

# The Quran and its Message

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Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

## UNBELIEVABLE DESCRIPTION OF THE NOBLE PROPHET JESUS<sup>(pbuh)</sup> IN A HADITH

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Many Muslims today understand and elevate the Sunni 'Sahiyah' cannon (Imam Bukhari and Muslim's Hadith corpus) as an infallible corpus, without any contradictions, or containing any questionable Ahadith. A corpus, that is free from any blemishes, carefully sifted to eradicate any mistakes by scrupulous compilers and hence, why it carries the epithet 'sahih'.

Unfortunately, apart from the fantastic nature of the claim, any serious or seasoned academic will recognise that the 'Sahiyah' has always attracted criticism throughout its history from certain Muslim proponents. At times, the criticism has been strong. This criticism has been advanced, well documented and discussed by many notable Muslim scholars throughout history as well as modern scholarship.

One particular 'tension' will be noted. Whether this 'tension' amounts to a clear contradiction, I will leave this for the reader to decide after reading the article and seeking any further clarification / input from religious leaders / scholars that they deem necessary.

### A CASE IN POINT - A BUKHARI HADITH

There is no mention of Dajjal in the Quran or any categorical statement which supports the second coming of Prophet Jesus.<sup>(pbuh)</sup> Yet, despite finding no support from the Quran, it remains the mainstay of Muslim belief. Many Hadith narratives only serve to ratify such an unwarranted understanding which primarily remains a Christian concept.

Whether this belief has infiltrated through early Muslim converts, some of whom no doubt were also Christians and possibly brought with them their theological baggage, is difficult to answer. However, this concept is clearly negated by the Quranic. (Please see related article below).

Many professional 'muhaddathin' (Hadith specialists) throughout Islamic history have attempted to reconcile hadith reports often resulting in laborious explanations to 'harmonise' and resolve

apparent 'tensions' within them. Much literature therefore has developed over the millennia which remains not only voluminous, but can also be quite laborious to study.

The purpose of this article with the example cited, is not intended to advance a detailed explanation of how the 'muhaddathin' have explained the hadith. As already intimated earlier, the reader is strongly advised to seek explanations for themselves if they deem it necessary and ascertain whether the explanations provide compelling responses.

Three main areas will be noted overlooking many other theological 'difficulties' within the hadith.

- (1) The description of Prophet Jesus <sup>(pbuh)</sup> noted in the Hadith
- (2) The apparent tension by another report which clearly seems to contradict it
- (3) Would the Prophet Muhammad <sup>(pbuh)</sup> ever utter such a description?

A popular, well known translation by Muhsin Khan is utilised. Readers are advised to tackle the Arabic directly by studying it for themselves, or if Arabic is not understood, referring the text to one who is conversant with the language.

## PROPHET JESUS <sup>(pbuh)</sup> DESCRIBED AS RED FACED AND AS IF HE HAD JUST COME OUT OF A BATHROOM

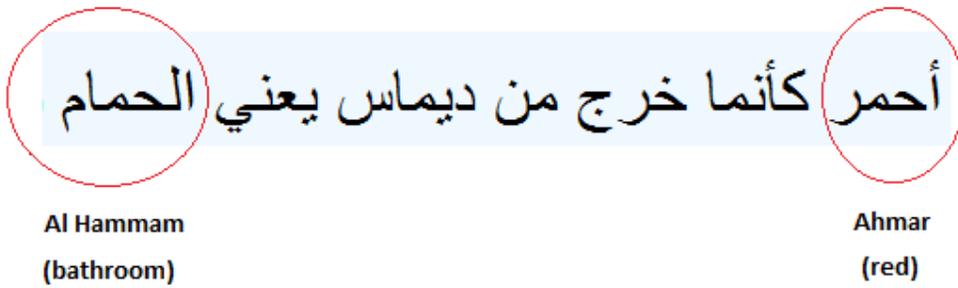
Volume 4, Book 55, Number 647:

Narrated Abu Huraira:

The Prophet said, "I met Moses on the night of my Ascension to heaven." The Prophet then described him saying, as I think, "He was a tall person with lank hair as if he belonged to the people of the tribe of Shanu's." The Prophet further said, "I met Jesus." The Prophet described him saying, "He was one of moderate height and was **red-faced as if he had just come out of a bathroom**. I saw Abraham whom I resembled more than any of his children did." The Prophet further said, "(That night) I was given two cups; one full of milk and the other full of wine. I was asked to take either of them which I liked, and I took the milk and drank it. On that it was said to me, 'You have taken the right path (religion). If you had taken the wine, your (Muslim) nation would have gone astray.'" [1]

" - ص 1269 - 3254 حدثني إبراهيم بن موسى أخبرنا هشام عن معمر وحدثني محمود حدثنا عبد الرزاق أخبرنا معمر عن الزهري قال أخبرني سعيد بن المسيب عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال ﴿ قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ليلة أسري به لقيت موسى قال فنعتته فإذا رجل حسبته قال مضطرب رجل الرأس كأنه من رجال شنوءة قال ولقيت عيسى فنعتته النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال ربعة أحمر كأنما خرج من ديماس يعني الحمام ورأيت إبراهيم وأنا أشبه ولده به قال وأتيت بإناءين أحدهما لبن والآخر فيه خمر فقيل لي خذ أيهما شئت فأخذت اللبن فشربته فقيل لي هديت الفطرة أو أصبت الفطرة أما إنك لو أخذت الخمر غوت أمتك ﴿

SOURCE [2]



This hadith is further confirmed by others [3]

Overtly critical interpretations have been noted to suggest the term 'Hammam' here to imply a toilet / bathroom as commonly understood in modern day usage. There is absolutely no warrant for this interpretation. Albeit a 'hammam' in common Arabic parlance 'can' mean **a toilet** as in the phrase 'Ain al-hammam'? (where is the toilet?), this is not the intended meaning here.

Rather than a toilet, the 'hammam' here in its classical usage implies any bath (enclosure for hot bathing etc - hence the red face) in the ancient world (much like the Turkish baths today). If a form of toilet was intended, then a classical term such as 'al-ghaithi' would possibly be expected as used in the Quran 5:6.

This interpretation also agrees with the classical lexicons and the primary understanding of the word.

**حَمَّامٌ** [A hot bath ;] a certain structure, (S,) well known ; (Mṣb ;) so called because it occasions sweating, or because of the hot water that is in it; accord. to ISd, derived from **الْحَمِيرُ** ;

Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [4]

However, it is quite disconcerting that any such description as noted in the hadith would be advanced with regards a noble messenger of God. Even without any in-depth scrutiny, many readers will conclude that in fact, it almost seems unlikely.

Even though many 'muhaddathin' would advance explanations of the rationale behind such a statement, what is even more difficult to resolve is the following hadith which clearly seems to contradict Abu Hurairah's tradition. This begs the question then, is everything in the 'Sahih' hadith true? Clearly traditions of the like of Abu Hurairah's which captured such a description were unacceptable to some, hence the following tradition.

**Volume 4, Book 55, Number 650:**

Narrated Salim from his father:

**No, By Allah, the Prophet did not tell that Jesus was of red complexion but said, "While I was asleep circumambulating the Ka'ba (in my dream), suddenly I saw a man of brown complexion and lank hair walking between two men, and water was dropping from his head. I asked, 'Who is this?' The people said, 'He is the son of Mary.' Then I looked behind and I saw a red-complexioned, fat, curly-haired man, blind in the right eye which looked like a bulging out grape. I asked, 'Who is this?' They replied, 'He is Ad-Dajjal.' The one who resembled to him among the people, was Ibn Qatar." (Az-Zuhri said, "He (i.e. Ibn Qatan) was a man from the tribe Khuza'a who died in the pre-Islamic period.")** [5]

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## FINAL THOUGHTS

Would such a noble Prophet of God, described by the Quran as one of 'khuluqin azeem' (exalted character - 68:4) delve into such kind of trivial matters so as to describe his noble predecessors in such a way? Or would he remain content with the following verse and general advice of the Quran?

