bible, their kingdom included all the nations from the river Euphrates to as far west as the city of Gaza in Philistia and the Egyptian border. After the death of King Solomon in 931 B.C, his son Rehoboam succeeded him as king. He was very cruel so the people rebelled against him and his kingdom was reduced to the territory of JUDAH. Jerusalem was the capital of this southern kingdom. Only two tribes, JUDAH and BENJAMIN remained loyal to Rehoboam. The remaining ten tribes formed the northern kingdom of Israel, with its capital at SAMARIA and made Jeroboam as their king. There was continual warfare between the two kingdoms.

Jeroboam, according to the Bible, was an official in Solomon's kingdom. He revolted against King Solomon and in order to avoid his wrath escaped to Egypt and stayed there until Solomon's death. About two hundred years later Assyrians under king Tiglath Pilsar III (745-727 B.C) attacked the northern kingdom of Israel and captured many cities and took their people to Assyria as prisoners. Thus began the captivity and dispersion of the ten tribes.

A few years later emperor Shalmaneser V of Assyria attacked the kingdom of Israel. King Hoshea of Israel surrendered and agreed to pay him tribute every year. But one year king Hoshea sent messengers to the king of Egypt asking for his help and stopped paying the annual tribute to Assyria. When Shalmaneser learnt this, he reacted very strongly, invaded Israel and besieged Samaria, which lasted for three years. During this time emperor

Shalmaneser died. His successor Sargan II continued the attack, and in 722 B.C destroyed the kingdom completely and carried almost all the remainder of the ten tribes to Assyria, Mesopotamia and parts of Media. Henceforth, these ten tribes were known as the Lost Tribes. Further dispersion of the ten tribes took place when the Babylonians destroyed the Assyrians.

Later, the Persians under King Cyrus crushed the Babylonian Empire in 539 BC. The Israelites thus suffered again and were scattered throughout the Persian Empire which at that time extended upto Afghanistan and India. It was these lost tribes of Israel that Jesus went in search of.

JESUS TRAVELS TO THE EAST

It appears that Jesus left Galilee and followed the caravan route to Syria, where there was a large Jewish community settled in and around Damascus. There are indications that from Damascus Jesus travelled to Nisibain, a city about 450 miles from Jerusalem, which is on the route from Syria to Persia. A well known Persian historical work known as Rauzat-us-Safa describes an account of the travels of Jesus to Nisibain.

It says, "Jesus, on whom be peace, was named the Messiah as he was a great traveller. With a woollen scarf on his head and woollen cloak on his body, and a stick in his hand, he wandered on foot from country to country and from city to city. He ate wild fruit and vegetation and at night stayed where he happened to be. In one of his travel, his companions bought a horse for him. He rode the horse

one day but as he could not make any provision for the feeding of the horse, he returned it.

When he arrived in Nisibain, which was at a distance of several hundred miles from his home, he sent some of his disciples into the city to preach. There were current wrong and unfounded rumours in the city about Jesus and his mother. The governor therefore arrested the disciples and summoned Jesus. Jesus preached to the people, healed some sick persons by his prayers and also showed some other miracles to them; as a result the king of Nisibain, with all his armies and his people became his follower".⁽⁹⁹⁾

JESUS IN PERSIA

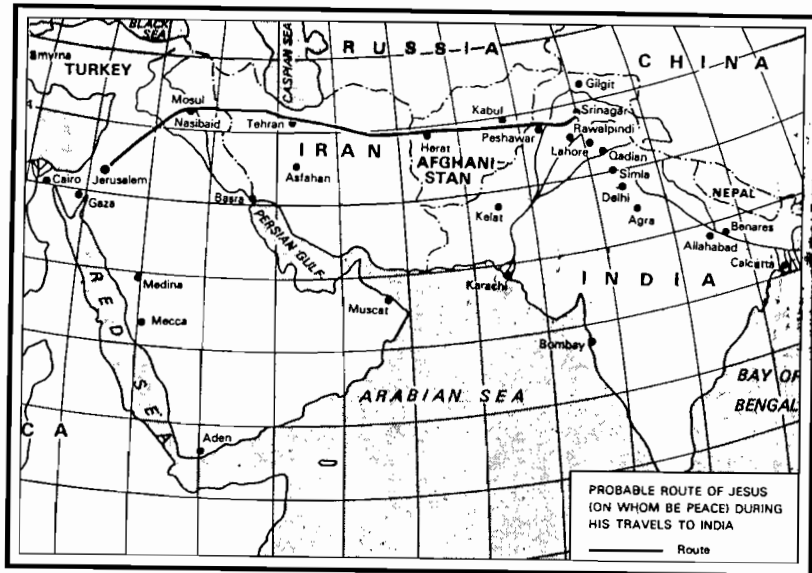
It seems that by going to Nisibain, Jesus intended to travel towards the east through Persia to Afghanistan.

