

Proposed solutions for the four metaphysical puzzles related to Jesus from an Islamic perspective (An Overview)

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[{This article is just an overview of article #58 in the library site, and this overview was published in the platinum post in Bart Ehrman blog}].

This is a brief summary of an article with the same name, and I will provide the link for the original article at the end.

There are 4 puzzles related to Jesus that are really interesting:

1. Jesus didn't die on the cross (as per the Quran). So, was Jesus nailed to the cross but didn't die there, or was he not on the cross at all?
2. Jesus missionary lasted for about 3 years, and we can conclude that he finished his mission. So, what was this mission?
3. Why Jesus ascended to heaven and why is he returning back? Why not just die?
4. Why the miraculous birth? Abraham birth was normal and Moses birth was normal, so what is the need for the miraculous birth of Jesus?

Jewish Scholars have clear answers for these puzzles:

Jesus died on the cross, he didn't have a mission, he didn't ascend to heaven, he won't be returning back, and his birth is not miraculous.

Atheists have the same answers and devoted Christian Scholars have other answers for these puzzles, but to my understanding, these puzzles have never been explored by Muslims before (except for the first puzzle), and it would be interesting to explore them here.

It should be noted that this is not an apologetic article; rather, it is an article that aims to present solutions for these puzzles from a perspective that is in harmony with the Islamic metaphysics. However, it should also be noted that I have utilized certain legitimate interpretations for the Quranic verses, and it is important to acknowledge that these verses can also be legitimately interpreted differently. Nevertheless, the proposed solutions don't contradict the clear verses of the Quran.

We also added one subject about the miraculous birth of Jesus from the Quranic perspective.

As I have mentioned before, this is a brief introduction to the solution model, and I will provide the link for the original article at the end.

1# Was Jesus nailed to the cross but didn't die there, or was he not on the cross at all?

Quran 4:157 answered the claim of the Jews that they killed Jesus, and the verse says that they didn't kill him, and they didn't crucify him, but they thought they did, and they didn't kill him for certain.

The word "crucify" has two legitimate meanings in Arabic:

- The default meaning: to execute by the cross.
- The alternative meaning: to nail on the cross.

This will provide two legitimate interpretations for the above Quranic verse:

- The default interpretation: Jesus was nailed to the cross, but he didn't die there.
- The alternative interpretation: Someone else other than Jesus was nailed to the cross.

Muslims took the alternative interpretation as they couldn't believe that God will let Jesus go through this horrible treatment. This was supported by stories originated from Christians who converted to Islam.

This view was dominant until 1984 when Ahmad Deedat highlighted the default interpretation and built an interesting model accordingly.

Now ... the line in the Quranic verse "they didn't kill him for certain" does support the default interpretation as it clearly clarifies that there has been a killing attempt.

Using the default interpretation, the meaning of Quran 4:157 can be summarized as the following:

They say they killed Jesus, but they didn't kill him, nor they executed him on the cross, but they thought they did. They even were in doubt and they didn't have knowledge but assumptions, and they didn't kill him for certain.

The default interpretation can be supported by analyzing the scientific historical data:

There are numerous accounts that Jesus has been seen after the crucifixion. Therefore, there are 3 main options to explain these accounts from a scientific historical perspective:

- Jesus died on the cross, and he was buried, but someone took his corpse. However, Jesus companions hallucinated seeing and talking to him.
- Jesus died on the cross, and he was buried. A group of his companions decided to take his corpse and bury him somewhere else. Then they decided to tell the people that Jesus is still alive.
- Jesus was nailed to the cross. However, he didn't die there, but went into deep coma. He then recovered and talked with many people. then he went into hiding waiting for the right moment to make his move, but he died suddenly. One of his companions was with Jesus at the time and he buried Jesus quietly, and he managed to keep this matter secret.

The first option is highly unlikely: people don't have the same exact hallucination.

The second option is possible but unlikely: these people were peasants and it is unlikely that they could maintain a conspiracy of such magnitude.

The third option is probable as it is possible to withstand 6 hours of crucifixion, and deep-coma does scientifically exist.

So, regardless of the probability distribution of these options, we could claim with confidence that the death of Jesus on the cross was "historically" not certain.

Now ... There is a clear contradiction between the conclusion that "Jesus probably died in hiding" with the Islamic metaphysics. Therefore, this conclusion can be rejected metaphysically as it is clear from the Islamic Scripture that Jesus ascended to heaven.

But the conclusion that "Jesus didn't die on the cross" fit exactly with one of the interpretations of Quran 4:157. Therefore, this conclusion can support one interpretation over the other. Therefore, we can say with confidence that Jesus was highly likely nailed to the cross but didn't die there.

2# Jesus missionary lasted for about 3 years, and we can conclude that he finished his mission. So, what was this mission?

In the original article, I argued that the covenant between God and the Samaritans was ended as the Samaritans rejected Elijah and tried to kill him. The notion that the covenant ended means that the Samaritans will live according to their skills and capabilities with no special support from God the same as most other nations on earth at that time.

This is not a conclusive conclusion, but I utilized it to say that Jesus was the same to the Jews as Elijah to the Samaritans: Jesus provide two options to the Jewish religious-authority: Either they will follow and obey him (or at least leave him alone) or the covenant will end between God and the Jews, the same as it was ended between God and the Samaritans.

