

The Descent of Jesus: A Comparative Analysis of the Views of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* and Javed Ahmad Ghamdi

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Abstract

This study investigates the contrasting views on the ascension and descent of Jesus between Ahl al-Sunnah and Javed Ahmad Ghamidi. Sunni scholars interpret the Qur'an as explicitly affirming Jesus's ascension and supporting his future descent near the Day of Judgment, which they consider a core belief substantiated by numerous strong narrations from prominent companions, 21 of which are included in this paper. Rejecting this belief, according to Sunni thought, constitutes misguidance. Conversely, Javed Ahmad Ghamidi posits that Jesus was taken to the heavens after his natural death and argues there is no Qur'anic evidence of his return. Ghamidi further highlights inconsistencies within Ḥadīth literature regarding Jesus's descent, diverging from traditional Sunni interpretations. This analysis reveals the theological divide, with Ghamidi's views challenging mainstream Islamic positions on this eschatological subject. Furthermore, it reveals the contradiction in Ghamidi's methodology in signs of Qiayamah.

Keywords: Jesus, Descent of Jesus, Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, Signs of the Day of Judgment.

Introduction

Javed Ahmad Ghamdi is a well-known Muslim scholar who has undertaken an analytical approach to understanding Islam. He has authored commentaries on the Qur'an and other religious texts, presenting detailed discussions on Islamic beliefs and rulings. Ghamdi shares his thoughts through social media, enabling a broad audience of Muslims to learn about Islam from him. He places significant emphasis on reason in interpreting the religion, asserting that the foundation of Islam is built upon universally accepted principles of knowledge and reason.¹

In Ahl al-Sunnah, reason has certain boundaries, and where reason reaches its limits, humans turn to divine revelation for guidance. Reason is generally valued in Islam; however, there are matters beyond the complete comprehension of reason alone, for which revelation provides final guidance. Examples of such topics include details about the Day of Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. Reason operates within the framework set by revelation.

Burjis: Vol. 11, Issue 2 July-December, 2024
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Certain beliefs in Islam cannot be fully understood through reason alone, such as the ascension and descent of Jesus (Isa). This paper examines Javed Ahmad Ghamidi's views on these matters, comparing them with Ahl al-Sunnah scholarship positions to assess their perspectives' similarities and differences.

The primary questions addressed in this paper are as follows:

- What is the position of the Ahl al-Sunnah on the ascension and descent of Jesus?
- Why does Javed Ahmad Ghamidi reject the concept of Jesus's ascension and descent, and what are his arguments supporting this rejection?

Relevant Books on the Topic:

1. Muhammad Anwar Shah Kashmiri, *Ikfār al-Mulḥidīn fī Ḍarūriyāt al-Dīn*, (2010).
2. Mufti Muhammad Rafi Usmani, *Alāmāt-e-Qiyāmat awr Nuzūl-e-Masīḥ*, (Karachi: Maktabah Dārul 'Ulūm Karachi, 1393 AH).
3. Maulana Syed Muhammad Yusuf Banori, *Aqīdah Nuzūl-e-Masīḥ: Qur'an, Aḥādīth awr Ijma'-e-Ummat kī Roshnī mein*, (Karachi: Bayt al-'Ilm).
4. Syed Manzoor-ul-Hasan, *Nuzūl-e-Masīḥ: Javed Ahmad Ghamidi kā Mawqif*, (Lahore: Al-Mawrid).

The above works primarily discuss Ahl al-Sunnah's views on Jesus' descent. However, they have not thoroughly addressed a comparative examination of Javed Ahmad Ghamidi's perspectives on Jesus' descent against those of Ahl al-Sunnah scholarship.

This paper draws on Javed Ahmad Ghamidi's views from his books and social media lectures. At the same time, Ahl al-Sunnah scholars' opinions are referenced from classical sources on Islamic creed and Hadith. A comparative analysis is conducted to highlight both perspectives.