During the course of his journey, Jesus seems to have passed through Herat, a town near the border of Afghanistan with Iran. This is evident from a brief account of a community called DERVISHES, who claim to be the followers of Jesus and are found even today, in and around Herat. In a book called 'Among the Dervishes', it is stated:

"The followers of Isa, son of Maryam - Jesus, son of Mary, generally call themselves Moslems and inhabit a number of villages scattered throughout the western area of Afghanistan whose centre is Herat They believe in the doctrine that Jesus was the 'son of God' because he had attained that rank through his goodness and sacrifice. According to these people, Jesus escaped from the cross, was hidden by friends, was helped to flee to India and

settled in Kashmir where he is revered as an ancient teacher, Yuz Asaf. It is from this period of the supposed life of Jesus that these people claim to have got their message.”⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

It appears that after leaving Nisibain, Jesus assumed the name of YUZ ASAF as he was sometimes known by this name in the countries he subsequently visited. Yuz is derived from YUSU meaning Jesus and Asaf means the gatherer or collector. Thus Yuz Asaf means Jesus, the gatherer of the lost sheep of Israel.



JESUS IN AFGHANISTAN

From Herat Jesus seems to have entered Afghanistan and then through Punjab to Kashmir where the lost tribes of Israel were believed to have settled. There are also indications that Jesus might have visited Tibet.

When we study the customs and habits of the inhabitants of those countries, especially Afghanistan and Kashmir, we are surprised to find that the Afghans and the Kashmiris resemble the Israelites greatly and are very dissimilar to the people of the Indian Sub- continent in their habits, and complexion. The Afghans, themselves claim that they are the descendants of Israelites and their features certainly support their claim and so do several of the names of their tribes. For example MUSA KHEL means the tribe of Moses; DAUD KHEL, the tribe of David; YUSUF ZAI the tribe of Joseph and SULEMAN

ZAI, the tribe of Solomon. Similarly the names of several of their places appear to have Jewish origin.

There is therefore every possibility that some of the lost tribes of Israel had settled in different parts of Afghanistan for a long time before the event of crucifixion and that Jesus visited them and preached to them and was accepted by them.

JESUS IN INDIA

From Afghanistan Jesus might have travelled through the Punjab in India and finally settled in Kashmir. In Kashmir, most of the Israelites had adopted Budhism. Some, even had become idol worshippers. Slowly and gradually Jesus brought them back to the true faith and they accepted him as a Prophet of God.

As time passed Jesus had a great following even in Kashmir. He was held in great honour. Thus he was accepted in all the lands where the lost tribes of Israel had settled.

JESUS MEETS A HINDU KING

In a very old Sanskrit book called Bhavishya Maha Puranas, a meeting between King Shalewahin and Jesus is described. It is reported that once King Shalewahin went to a peak of the Himalayas. There, in the middle of the Hun country the mighty king saw a dignified person of fair complexion wearing white clothes, sitting in the mountain. Shalewahin asked him who he was?



Tomb of Jesus in Srinagar, Kashmir. India

He replied with a smile, ‘ I am the Messiah, born of a virgin.’

He also told the king that he had come from a far off land where he suffered at the hands of his people. When the king asked him to explain his religion, Jesus replied. ‘It is love, truth and purity of heart’.

