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Second Coming of Jesus Christ; A Review of Sulṭān Paul's Thoughts in the Light of Islamic Teachings

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Abstract
Islam and Christianity do share some similarities, but their core beliefs are very different. Some Christian authors interpret these connections using Islamic justifications to support their perspective. One such similarity is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, which is anticipated by both religions. While this occurrence is seen as one of the signs of the Hour in Islamic traditions, it is of utmost importance in Christian eschatology. In this article, Sulṭān Paul's thoughts on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ are examined from an Islamic viewpoint. Sulṭān Paul, who was born in 1881 and raised in an Afghan Muslim family, subsequently converted to Christianity in 1903. He rose to prominence in the Subcontinent for his Christian activities. He made an effort to integrate biblical literature with the Qur'ān through his writings, defending Christianity and addressing Islam and other religions. The study explores Sulṭān Paul's contributions and illuminates his thoughts on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We hope to better comprehend the interaction between Christian eschatology and Islamic beliefs by exploring this viewpoint.

Keywords: Second Coming of Christ, Christianity, Sulṭān Paul's Thoughts, Islamic Views, Short Introduction to Sulṭān Paul.

Sulṭān Paul was born to an Afghan royal family in 1881. Because of some political opposition, his family members were arrested and some of them were sentenced including his father. To save life, his mother migrated to Delhi, India, where he got his education. He studied philosophy, Tafsīr, Ḥadīth, Islamic history, and Arabic literature. Professionally he was an Arabic professor at Forman Christian (FC) College, Lahore. During the early years of his educational life, he was involved in debates with Christian scholars. He studied Islam and Christianity comparatively in search of salvation. This research finally resulted in his conversion to Christianity. After conversion, he got a prominent status in the Christian community in the Subcontinent. "Second Coming of Christ" (نزولِ مسیح) is the writing in which he tried to prove that the Islamic concept of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is derived from Christianity. To prove his position, he has produced arguments from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.

Second Coming of Jesus Christ

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is one of the core doctrines of both Christianity and Islam. Muslims and Christians both look forward to Jesus' second coming. The belief that Jesus Christ is still alive in the skies is one that both Islam and Christianity share. The main difference between the two religions, though, is that according to Islam, God saved Jesus Christ from the clutches of the Jews and took him to heaven.[1] While, Christians assert that on the third day following his execution, Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven in front of his disciples,[2] and now he will return to earth.

The primary issue in this scenario is whether or not Jesus Christ is a religious figure. Jesus Christ will arrive as a Muslim, not a prophet or the son of God, according to Islamic tradition. He shall follow Islamic Sharī'ah and the Imām in office at the time. He will naturally die and be laid to rest in the Prophet's Mosque, which is near to the Holy Prophet's Shrine.[3] There are many indications in the Prophet's sayings about his second coming, which detail is not possible in this short article. According to Christian doctrine, Jesus Christ will return in three respects: as the Messiah, the Son of Man, and the Lord,[4] as well as since he predicted his

[1] Al-Qur'ān, 4:157-158

[2] The Gospel of Matthew, 16:21 , 17:23 , 20:19 ; The Gospel of Mark, 16:19 ; The Gospel of Luke, 9:22 , 18:33 , 24:7,46,51 ; Acts, 10:40 , 1 Corinthians, 15:4

[3] Bukhārī, Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl, al-Jāmi' al- Ṣaḥiḥ, Book.34, Chapter.102, Ḥadīth.2222 ; Book. 46, Chapter.31, Ḥadīth.2476 ; Book.60, Chapter.49, Ḥadīth.3448 ; Muslim, Ḥajjāj Qushairī, Saḥīḥ Muslim, Book.1, Chapter.71, Ḥadīth.389 ; Book.1, Chapter.71, Ḥadīth.391 ; Tirmadhī, Muḥammad b. 'Īsā, Jām'e 'Al- Tirmadhī, Book.31, Chapter.54, Ḥadīth.2233 ; AI-Tabrezī , Sheikh Waliuddīn Abū 'Abdullah AI-Khatīb, Mishkāt Al-Maṣābīḥ, Book.28, Chapter.2, Ḥadīth.5772

[4] The Gospel of Matthew, 24:27 ; 1 Corinthians, 15:23 ; 1 Thessalonians, 3:13, 4:15 ; 2 Peter, 1:16

resurrection while still on earth. He would therefore impart Christian doctrine at his second coming.