Categories of Islamic Beliefs

The descent of Jesus (Isa) is among the essential aspects of faith in Islam. Although the belief in the descent of Jesus near the Day of Judgment is not classified as an independent article of faith, denying its foundational importance or deeming it unnecessary is considered incorrect. Those who reject it are deemed misguided, as there are four categories regarding the proof and significance of Islamic beliefs and commandments:

1. Definitive in Transmission and Meaning: The Qur'an and *Mutawātir* Ḥadīth (widely transmitted) are classified as definitive in transmission. However, they can vary in clarity of meaning—some convey absolute certainty, while others suggest likelihood—denial of these leads to disbelief or misguidance.

The other categories are as follows:

2. Definitive in Transmission, Probable in Meaning
3. Probable in Transmission, Definitive in Meaning
4. Probable in Both Transmission and Meaning

"Transmission" here refers to the source's authenticity from Allah, and "meaning" indicates the intended understanding. Definitive meaning is often present within the Qur'an and *Mutawātir*

Ḥadīth, though transmission may sometimes suggest likelihood rather than certainty. Denying something definitive in transmission and meaning is considered disbelief while rejecting the other three categories leads to misguidance.

The Ahl al-Sunnah Perspective on the Ascension of Jesus

Quranic verses support the belief in the ascension of Jesus (Isa) and are widely upheld within Ahl al-Sunnah. The Qur'an explicitly refers to the ascension of Jesus in the verse:

“When Allah said, ‘O Jesus, indeed I will take you and raise you to Myself and purify you from those who disbelieve and make those who follow you superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection’” (Sūrah Āl-‘Imrān, 3:55).

According to Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 310 AH), there are various interpretations regarding Jesus's ascension. However, scholars' most widely accepted interpretation is that Allah physically raised Jesus to the heavens. Additionally, numerous hadiths from the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) confirm that Jesus will return to Earth, where he will live for a set period, pass away, and be buried after funeral prayers are conducted.²

Imam al-Qurtubi (d. 1273 CE) interprets the phrase “مُتَوَفِّيكَ وَرَافِعُكَ” in the above verse as Allah saves Jesus and raises him to Himself. In his *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, he states that Allah raised Jesus to the heavens without his experiencing death.³

Furthermore, Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi (d. 1344 CE) asserts that the consensus (*Ijma'*) of the Muslim community, based on *Mutawātir* narrations, holds that Jesus is alive in the heavens and will return to Earth before the Day of Judgment. This view is firmly rooted in the Ahl al-Sunnah tradition and widely accepted as part of Islamic belief.⁴

The Descent of Jesus in the Light of the Qur'an

The Qur'an provides evidence supporting the descent of Jesus (Isa) in the period leading to the Day of Judgment, and classical commentators have interpreted these verses to indicate his return. One such verse is:

“And there is none from the People of the Scripture, but that he will surely believe in him before his death. And on the Day of Resurrection, he will be a witness against them” (Sūrah Al-Nisā', 4:159).

In explaining this verse, Ibn Jarir al-Tabari clarifies that the pronoun "before his death" refers to Jesus, meaning that all Christians and Jews will believe in him when he returns before the end of times.⁵

Similarly, Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 1210 CE) interprets the verse:

“When Allah said, ‘O Jesus, indeed I will take you and raise you to Myself and purify you from those who disbelieve and make those who follow you superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection’” (Sūrah Āl-‘Imrān, 3:55).

He suggests that Jesus is among the signs of the Day of Judgment, as his return will signify the nearness of the end times. Here, the term “sign” implies “knowledge” or “indication” of the approaching Hour.⁶

Furthermore, in *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, it is explained that in Sūrah Al-Zukhruf, 43:61), the pronoun “he” refers to Jesus, where “sign” denotes “indication.” This implies that Jesus’s descent is a clear sign of the approaching Day of Judgment.⁷

As scholars have interpreted them, these verses collectively indicate that the Qur'an affirms Jesus’s life and future descent as part of the signs heralding the end times.