King Shalewahin was deeply impressed by his holiness, so he left after paying homage to him.⁽¹⁰¹⁾

JESUS DIED IN KASHMIR

Jesus, may peace be upon him, is believed to have died at the age of 120 and was buried in Kashmir. Guided by divine revelation and subsequent research, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, located his tomb in the Khanyar sector of the city of Sri Nagar, where it has now become well known and continues to attract many visitors from all parts of the world. The tomb is known as the Tomb of Yuz Asaf. The grave, according to Jewish custom, is east-west in direction, while it is a well known fact that Muslims, in that part of the world, bury their dead in North- South direction. The Hindus and the Budhists, on the other hand, cremate their dead.

This discovery is a further evidence to the fact that Jesus did not die on the cross and that he had travelled to India to accomplish the divine mission, for which he was sent into this world. May his soul rest in peace.

The Holy Qur’an mentions the place of his final refuge in the following words:

“And we made the son of Mary and his mother a Sign, and gave them shelter on a pleasant plateau with springs of running water”.⁽¹⁰²⁾

This is an accurate description of the beautiful valley of Kashmir, where Jesus and his mother finally settled and lived in peace and tranquillity after his escape from Palestine. Kashmir is famous throughout the world for its natural beauty. It is called the ‘valley of eternal bliss’ and sometimes ‘heaven on earth’. Thus this ‘heaven on earth’ became the place of eternal rest for Jesus and his mother.

It is also believed that Mary died and was buried at a place called Mari or Murree, named in her honour. Her grave which is known as ‘ The resting place of mother Mary’ can be visited even today. Murree is situated in Northern Pakistan not far from Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, and is part of the mountainous range which extends to Kashmir.

The Holy Qur’an tells us in clear terms that Jesus had died. It says: “The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a Messenger. All Messengers have indeed passed away before him. And his mother was a truthful woman. They both used to eat food”.⁽¹⁰³⁾

At another place it says:

“Muhammad is only a Messenger. All Messengers have indeed passed away before him”.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

QUESTIONS

1. Who were the ‘lost sheep of the house of Israel’?

2. How many tribes did the Jews have?
3. Which of the tribes remained loyal to the Southern Kingdom?
4. Name the capital of Southern Kingdom.
5. Who was the king of this Kingdom?
6. Name the capital of the Northern Kingdom?
7. Who was the king of the Northern kingdom?
8. What was the cause of the division of the Jewish tribes?
9. Which Assyrian kings attacked the Northern kingdom and took the people away as prisoners?
10. Which countries did Jesus pass through during his journey to India and why?
11. Who was called 'Yuz Asaf'? What does it mean?
12. How could you tell that the Afghans are the descendants of Israelites?
13. Which book describes a meeting between Raja Shalewahin and Jesus?
14. Who located the tomb of Jesus in Kashmir?
15. How can you refute the Non Ahmadi Muslims' claim that Jesus is physically alive in heaven and will come back to the earth?

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE TURIN SHROUD

Millions of people believe that Turin Shroud is the very linen cloth in which Jesus was wrapped after he was taken down from the cross. However there are others who believe that it is fake and therefore challenge its authenticity.

The shroud has been displayed to the public three times in this century, the last being in 1978, which drew more than three million people to the Cathedral of Turin in Italy, where it is kept with utmost security.

Those who believe it to be genuine, point out that it contains a remarkable image of a life size bearded man with long hair. One half of the cloth bears the front image of a man while the other half shows the back. The image bears obvious marks of crucifixion. There are blood streaks which encircle the head probably due to the crown of thorns. Nail wounds also appear on the wrists. One large mark of blood flow is seen on the left side of the chest which corresponds to the piercing of right side of the body. Impressions from the scourging could also be seen on the body. From these blood marks, one can infer that Jesus was alive when wrapped in this cloth.

The cloth is 434 centimetres long and 109 centimetres wide. Scientists have performed many tests on the shroud to see whether it is genuine or fake.

In 1978, a team of researchers found that the bloodstains on the cloth appeared to be human blood. The team concluded that the image was probably caused by a human body. Other scientists found that the pollens and limestone dust from the cloth could have come from the region of Palestine. However the results were not conclusive.

