43506 - Answer to Questions About the Verses Which Speak of the Life of the Messiah (peace be upon him)

the question

I am very interested in this site and I am a regular visitor to this site. I have great respect for you. Before going to my question I would like to say that I have no doubts about the holy Quran and I believed that not even a single letter of the Quran has been change. But I have some misunderstandings about these two verses. "So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)"! (Sura Maryam 33). The day that I die; what does this mean? And also this verse: And there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before his death; and on the Day of Judgment he will be a witness against them;- (An-Nisa 159). Before his death; what does this mean? But this verse: "That they said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah";- but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not:- (An-Nisa 157) " Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise;- (An-Nisa 158). Right now I am studying in China. I have some friends from different faiths asking about the holy Quran and status of Jesus (pbuh) in Islam. I am trying my best to answer all their questions.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

First of all, we would like to thank you for your keenness to ask about matters of your religion, and your efforts to understand the Book of Allaah, may He be glorified and exalted. We ask Allaah to bless us and you with beneficial knowledge.

With regard to the verse in which Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And Salaam (peace) be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive!”

[Maryam 19:33],

al-Tabari said in his Tafseer: The phrase “And Salaam (peace) be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive” means: I was granted protection from Allaah against the Shaytaan and his troops on the day I was born, so that they could not do to me what they do any newborn, i.e. prick him. And on the day I die I shall be protected from the terrors of death. And on the day I am raised alive on the Day of Resurrection I shall be protected against the terror that will seize the people when they see the horrors of that Day.” [Tafseer al-Tabari, 8/340].

Al-Qurtubi said: “And Salaam (peace) be upon me” means protection that is granted to me from Allaah, may He be exalted. Al-Zajjaaj said: Salaam was mentioned before this without the definite article, and the second time it was mentioned with the definite article. The phrase “the day I was born” means, in this world. And it was said: from the suggestions of the Shaytaan. The phrase “and the day I die” means in the grave. The phrase “and the day I shall be raised alive” means, in the Hereafter, because he has three stages: alive in this world, dead in the grave, and resurrected in the Hereafter, and he is granted protection in all three.

Tafseer al-Qurtubi, 11/98.

From the comments of the mufassireen (commentators of Quran) quoted above it may be known that the phrase “and the day I die” does not mean that he has died, rather it means that when he dies – which will happen after he has descended and killed the Dajjaal, as is proven in the ahaadeeth (prophetic narrations)– then he will be protected from dying without belief in Allaah, may He be exalted. Similarly the words “and the day I shall be raised alive” do not mean that he was raised on the Day of Resurrection. Rather he was speaking about his situation at the time of his birth, at the time of his death and at the time of his resurrection. Undoubtedly he will die, but as is indicated by the other verses that you quoted, he did not die by being killed or crucified, rather Allaah took him up to Himself, and he will die after he descends from heaven and kills the

Dajjaal.

With regard to the verse in which Allaah says:

“And there is none of the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) but must believe in him [‘Eesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), as only a Messenger of Allaah and a human being] before his [‘Eesa (Jesus) or a Jew’s or a Christian’s] death (at the time of the appearance of the angel of death). And on the Day of Resurrection, he [‘Eesa (Jesus)] will be a witness against them”

[al-Nisa’ 4:159]

The scholars differed as to whom the pronoun “his” in the phrase “his death” refers. There are two views:

1 – That the pronoun refers to ‘Eesa ibn Maryam (peace be upon him), in which case the meaning of the verse is: that there is no one among the people of the Book but he must believe in ‘Eesa (peace be upon him) before he (‘Eesa) dies, because when he descends from heaven and kills the Dajjaal, he will break the cross and kill the pigs and abolish jizyah (tax paid by non-Muslims in an Islamic state), and he will accept nothing but Islam, and at that time the People of the Book will believe in him, before he dies (blessings and peace of Allaah be upon him), and they will know that he is true and that he did not die before then. So what is mentioned in the verse is one of the signs of the Hour and one of the portents of the Day of Resurrection, which will happen after the descent of ‘Eesa; before he dies at that time, the People of the Book will believe in him. There is support for this view in the comment made by Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) after he narrated the hadeeth which speaks of the descent of ‘Eesa (peace be upon him) at the end of time. It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “By the One in Whose hand is my soul, soon the Son of Maryam will descend among you as a just judge. He will break the cross and kill the pigs and abolish the jizyah, and wealth will become so abundant that no one will accept it, and one prostration will be better than this world and everything in it.” Then Abu Hurayrah said: recite, if you wish: “And there is none of the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) but must

believe in him [‘Eesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), as only a Messenger of Allaah and a human being] before his [‘Eesa (Jesus) or a Jew’s or a Christian’s] death (at the time of the appearance of the angel of death). And on the Day of Resurrection, he [‘Eesa (Jesus)] will be a witness against them”[al-Nisa’ 4:159]

Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 3129; Muslim, 220.