Sulṭān Paul's Thoughts

Sulṭān Paul, in his concise work titled "Second Coming of Christ," (نزولِ مسیح) addressed a significant matter concerning Islam and Christianity. He aimed to demonstrate that the references in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth to the Second Coming of Christ are ultimately derived from the New Testament.[5] In his writing, he endeavored to establish Christianity as the true religion. The verses from the Qur'ān that Sulṭān Paul presented as evidence primarily pertain to the Hour of Resurrection, yet he attempted to argue that these verses refer to the Second Coming of Jesus. By citing similar verses from the New Testament, he posited that the Qur'ānic verses draw their inspiration from the teachings of the New Testament. So he writes;

> "Here, we'll display a few passages from the Qur'ān on Christ's Second Advent in two columns: one with verses from the Gospel and the other with verses from the Qur'ān. Because the Gospel verses are taken directly from the Qur'ān, they are accurate and literal translations of the Qur'ān."[6]

Some may think that the Qur'ān contains verses that refer to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. However, Muslim scholars have never used these verses to prove the Second Coming. Instead, these verses are about the signs of the Hour, a time of great upheaval and change that will precede the end of the world. The signs of the coming of Jesus Christ are described separately in Islamic traditions. The question is whether the verses of the New Testament presented by Sulṭān, compared to the Qur'ān, clearly state the coming of Jesus Christ or not. Describing Qur'ānic verses, Sulṭān Paul needed to quote any commentary related to these verses as well which would prove his point, but he did not quote any commentator. Sulṭān has presented three examples. Now the Qur'ānic verses and ḥadīth, presented by Sulṭān, and the verses of the New Testament with comparative analysis are described in the same way as he has stated in the columns.

First Example

NT Verses	Qur'ānic Verses
The author of the Gospel of Matthew writes that the sun will darken, the moon will stop shining, stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will	**1.** When the Sky is cleft asunder; When the Stars are scattered; When the Oceans are suffered to burst forth. (Qur'ān; 82:1-3)

[5] Paul, Sulṭān, Second Coming of Christ, Muhammadanism.org, 1929, p.3
[6] Ibid, pp.6-7

be shaken immediately after those days of tribulation. All the earth's tribes will then weep, and they will witness the Son of Man ascending in the clouds of heaven in all of his glory and might. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from all four winds—that is, from the top to the bottom of heaven. **(Matthew; 24:29-31)**	**2.** When the sun [with its spacious light] is folded up; When the stars fall, losing their luster. (Qur'ān; 81:1-2) **3.** Will they wait until Allah comes to them in canopies of clouds, with angels [in His train] and the question is [thus] settled? but to Allah do all questions go back [for decision]. (Qur'ān; 2:210) **4.** And thy Lord cometh, and His angels, rank upon rank. (Qur'ān; 89:22)

The verses of the Gospel mention the coming of Jesus Christ. However, the real subject matter of Qur'ānic verses is very different from the Gospel. Let us first examine the Qur'ānic verses and then the background of the Gospel's statement.

Sulṭān has taken verses from four different places of the Qur'ān. First of all, the first three verses of chapter 82 (Surah Infiṭāar) are mentioned. This whole chapter depicts the Day of Judgment. Then the first two verses of chapter 81 (Surah Al-Takwīr) are described. There are two topics in this chapter, one is the Hereafter and the second is the Prophethood. The first six verses speak of the first phase of the Hour in which the whole system of the universe will be disrupted. The next phase is mentioned in the next seven verses in which the book of deeds of man will be opened and his crimes will be questioned. In all the verses that follow, the Prophethood and the grandeur of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) are stated.