In 1988, scientists used another test called radio carbon dating on cloth from the shroud in order to determine its age. The results indicated that the shroud dates back to about 1200. The Roman churches accepted the results and declared that the Turin Shroud was fake. However some historians and scientists have challenged this conclusion. The controversy therefore is far from over.

Moreover those who regard it as fake and declare that the imprint on the shroud was the work of an artist have never given a satisfactory explanation of the negative image on the cloth. It is difficult enough to reproduce the positive of a picture with such delicate light shading, but to achieve a perfect negative by artificial means is very hard to imagine.

For those who accept it as genuine and regard it as very holy, it furnishes a corroborative evidence in support of the theory that the body of Jesus was removed from the cross while he was still alive.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the Turin Shroud?
2. Where is it placed?
3. Supposing that the Turin Shroud is genuine, how would you prove that Jesus was alive when taken down from the cross?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE SECOND ADVENT OF JESUS

Jesus is reported to have said:

“The sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the celestial powers will be shaken. Then the sign of the son of man will appear in the sky.”⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

The sign clearly refers to the eclipses of the sun and the moon at the time of the second advent of Jesus. The Holy Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, had also made a similar prophecy. He indicated a very clear sign of the appearance of the Mahdi, whom Muslims were waiting for.

Darqutni, an eminent and recognised book on the Sayings of the Holy Prophet recorded the following:

“For our Mahdi there shall be two signs which have never been manifested before since the creation of the heavens and the earth. In the month of Ramadhan, the moon will be eclipsed on the first of its nights of eclipse, and the sun will be eclipsed on the middle day of its days of eclipse. and both will occur in the same month of Ramadhan.

These two signs have never occurred before since Allah created the heavens and the earth.”



Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad
Promised Messiah & Mahdi
Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The eclipse of the moon normally occurs on the 13th, 14th or 15th night of a lunar month, and the eclipse of the sun on the 27th, 28th or 29th of the lunar month. The sign mentioned by the Holy Prophet, therefore, was that the moon would be eclipsed on the 13th night of a lunar month and the eclipse of the sun on the 28th of the same lunar month, which will be the month of Ramadhan. This sign was to appear after and not before the advent of the Mahdi. He also explained that the Mahdi and the Messiah would be one and the same person. It is reported in the Book of Traditions "There is no Mahdi except Jesus, son of Mary".⁽¹⁰⁶⁾

It so happened that an eclipse of the moon occurred on the 13th of Ramadhan, March 21, 1894 and the eclipse of the sun occurred on the 28th of the same month of Ramadhan, April 6, 1894, in exact accord with the prophecy of the Holy Prophet. The same phenomenon was repeated in the Western hemisphere in 1895. This was such a magnificent sign that it was impossible for any person to manufacture or improvise.

These prophecies were fulfilled in the lifetime of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India, who claimed to be the Mahdi and the Promised Messiah, and had founded a community in 1889, five years before the appearance of these heavenly signs.

Jesus also foretold the state of the world at the time of his second advent. He said, "Countries will fight each other, kingdoms will attack one another. There will be famines and earthquakes everywhere."⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

All these signs point to the present age when famines, epidemics, plague, and earthquakes are taking place in various parts of the world and the nations are at war with each other. These signs have been manifested which means that the second advent of Jesus had come about in the person of someone who came in the power and spirit of Jesus.

The Muslims, too, were looking forward to the advent of the Mahdi and the Messiah. There was general agreement among Muslims that the Mahdi would appear at the beginning of the fourteenth century of the Islamic era. This they inferred from a tradition of the Holy Prophet. That century is also over now. We find that the only claimant of the Mahdi and the Messiah is Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, who claimed that the prophecies predicting the appearance of a divinely inspired teacher, in the latter days, had been fulfilled in his person.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian wrote a book 'Jesus in India' in 1899 in which he declared that Jesus did not die on the cross as was claimed by the Jews and the Christians and did not ascend to heaven as was believed by the Christians as well as the major section of the Muslim community. He was saved from the accursed death on the cross, migrated to the countries where the lost tribes of Israel had settled and after completing his mission died in Kashmir.

The second advent of Jesus therefore meant that someone else would come in his spirit as no one who departed from this world had ever returned.