The Ascension of Jesus in the Light of Hadith

The concept of Jesus's ascension is established in the Qur'an, though it is less frequently addressed in Hadith. However, discussions have arisen in Hadith scholarship regarding whether Jesus ascended while asleep or in a state of death. Despite differing opinions among hadith scholars and jurists, there is consensus among most classical commentators and hadith scholars that Jesus was raised to the heavens while alive.

Several hadiths mention that when the Jews attempted to crucify Jesus, Allah lifted him alive to the heavens. For instance, Ibn Abbas (RA) narrates:

“Allah raised Jesus to the heavens, and the Jews mistakenly crucified another young man, thinking him to be Jesus.”⁸

In interpreting Allah’s statement, “Indeed, I will take you and raise you to Myself” (Sūrah Āl-‘Imrān, 3:55), scholars agree that the term “raise” signifies that Jesus was physically lifted from Earth.⁹

According to hadith literature, he remains alive in the heavens and will only experience death upon his eventual descent and return to Earth near the end. Multiple hadiths affirm that Jesus's ascension was an event in which he was saved from death and raised by Allah.

The Descent of Jesus in the Light of Hadith

Islamic scholars have established that the hadiths regarding the descent of Jesus (Isa) have reached *Tawātur* (a term denoting a high degree of authenticity due to their widespread transmission through multiple chains of narrators). Esteemed scholars who affirm the *Tawātur* of these hadiths include Imam al-Tabari (d. 923 CE), Ibn Atiyyah al-Andalusi (d. 516 AH), Hafiz Ibn Kathir (d. 774 AH), Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 1449 CE), Imam al-Shawkani (d. 1834 CE), Allama Alusi (d. 1854 CE), and Allama Zahid al-Kawthari (d. 1952 CE).

The hadiths on this topic are narrated through various companions of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), including Abu Hurairah,¹⁰ Abdullah ibn Mas'ud,¹¹ Abdullah ibn Umar,¹² Hudhayfah ibn Usayd,¹³ Ibn Abbas,¹⁴ Nawwas ibn Sam'an,¹⁵ Jabir ibn Abdullah,¹⁶ Aws ibn Aws,¹⁷ 'Urwah ibn Ruwaym,¹⁸ Thawban,¹⁹ Abdullah ibn Salam,²⁰ Anas ibn Malik,²¹ Mujma' ibn Jariyah,²² Abu Umamah al-Bahili,²³ Abdullah bin Masood,²⁴ Uthman ibn al-As,²⁵ Samurah ibn Jundub,²⁶ Jubayr ibn Nufayr,²⁷ Imran ibn Husayn,²⁸ Aisha,²⁹ Abu Sa'id al-Khudri,³⁰ and Ammar ibn Yasir.³¹

These narrations confirm that Jesus will descend from the heavens in the end times, a belief widely accepted in Islamic tradition. Here are some examples of authentic *Mutawātir* hadiths on the subject:

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S. No.	Narrator	Reference
1.	Abu Hurairah	Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth # 3449 Ṣaḥīḥ li-Muslim, Ḥadīth # 155 & 2897 Musnad Aḥmad, Ḥadīth # 7665 & 9121 Kanz al-‘Ummāl, Ḥadīth # 38862
2.	Abdullah ibn Umar	Ṣaḥīḥ li-Muslim, Ḥadīth # 2940 Kanz al-‘Ummāl, Ḥadīth # 298 & 31267
3.	Nawwas ibn Sam'an	Ṣaḥīḥ li-Muslim, Ḥadīth # 2937
4.	Jabir ibn Abdullah	Ṣaḥīḥ li-Muslim, Ḥadīth # 156 Musnad Aḥmad, Ḥadīth # 14720 & 15127
5.	Ibn Abbas	Al-Mustadrak ‘ala al-Ṣaḥīḥayn, Ḥadīth # 2759
6.	Hudhayfah ibn Usayd	Ṣaḥīḥ li-Muslim, Ḥadīth # 2901 Musnad Aḥmad, Ḥadīth # 16141 Sunan li-Ibn Mājah, Ḥadīth # 4055
7.	Aws ibn Aws	Kanz al-‘Ummāl, Ḥadīth # 38852
8.	'Urwah ibn Ruwaym	Kanz al-‘Ummāl, Ḥadīth # 38853
9.	Thawban	Sunan li-Al-Nasa’i, Ḥadīth # 3175 Majma’ al-Zawā’id, Ḥadīth # 9453 Kanz al-‘Ummāl, Ḥadīth # 38862
10.	Abdullah ibn Salam	Sunan li-Al-Tirmidhī, Ḥadīth # 3617
11.	Anas ibn Malik	Al-Mustadrak ‘ala Ṣaḥīḥayn, Ḥadīth # 8634
12.	Majma' ibn Jariyah	Musnad Aḥmad, Ḥadīth # 7665 & 9121 Sunan li-Al-Tirmidhī, Ḥadīth # 2244 Kanz al-‘Ummāl, Ḥadīth # 38850
13.	Abu Umamah al-Bahili	Sunan li-Ibn Mājah, Ḥadīth # 4077 Kanz al-‘Ummāl, Ḥadīth # 38742
14.	Abdullah bin Masood	Al-Mustadrak ‘ala Ṣaḥīḥayn, Ḥadīth # 3448 Kanz al-‘Ummāl, Ḥadīth # 39731
15.	Uthman ibn al-As	Musnad Aḥmad, Ḥadīth # 431 Al-Mustadrak ‘ala Ṣaḥīḥayn, Ḥadīth # 8473
16.	Samurah ibn Jundub	Al-Mustadrak ‘ala Ṣaḥīḥayn, 1230 Musnad Aḥmad, Ḥadīth # 7665 & 9121
17.	Jubayr ibn Nufayr	Al-Mustadrak ‘ala Ṣaḥīḥayn, 4351
18.	Imran ibn Husayn	Musnad Aḥmad, Ḥadīth # 19921
19.	Aisha	Musnad Aḥmad, Ḥadīth # 24467
20.	Abu Sa'id al-Khudri	Kanz al-‘Ummāl, Ḥadīth # 38673
21.	Ammar ibn Yasir	Kanz al-‘Ummāl, Ḥadīth # 38694

The hadiths mentioned above, found throughout sources such as *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, *Sunan Abi Dawud*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, *Sunan Ibn Majah*, *Sunan al-Bayhaqi*, and *Mustadrak al-Hakim*, are widely transmitted and documented by prominent companions and successors in both hadith and tafsir literature. Scholars of jurisprudence and theology have also discussed the ascension of Jesus (Isa) and his descent near the Day of Judgment. For instance, in

Fiqh al-Akbar, Imam Abu Hanifa states that the descent of Jesus from the heavens is an actual and inevitable event.³²

Similarly, Imam al-Tahawi (d. 933 CE), in his book “*Aqīdah al-Ṭahāwiyyah*”, affirms the descent of Jesus as a valid and definitive belief.³³

Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari (d. 935 CE) also acknowledges the consensus of the Muslim community regarding Jesus' (Isa) ascension to the heavens.³⁴

Imam al-Nawawi (d. 1277 CE) considers it obligatory to affirm this belief and states there is no valid basis for denying it.³⁵

Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi (d. 1344 CE) also holds that Jesus will descend in the latter days.³⁶

Similarly, Ibn Humam (d. 1457 CE) asserts that Jesus's descent is a true and certain event.³⁷ Zahid al-Kawthari (d. 1952 CE) further confirms that early and later scholars have accepted the belief that Jesus was raised alive and will descend near the Day of Judgment.³⁸

There is also consensus among the prominent hadith scholars, including Imam Muslim and Imam Bukhari, regarding the authenticity of the hadiths on Jesus's descent, which have been widely accepted by the early generations (*salaf*) of Muslims over the centuries. Therefore, it is considered incorrect to deny this belief.³⁹

The majority of Islamic commentators and theologians agree that Jesus will descend from the heavens, slay the Antichrist, and break the cross, marking one of the major signs of the end times.⁴⁰