Further, verse 22 of chapter 89 (Surah Al-Fajr) is quoted. Four topics are discussed in this chapter. First is the narrative of the reward and punishment in the Hereafter which the Makkens used to deny. Second is the fate of the people of 'Ād, Thamūd, and Pharaoh, citing human history. Third is the mention of the general moral condition of human society while the fourth indicates to the court to be established by God on the Day of Judgment. After it, verse 210 of chapter 2 (Surah Al-Baqarah) has been quoted. However, this verse does not prove the coming of Jesus. Earlier, in verse 209, Allah commands the believers to submit themselves completely to Islam. Then in verse 210, not only the Muslims but the whole of humanity is being made aware of the fact that God is always believed without seeing and this is the mark of the believers. If God appears with his angels, then the trial for man has no value and the concept of success and failure ends. Believers are being told not to wait for God to come with angels and to execute His judgment only then will they believe in Him. So accept Him before the time comes. The New Testament also

supports the idea of believing in God without seeing Him.[7]The eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews completely is about this topic.

We now turn to the verses of the New Testament which Sulṭān Paul has compared to the Qur'ān. These verses have been taken from the Gospel of Matthew chapter 24, the first two of which speak of the destruction of Jerusalem. Verses 3 to 14 mention the suffering, persecution, corruption, and false prophets who will appear in the world before the coming of Jesus Christ and, in a way, it is a sign of the coming of Jesus Christ. After it that, verses 15 to 28 mention Jesus Christ's exhortation to Christians to avoid these situations and false prophets. Verse 29 refers to the last sign of the coming of Jesus Christ, immediately after which the Son of Man will appear. And later on in verse 36, it is mentioned that only God knows this hour.

All these verses of the Gospel of Matthew chapter 24 refer only to the coming of Jesus Christ but the Qur'ānic verses, through which Sulṭān has tried to mislead his readers, in comparison to the New Testament indicate only destruction and ruin in the universe on the Day of Judgment. Nowhere in them is there any mention of the coming of Jesus nor in the Muslim commentaries such meanings have been derived from these verses. Only Sulṭān Paul has derived this concept from his side.

Second Example

NT Verses	Qur'ānic Verses
The author of the Book of Revelation describes how, after opening the sixth seal, there was a powerful earthquake, the sun turned black like sackcloth made of hair, the moon turned red, and the stars fell to Earth like premature figs falling from a tree shook by a strong wind. And the heavens separated like a scroll that rolls up. **(Revelation; 6:12-14)**	**1.** O mankind! fear your Lord! for the convulsion of the Hour [of Judgment] will be a thing terrible. (Qur'ān; 22:1) **2.** The Day that We Roll up the Heavens like a scroll rolled up for books. (Qur'ān; 21:104) **3.** One day the earth will be changed to a different earth, and so will be the heavens. (Qur'ān; 14:48)

The verses of these three chapters state the destruction of the heavens and the earth on the Day of Resurrection. And so the three verses of the book of Revelation are pointing to the great earthquake of the Hour. If we talk about the Hour, there are similarities between the statement of the Book of Revelation and the Qur'ān, but neither the Qur'ān nor these verses of the Book of Revelation mention Jesus Christ anywhere. These only point to the great destruction that will take place in the universe on the Day of Judgment and nothing more. Although the book of Revelation

[7] 1 Peter, 1:8-9 ; Hebrews, 11:27 ; 2 Corinthians, 5:6-7

mentions the coming of Jesus Christ in a few places,[8] the verses presented by Sulṭān at this place describe the scenes of Resurrection whose purpose is to educate the readers. The same strategy has been used in the Old Testament to describe the horrors of the Day of Judgment to frighten people, to train them, and to make them attentive to God. The Old Testament calls this day as the Day of the Lord.[9] In his commentary on these verses of the Book of Revelation, Professor James Moffatt writes that here is the sound of many prophets calling out, "The day of the Lord is great and terrible; and who can abide it?" together with the thunder of Yahweh resounding from Israel's past."[10]