Hadhrat Ahmad also declared that God had told him that he is the Promised Messiah, the Christians and Muslims were waiting for, who had come in the spirit of Jesus.

God revealed to Hadhrat Ahmad:

"The Messiah, son of Mary, Prophet of God, is dead. It is thou who has appeared in his spirit, according to the promise. The promise of God is always fulfilled."⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

In his Urdu poetry he said:

ابن مریم مر گیا حق کی قسم
داخل جنت ہوا وہ محترم

God is witness that
The son of Mary had died;
that revered one
Dwells in Paradise.

وقت تھا وقت مسیحا نہ کسی اور کا وقت
میں نہ آتا تو کوئی اور ہی آیا ہوتا

The time demanded the advent of the Messiah,
Not of anyone else;
Had I not come,
Someone else would have come in my place.

QUESTIONS

1. Which book mentions Holy Prophet's prophecy regarding the advent of the Mahdi?
2. What was the prophecy and how was it fulfilled?
3. Mention the Hadith which says that Mahdi and the Messiah would be the same person?
4. Name the book which the Promised Messiah wrote to remove the doubts over Jesus's death on the cross and his subsequent journey to India.
5. What was the name of the Promised Messiah?

GLOSSARY

- Abrogate: Repeal, Cancel.
Abundance: Plenty
Admonition: Warning
Agony: Extreme physical or mental torture.
Almsgiving: Charity, Zakat.
Aloes: A sweet smelling liquid produced from a plant.
Anguish: mental suffering.
- Bandit: Robber, Outlaw.
Benign: Kindly
Bestow: Give
Blasphemy: Saying or doing something that shows disrespect for God and is considered shocking.
- Celestial: Concerned with sky.
Censure: Reprove, Criticise harshly, Reprimand.
Centurion: An officer in the Roman army.
Cleave: Split into parts violently.
Colluded: Agreed secretly.
Concocted: Invented.
Covenant: Agreement.
Cremate: To burn the dead body as part of funeral service.
- Decreed: Decided.
Dedicated: Devoted to a sacred purpose.

Defiled: To do something which is offensive to the sacred person or place.

Desist: Stop doing it.

Duress: Threat.

Exhort: To urge, To admonish.

Fore-runner: Predecessor

Forsake: To withdraw help. Abandon.

Gentile: A person who is not a Jew.

Grieve: To feel very sad about something that has happened.

Hideous: Extremely unpleasant ; Ugly.

High Priest: The chief Jewish priest and president of Jewish supreme council.

Homage: To show respect; To honour.

Hypotensive: With low blood pressure.

Hyssop: A small bushy plant used in religious ceremonies to sprinkle liquids.

Immune: Exempt.

Impostor: False claimant to Prophethood

Interpolated: Additions to sacred writings.

Leavened Bread: Bread made using yeast.

Metaphor: Using words not with their ordinary meaning, but trying to describe a situation by using images or symbols.

Mortified: Humiliated ;

Multitude: Crowd of people.

Myrrh: A sweet smelling gummy substance produced from the sap of certain trees and shrubs.

Omnipotence: Having total power.

Parable: A story used to illustrate spiritual lesson, Allegory.

Perplexed: Puzzled, Confused ;

Pharisees: A Jewish religious party during the time of Jesus.

Progeny: Children.

Sadducees: A small Jewish religious group of old times. Most of them were priests.

Scandalous: Outrageous, Shocking.

Secluded: Isolated.

Seclusion: Away from other people, Isolation..

Sepulchre: A tomb cut in rock.

Synonym: Word or expression that means the same as another word or expression.

Synoptic: The first three Gospel writers, i.e. Mark, Matthew and Luke.

Tidings: News.

Traditions: Sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad,
peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

Unleavened Bread: Bread made without using yeast.

Vow: Promise to God.

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In a world where one has to put up with the 'Ho Ho Ho' of Santa Claus, this book tries to retell the true story of Jesus, shorn of the myths that surround his life. It covers Jesus' birth, his early life, prophethood, and the miracles he performed. It also explains the enemy plots to kill him and put him on the cross. The book describes how he survived the crucifixion and gives an account of his journey and the route that he took to get to India where he died at an old age.

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