The above discussion concludes that hadith scholars and commentators affirm the ascension and descent of Jesus (Isa). His descent will occur as a follower (*ummah*) of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), and he will adhere to and make judgments according to Muhammad's Shariah. As mentioned in *Fath al-Bari*, Jesus will descend as a member of the Prophet Muhammad's community.⁴¹

Javed Ahmad Ghamidi's View on the Ascension of Jesus

Javed Ahmad Ghamidi holds a different view regarding Jesus's ascension. According to him, while Jesus was indeed raised, he does not accept the interpretation that he was raised alive, considering it inconsistent with the Qur'an. Ghamidi interprets the term "مُتَوَفِّيكَ" in Sūrah Āl-‘Imrān, verse 55, as explicitly meaning death, and he believes that "وَرَأَوْهُكَ" (raising) refers to Jesus's physical body.⁴²

In his view, Jesus was given a natural death, and then his body was raised to the heavens. Ghamidi maintains that Jesus will not be sent back to Earth. However, the mainstream view holds that the Qur'anic verses affirm the ascension of Jesus.

Javed Ahmad Ghamidi's View on the Descent of Jesus

Javed Ahmad Ghamidi has extensively discussed the topic of Jesus's descent in his books and lectures. In these, he presents the view that the belief in Jesus's descent became established among Muslims without solid foundational evidence. In his book *Mīzān*, he notes that Jesus is mentioned frequently in the Qur'an and argues that it is improbable for the Qur'an to remain silent on the matter of a significant prophet being raised alive to the heavens if this were indeed the case.⁴³

Ghamidi interprets this to mean that since Jesus is considered one of the foremost prophets (*Ū'lū'l-‘azm*), if his descent were to occur, it would have been mentioned alongside his ascension in the Qur'an. Therefore, he sees no compelling basis for believing otherwise. Despite these explanations, however, Ghamidi holds a distinct perspective on this issue, deriving a different interpretation from the Qur'anic verses on Jesus's ascension.

Javed Ahmad Ghamidi's Reasons for Rejecting the Belief in Jesus's Descent

According to Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, his rejection of the belief in the descent of Jesus near the Day of Judgment is based on two main points:

- The Qur'an explicitly mentions the death of Jesus.
- It is implausible, in his view, that the Qur'an would remain silent on the matter of such a prominent prophet being raised alive to the heavens.⁴⁴

Ghamidi argues that since the Qur'an does not explicitly mention Jesus' descent clearly, there is no solid basis for this belief within the Qur'anic text.⁴⁵

According to Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, although hadith scholars have accepted narrations about Jesus's descent, these narrations do not align with the Qur'an. He argues that since the Qur'an mentions Jesus frequently and acknowledges him as one of the foremost prophets (*Ū'lū'l-'azm*), it would have referenced his descent near the Day of Judgment if it were intended.⁴⁶

Ghamidi rejects the belief in Jesus's descent because it is not mentioned explicitly in the Qur'an, even though he accepts other signs of the Day of Judgment that are either not mentioned in the Qur'an or based on *Aḥād* (solitary) narrations.⁴⁷

However, more than one hundred hadiths from major companions affirm Jesus' descent near the end times. Denying this belief would conflict with Ahl al-Sunnah's established views.⁴⁸

Javed Ahmad Ghamidi provides the following reasons for rejecting the narrations about Jesus's descent:

- Ghamidi argues that Jesus's descent cannot be considered among the signs of the Day of Judgment because, according to the hadiths, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) mentioned "a wind" as the tenth sign. When the companions narrated this hadith, it led to two versions of the narration: in some accounts, the tenth sign was the wind, while others mentioned the descent of Jesus as the tenth sign.
- Ghamidi favors the interpretation with "the wind" as the tenth sign. He explains that the narrations about Jesus's descent include a specific timeline, indicating that Jesus would descend soon after the conquest of Constantinople, immediately following the appearance of the Antichrist (Dajjal). Since Constantinople was conquered in 1453 CE without anticipated events, Ghamidi suggests this narration may have been misunderstood or inaccurately transmitted.