### 002.134

"Those are a people who have passed away. Theirs is that which they earned, and yours is that which you earn. And you will not be asked of what they used to do"

The Hadith corpus is replete with many 'tensions' within the narratives which have caused voluminous books and commentaries to be written to 'harmonise' and explain them often with conflicting views. The example cited above was merely chosen as it demonstrated the kind of difficulties in the corpus which academics encounter.

In this case, the content of the hadith was possibly initially circulated to make a theological point with regards the second coming of Prophet Jesus. <sup>(pbuh)</sup> However, in the process, what were left were clear indications of the mindsets of the circulators when clearly such a narrative would likely not have originated from the mouth of the Prophet. Furthermore, albeit that the Hadith has been recorded on the authority of a personality by the name of Abu Hurairah who heard it directly from the Prophet, there is a whole chain of narrators that span the 2 centuries to him.

Ibrahim bin Musa - Hisham - Muammar - Mahmoud - Abdul Razzaq - Muammar - Zuhri - Said ibn al-Musayyab - Abu Hurairah - The Prophet

It is quite possible, that as a response to the questionable description noted in the tradition narrated by Abu Hurairah, another report was circulated to challenge and contradict it. This hadith was then circulated under the authority of Salim who heard his 'corrective' hadith from his father.

This apparent 'tension' was merely cited as a relatively 'mild' example. There are 'tensions' within the Hadith corpus that are so significant that they often lead 'extremists' to 'cherry pick' the appropriate narratives to support their violent ideologies. Other hadith reports, if the veracity is to be accepted, cast serious doubts on the character and motives of the noble Prophet Muhammad. <sup>(pbuh)</sup>

As many Muslims seldom study these sources in any depth, they remain oblivious to some of its difficult contents which can, in many cases, only be described as unsavory. It is not uncommon to hear a selection of 'repeated' more palatable Hadith from the microphones of Islamic preachers which advance the impression that the whole corpus is similarly agreeable. This is clearly not the case for any of those who embark upon a serious study of the literature.

Whether such a description was ever uttered by a prophet of God with regards another noble prophet is difficult to accept. This is especially true when the concept of the 'Dajjal' or the second coming of Prophet Jesus <sup>(pbuh)</sup> is nowhere to be found in the Quran. It is inconceivable that a Prophet of God would teach something contrary to the scriptures he had received.

Or, is a more likely scenario, that this narrative reflects the mindsets and theological biases of the people of an era when this hadith was collected, compiled and disseminated over 2 centuries after the death of the Prophet?

#### **Related Articles:**

- (1) [Is the Second Coming of Prophet Jesus \(pbuh\) Supported by the Quran?](#)
- (2) [Islamic Secondary Sources](#)

#### **REFERENCES**

[1] KHAN, M. M - **Translations available online and in appropriate bookstores.**

Any bold emphasis are my own insertions. They have no bearing on the original text other than they emphasise relevance to the topic at hand. These are merely illustrations and have solely been utilised for educational and explanatory purposes.

[2] HADITH IN ARABIC [online], Available at <http://hadith.al-islam.com/Page.aspx?pageid=192&TOCID=2077&BookID=24&PID=3265> [Accessed 13th September 2011]

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[3] KHAN, M. M - **Example: Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 55, Number 607. Translations available online and in appropriate bookstores.**

[4] LANE. E.W, Edward Lanes Lexicon, Williams and Norgate 1863; Librairie du Liban Beirut-Lebanon 1968, Volume 2, Page 637

[5] KHAN, M. M - **Translations available online and in appropriate bookstores.**

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