We see this theme is also mentioned in the Book of Isaiah,[11] commenting on which Franz Delitzsch writes that God will destroy the current world when sin, which leads to unbelief and persecution of the Church of Believers, has reached its climax.[12] Similarly, the scene of the Hour has been described in the book of Joel and the Gospel of Matthew.[13]

If Sulṭān accuses the Qur'ān that the verses concerning the Second Coming of Jesus are derived from the New Testament then the same verses are also found in the Old Testament and with the slightest alteration in the New Testament these verses are quoted. The verses of the Old Testament mention the Day of Judgment but no indication of the Second Coming of Jesus is found. These verses were later used in the New Testament as evidence of the Second Coming of Jesus.

Third Example

writes describing the scene of the court that will be established on the Day of Judgment

NT Verses	Ḥadīth
According to the author of the Gospel of Matthew, the Son of Man will sit on the throne of glory when he returns in glory, bringing with him all the holy angels: All nations will gather before him, and he will divide them among themselves like a	"The Messenger of Allah said: 'Allah, Glorified and Exalted is He, will say on the Day of Resurrection: "O son of Adam, I fell sick and you did not visit Me." He will say: "O Lord, how could I visit You when You are the Lord of the

[8] Revelation, 1:4,7-8

[9] Isaiah, 2:12, 13:6-9 ; Jeremiah, 46:10 ; Malachi, 4:5 ; ; 1 Peter, 3:10 ; Ezekiel, 30:3 ; Joel, 2:11, ; Amos, 5:18-20 ; Zephaniah, 1:14 ; Acts, 2:20 ; 1 Thessalonians, 5:2

[10] Prof. James Moffatt, The Moaffatt New Testament Commentary, New York, Harper & Brothers Publisher, p.123

[11] Isaiah, 34:4

[12] Delitzsch, Franz, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah, Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1890, vol.2, pp.65-66

[13] Joel, 2:30-31 ; The Gospel of Matthew, 24:29

shepherd divides his sheep from the goats, placing the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. On his right hand, the King will then say to them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." For, when I was hungry, you fed me; when I was thirsty, you gave me drink; when I was a stranger, you took me in; when I was sick, you visited me; when I was in prison, you came to visit me. Then the righteous will respond to him by asking, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and fed thee?" or hungrily, and offered you a drink? When did we recognize you as a stranger and welcome you? or left you nude and clothed? Or when we came to you after noticing that you were ill or in jail? The King will then respond and tell them, "Truly, I tell you, insofar as you have done it to even one of these least fortunate of my brethren, you have done it to me as well." Then he will also say to those on the left, Go from me, cursed ones, into eternal flames, and make preparations for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you fed it to me; I was thirsty, and you gave it to me; I was a stranger, and you did not accept me; I was naked, and you did not clothe me; I was ill and in prison, and you did not come see me. Then they would respond to him as well, asking, "Lord, when did we not tend to your needs when we saw you hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, ill, or imprisoned?" Then he will respond to them, saying, "Truly I tell you, insofar as	Worlds?" He will say: "Did you not know that My slave so-and-so was sick, but you did not visit him? Do you not know that if you had visited him you would have found Me with him? O son of Adam, I asked you for food and you did not feed Me." He will say: "O Lord, how could I feed You when You are the Lord of the Worlds?" He said: "Did you not know that My slave so-and-so asked you for food, but you did not feed him? Do you not know that if you had fed him, you would have found that with Me? O son of Adam, I asked you for water and you did not give Me to drink." He will say: "O Lord, how could I give you to drink when You are the Lord of the Worlds?" He will say: "My slave so-and-so asked you for water, and you did not give him to drink. If you had given him to drink you would have found that with Me. (Muslim; Book.45, Chapter.13, Ḥadīth.6556)

you did not do it to even the least of these, you did not do it to me." And these will depart into eternal punishment, while the righteous will enter eternal life. (Matthew; 25:31-46)	

In the third column, Sulṭān Paul narrates the ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim and the verses from the Gospel of Matthew. Both are explained in the following points;

1. Imām Muslim has narrated this ḥadīth in the chapter of goodness and merciful reward as Sulṭān Paul himself has written the same chapter. If this ḥadīth was about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, then Sulṭān Paul could have presented it in support of his claim but this is not the case.