2 – That the pronoun refers to the kitaabi (Jew or Christian) himself, in which case the meaning of the verse is that there is no one among the people of the Book but he must believe in ‘Eesa (peace be upon him), and that he is true, and that he did not die. That is when he suffers the agonies of death and sees realities and proofs. At the time of death, the kitaabi will know that what he believed is false, but that faith will not benefit him at that point.

Based on both views mentioned above, there is no indication or suggestion in the verse that ‘Eesa (peace be upon him) has died. Rather the words – according to the first view – refer to a matter of the Unseen which will come to pass in the future, because he (peace be upon him) will undoubtedly die, but that will be after he has descended, as stated above. And according to the second view, the phrase “before his death” refers to the death of the kitaabi himself.

Al-Tabari, Ibn Katheer and other imams of tafseer (exegesis) regarded the first view as more likely to be correct. Ibn Katheer said: With regard to the words (interpretation of the meaning): “And there is none of the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) but must believe in him [‘Eesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), as only a Messenger of Allaah and a human being] before his [‘Eesa (Jesus) or a Jew’s or a Christian’s] death (at the time of the appearance of the angel of death). And on the Day of Resurrection, he [‘Eesa (Jesus)] will be a witness against them”[al-Nisa’ 4:159], Ibn Jareer said: The scholars of interpretation differed concerning the meaning of that. “And there is none of the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) but must believe in him [‘Eesa (Jesus)] before his death” means, before the death of ‘Eesa. That means that all of them will believe in him when he comes down to fight the Dajjaal, so all religions will become one, which is the monotheistic religion of Islam, the religion of Ibraaheem (peace be upon him). … It was narrated that Ibn ‘Abbaas said: “And there is none of the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) but

must believe in him [‘Eesa (Jesus)] before his death” means, before the death of ‘Eesa ibn Maryam (peace be upon him). … It was narrated that al-Hasan said: “And there is none of the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) but must believe in him [‘Eesa (Jesus)] before his death” means, before the death of ‘Eesa, and by Allaah, he is alive with Allaah, but when he descends they will all believe in him. … Ibn Jareer said: And others said: That means before the death of the one who believes in the Book (i.e., the Jew or Christian), because at that point (just before death) he will now truth from falsehood because everyone upon whom death comes, his soul does not come out until truth has been made distinct from falsehood with regard to his religion. ‘Ali ibn Abi Talhah said, narrating from Ibn ‘Abbaas concerning this verse: He said: No Jew will die until he believes in ‘Eesa. … Ibn ‘Abbaas said: If his head is cut off, his soul will not come out until he believes in ‘Eesa. … It was narrated that Ibn ‘Abbaas said: The Jew will not die until he bears witness that ‘Eesa is the slave of Allaah and His Messenger.

Ibn Jareer said: The most likely of these opinions to be correct is the first one, which is that no one of the People of the Book will be left after the descent of ‘Eesa (peace be upon him) but he will believe in him before the death of ‘Eesa (peace be upon him). Undoubtedly what Ibn Jareer said is the correct view, because it is what is meant from the context of the verses, which state that what the Jews claim, that ‘Eesa was killed and crucified, is false, as are the claims of the ignorant Christians who believed the claims of the Jews. Allaah tells us that this is not what happened, rather it was made to appear so to them, and they killed the look-alike and did not realize that. But he (‘Eesa) was taken up to Him, and he is still alive, and will descend before the Day of Resurrection, as is indicated in the mutawaatir ahaadeeth. He will kill the false messiah (the Dajjaal) and will break the cross and kill the pigs, and abolish jizyah, i.e., he will not accept it from any of the followers of other religions, rather he will only accept Islam or the sword. This verse tells us that all the people of the Book will believe in him at that time, and not one among them will fail to believe in him. Hence he said: “And there is none of the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) but must believe in him [‘Eesa (Jesus)] before his death” i.e., before the death of ‘Eesa (peace be upon him), whom the Jews and the Christians who agreed with them claim that he was killed and crucified, but on the Day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them, i.e., because of their deeds that he witnessed before he was taken up into heaven and after he descends to the

earth again. Tafseer Ibn Katheer (1/762).

It is essential to note that debate with the Christians must be done on the basis of knowledge and proof, so that you will not be a cause of people not accepting the truth because of weak arguments. The Christians do not have any sound proof at all, but they present specious arguments to distort the truth and they confuse truth with falsehood. May Allaah grant us refuge from the ways of the misguided.

And Allaah knows best.