The religious-authority made their choice and rejected Jesus and were the reason for Jesus to be tortured for 6 hours on the cross in an attempt to kill him. This caused the covenant between God and the Jewish people to end. Therefore, Jesus mission was ended.

The ending of this covenant means that the Jews from that day on will live according to their skills and capabilities with no special support from God the same as all other nations on earth.

Now ... If we accepted that the covenant between the Samaritans and God had ended, then I can argue here that the things that happened to the Jews after 70AD was much harder than the hardest thing that happened to Samaritans before. Hence, I can say with confidence that the covenant between the Jews and God must have ended before 70AD.

Looking at the history of the Jews from the Time of Abraham (about 1700 BC) until 70AD then the most oppressions that the Jews faced were three: the oppression of the Pharaoh (about 1187BC), the exiles to Babylon (about 587BC), and the oppression of Greek under the rule of Antiochus IV (about 160BC). These oppressions didn't last for more than 50 years:

For the Oppression of the Pharaoh: We have proposed in a previous article (See the reference in the original article) based on Quranic verses and supported by the Jewish bible, that the Pharaoh of the exodus was Ramesses VI (died in 1137BC) and the Pharaoh of the oppression was Ramesses III (reigned at 1187BC). Therefore, this oppression lasted for less than 50 years.

For the exiles to Babylon: The Babylonians took Jerusalem in 587BC and the Persians took Babylon in 539BC, and the permission for the Jews to return back to Palestine was given in 537BC. Therefore, this oppression lasted for about 50 years.

For the Oppression of the Antiochus IV: His reign started in 175BC and Jews managed to overcome the Greek by the "Maccabean Revolt" in 134BC. Therefore, this oppression lasted for less than 50 years.

But the things that happened after 70AD is completely different in magnitude and duration to the previous events in the Jewish history. Therefore, I can say here with confidence that the covenant between the Jews and God must have ended at one point before 70AD.

3# Why Jesus was ascended to heaven? Why not just die?

I am going here to argue that Jesus ascending and returning is just a symbolic fulfillment to a divine promise in Quran 58:21 (translated by quran.com):

Allah has decreed, I and My messengers will certainly prevail. Surely Allah is All-Powerful, Almighty.

As Jesus ended his mission "not prevailing", therefore, he needs to return back to fulfill this divine promise. So, his return (at the end of time) is just a symbolic fulfillment for a divine promise.

4# Abraham birth was normal, Moses birth was normal, and David birth was normal. So, why the miraculous birth for Jesus?

This is a complex subject and I discussed it extensively in the original article, but still the solution might not seem satisfactory. However, the solution is complete (i.e. there is a presented solution). However, it has been said: no model survives first contact, but still, the first model is the most valuable because it is the starting point for the process of the development of this model.

The solution for this puzzle is to say that Messengers of God have a formal (or informal) contract with God of which the Messenger will deliver the message as best as he can, and God will protect the Messenger from serious harm. For example,

Moses did have a contract with God (regardless whether it was formal or informal) as it can be interpreted from Quran 20:25-47. But I am going to argue here that Jesus didn't have such a contract as he was created as a servant/prophet from birth. Furthermore, Jesus was compared to angels in Quran 4:172, and I am assuming that angels have been created to be servants to God from the start. Therefore, there was no contract between Jesus and God. Therefore, God allowed the torture of Jesus on the Cross for 6 hours, which was sufficient event to end the covenant between the Jews and God.

The argument here is that **if** the covenant is going to be ended, then there need to be a sufficient cause for that. Torturing the Messenger of God and trying seriously to kill him is a sufficient cause. However, God will not allow a normal Messenger to be tortured; because of the contract. Therefore, a Messenger without a contract (i.e. a special Messenger) is needed here. That is the reason (I think) for the miraculous birth of Jesus.

It should be noted here that there are three types of prophethood:

Prophets without specific duties. Examples: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Prophets with specific duties to guide and teach their own people. Example: John the Baptist.

Messengers of God for a specific people. These prophets are actually special envoys from God. Examples: Lot and Moses.

Jesus was the Messenger of God to the Jews, and Elijah was a Messenger of God to the Samaritans.

5# The miraculous birth of Jesus from the Quranic perspective:

If the reader thought that Jesus birth was miraculous according to the Gospels, then multiply this thought thousands of times and this how miraculous the birth of Jesus according to the Quran.

I argued in the original article that Mary didn't carry Jesus for 9 months pregnancy. She only carried him for much less than half a day, possibly even less than 3 hours. This is not a new idea; it originated first time from Ibn-Abbas (the cousin of the Prophet who became a well-known scholar) as an interpretation for the related Quranic verses.

Therefore, the birth of Jesus was immediate after the conception. Jesus creation wasn't by a "sperm-fertilized" egg and it wasn't by a miraculous "non-sperm-fertilized" egg, but Jesus was created from the belly fat of Mary in the same process that created Adam from mud.

The conclusion here is that Mary is not the biological mother of Jesus, but she is his birth mother. However, it is clear from Quran 58:2 that Mothers are the ones who give birth. Therefore, in a third-party reproduction, the mother (in the Islamic perspective) is not the biological one, but the mother is the one who gave birth. So, regardless

whether Mary was the biological mother of Jesus or not, still, Mary is the true mother of Jesus according to the Islamic concepts as she is the one who gave birth to him.

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