2. The topic of the verses of the Gospel of Matthew is "The Judgment of the Nations" as described by the author of the Gospel himself. That is, all these conversations will be after the Day of Judgment when the court will take place.

3. According to ḥadīth, God will judge, while according to the Gospel, the son of Adam will judge as the representative of God, and the saying of the Son of Man to the people, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," in verse number 34, refers to it.

4. Neither the ḥadīth of Imām Muslim nor the verses of the Gospel of Matthew mention the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ.

5. The subject of both is the same, namely, the social reform of man and his moral training. Islam is the religion of love and affection in which unprecedented examples and unique rules regarding individual life as well as collective life are stated. In this ḥadīth the people are being encouraged to serve humanity and the same thing has been stated in different places in the Qur'ān.[14]

The verses of the Gospel support the Islamic position that individual as well as collective and social life should be improved. Thus, the teaching in the Gospel verses is that the service of a human being is actually to serve God. Regarding these verses, Duncan Heaster writes in his commentary that the Lord is affected by anything that is done to His creature. This is what the Lord is trying to teach us. He is not merely asserting that we will be saved if we carry out good deeds and that we will not be saved if we do not. He is arguing that what matters is not what is done to Him, but rather what is done to Him. Thus, rather than focusing only on doing good deeds, the teaching's main message is an exhortation to acknowledge and support His servants.[15] Further, concerning the people to whom the Gospel directs to serve, Dr.

[14] Al-Qur'ān, 90:11-16

[15] Duncan Heaster, Verse by Verse Commentary on Gospel of Matthew, Feedbooks, 2014, p.1339

Thomas writes that these brothers have been variously described by other interpreters as Christian apostles and missionaries, as well as all Jews and the poor of the globe.[16] Thus, the explanation of all these arguments proves that Sulṭān Paul's claim that 'Islamic traditions concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ are derived from the Bible' is based on a complete misunderstanding.

Christian Views respecting Second Coming

The Christian world has no reasonable answer to the question regarding Jesus' return. Did Jesus Christ fail at his first coming and will come back into the world to achieve success? If Jesus Christ had to come into the world again, then what was the need for Atonement? If he failed on his first arrival, it meant that his sacrifice was lost. Therefore, in answering such questions, Christian scholars have not been able to come up with any solid argument. The justification elaborated by Sulṭān Paul in this regard, and the verse from the Qur'ān in support of it, is that the Second Coming of Jesus will be for the domination of Christianity.[17] He presents the following verse from the Qur'ān as an argument:

> "Behold! Allah said: "O Jesus! I will thee you and thee you to Myself and clear thee [of the falsehoods] of those who blaspheme; I will make those who follow thee superior to those who reject faith, to the Day of Resurrection."[18,19]

A few answers Sulṭān's argument are as under:

1. The first thing concerning this verse is the followers of Jesus are the ones who believe in the true religion of God and that is Islam only. Every messenger taught it to his nation and after Jesus Christ the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) introduced the same religion. The Jews believe in Moses but deny Jesus, while the Christians believe in both, Moses and Jesus, but deny the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). Later, when the Muslims came after Christians, they accepted the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) as well as both Moses and Jesus. So, the true believers of Jesus Christ are Muslims and they will prevail.

2. The followers in this verse refer to all the believers who will come to the Day of Resurrection and include the Muslims as well because the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) have commanded to believe in all the prophets.[20]

3. This dominance will be religious, that is, the religion of those who believe in the correct teachings of Jesus Christ will prevail and the world knows that since the

[16] Dr. Thomas L Constable, Notes on Matthew (2015), p.403
[17] Sulṭān, Second Coming of Christ, pp.15-16
[18] Al-Qur'ān, 3:55
[19] 'Alī, 'Abdullah Yoūsuf, The Holy Qur'ān, King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Complex, 1987, p.25
[20] Al-Qur'ān, 2:285 ; Bukhārī, al-Jāmi' al- Ṣaḥiḥ, Book.2, Chapter.37, Ḥadīth.50

beginning of Islam, this religion has developed and even today it is gaining acceptance in Europe and other parts of the world. Islam is slowly growing in the West and people are abandoning Christianity and converting to Islam.

4. Sulṭān Paul did not fully narrate this verse, but only half a verse which proves his position. See the rest of the verse:

> "Then shall ye all return unto me, and I will judge between you of the matters wherein ye dispute."[21,22]

Sulṭān has already decided that Christians are the winners. God will send Jesus Christ to dispel people's doubts. So, Sulṭān's assertion is not correct.

Islamic Response to Second Coming

Only Muslims have a reasonable answer to the second coming of Jesus Christ that is as under:

Jesus did not die

According to Islamic traditions, Jesus Christ did not die but was resurrected by God. Now he will come to the world to fulfill his earthly period. He will break the cross, kill the pig, and abolish Jizzya.[23] He will taste death according to God's command. Muslims will offer his funeral prayer and he will be buried near the shrine of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). According to Christian traditions, he died on the cross and was buried as well, and the book of Job (Old Testament) says that he who dies and is buried in the grave will never come back to life.[24] According to the New Testament, Jesus Christ was buried in the grave and, now, he would not come again in the light of the book of Job. Therefore, in the light of these Christian traditions, there is no longer any justification for Jesus Christ to come back into the world.

Refutation of Christian Claim

According to Islamic teachings, Jesus Christ never claimed to be the Son of God. In this case, the Qur'ān states that on the Day of Judgment, Jesus Christ will refute Christian belief.[25] So, to rid the world of Christianity of this self-made belief, he will return to the world and present himself as a servant of God, as the coming of the Son of Man is mentioned in some places in the New Testament itself.[26]

Refutation of Jewish Claim

[21] Al-Qur'ān, 3:55
[22] 'Abdullah Yoūsuf, The Holy Qur'ān, 25
[23] Muslim, Saḥīḥ Muslim, Book.1, Chapter.71, Ḥadīth.389, 391 ; Bukhārī, al-Jāmi' al- Ṣaḥiḥ, Book.33, Chapter.102, Ḥadīth.2222
[24] Job, 7:8-10
[25] Al-Qur'ān, 5:116
[26] The Gospel of Matthew, 24: 37,39

The Jews had the claim that they killed Jesus Christ but Qur'ān states that they had not killed him nor they crucified him but Allah Almighty raised him to Himself.[27] It was necessary to refute their claim. Therefore, by sending him back, the secret of their evil will be revealed and they will be humiliated and disgraced at the hands of Jesus.

Jesus: A sign of the Hour

God has made him a sign of the Hour, so his second coming is one of the great signs of the Hour. Not only Islam but also Christianity admits it.[28]

Conclusion

Both religions are agreed on two points:

1. Jesus Christ is still alive in the heavens.

2. He will come back to the world when God Almighty will wish.

Additionally, some more things are common in this dogma. For example; the coming of angels with Jesus, the coming of false prophets before Jesus disclosed, the killing of anti-Christ by the breath of Jesus, and a great war (Armageddon) between believers and disbelievers. Despite these similarities, a question exists between Islam and Christianity till now. To which faith he will invite the people? Both religions try to prove their sides. He will come as a Muslim, by the Islamic traditions, and call the people to Islam. Christianity is not ready to accept it. According to Christian traditions Jesus will come as the Lord for the judgment of the people so he will call the world to Christianity. The Islamic viewpoint is more solid than Christianity because of having solid arguments regarding the justification of the Second Coming while Christianity has no suitable reasons behind this Coming.

[27] Al-Qur'ān, 4:157-158

[28] Al-Qur'ān, 43:59-61