A brief comparison of the views of Ahl al-Sunnah scholars and Javed Ahmad Ghamidi regarding the ascension and descent of Jesus is presented in the table below:

Topic	Ahl al-Sunnah Scholars	Javed Ahmad Ghamidi
Ascension of Jesus	Jesus was raised alive to the heavens	Jesus's body was taken to the heavens after a natural death
Descent of Jesus	Jesus will descend near the Day of Judgment	Jesus will not descend near the Day of Judgment
Sign of the Last Day	Considered a sign of the Day of Judgment	Not considered a sign of the Day of Judgment

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Topic	Ahl al-Sunnah Scholars	Javed Ahmad Ghamdi
Hadith Authenticity	Hadiths on Jesus's descent are widely transmitted (<i>Tawātur</i>)	<i>Tawātur</i> is not a religious term; it's a means for transmitting historical reports.

Findings:

The research on this topic has produced the following conclusions:

- According to Ahl al-Sunnah scholars, the ascension and descent of Jesus are mentioned in the Qur'an, with explicit wording used for the ascension.
- There are numerous narrations from prominent companions with solid chains of transmission regarding the descent of Jesus, of which 21 are specifically highlighted. Scholars consider the descent of Jesus a fundamental part of the faith, and rejecting it is viewed as leading to misguidance.
- In Javed Ahmad Ghamdi's view, Jesus was taken to the heavens after his death, and he will not return before the Day of Judgment, as there is no explicit mention of this in the Qur'an. Additionally, he notes inconsistencies in the hadiths that discuss the descent. Ghamdi's belief differs from that of Ahl al-Sunnah's scholarship.
- Javed Ahmed Ghamidi's opinion regarding the descent of Jesus (Isa) is considered weak (*marjuh*) by some scholars. They argue that there appears to be a lack of consistency in his reasoning and methodology. He accepts other signs of the Day of Judgment based on hadith, even though they are based on reports from individual narrations (*akhbar ahad*). Therefore, it becomes difficult to understand why he rejects the numerous and widely transmitted (*mutawatir*) narrations about the descent of Jesus.

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- ³⁵ Al-Nawawī, *Al-Minhāj*, 2: 190
- ³⁶ Al-Andulasi, *Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ*, 3: 177
- ³⁷ Ibn Hummam, *Kitāb al-Musāmarah fī Sharḥ al-Musāyarah*, 2: 242
- ³⁸ Muhammad Zahid Al-Kawthari, *Tawḥīd al Murām fī Nuzūl al-Masīḥ*, p: 36
- ³⁹ Muhammad Zahid Al-Kawthari, *Naṣrah ‘Ābirah*, (Cairo, 2nd Edition), p: 110
- ⁴⁰ Muhammad Yusuf Banori, ‘Aqīdah Nuzūl Masīḥ, (Karachi: Bayt al-‘Ilm), p: 41
- ⁴¹ Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, *Fath al-Bārī*, (Beirut: Dār al Ma’rifah, 1379 AH), 2: 491
- ⁴² Syed Manzoor ul Hasan, *Nazūl-e-Masīḥ: Javed Ahmad Ghamidi ka Mawqif*, (America: Al-Mawrid, 2023), p: 14
- ⁴³ Ghamdi, *Mizān*, p: 82
- ⁴⁴ Ghamdi, *Mizān*, p: 82
- ⁴⁵ Javed Ahmed Ghamdi, *Qayāmat Kī Nishānī Awr Nazūl-e-Masīḥ: Qur’ān O Ḥadīth Kī Roshnī Main*, <https://youtu.be/MpmdpeOV09Q?si=LERKfqcGqeOo0LYU> Retrieve:10.4.2024,8:30pm
- ⁴⁶ Ghamdi, *Mizān*, p: 183
- ⁴⁷ Junaid Akbar, Shabana Kaleem, Ashrāṭ al-Sā’ah sy Muta’līq Javed Ahmad Ghamidi awr Jamhūr Ahl-e-Sunnat kī Ārā’ kī Taqābulī Jā’izah, p: 6
- ⁴⁸ Muhaamd Rafi Usmani, *‘Alāmāt-e-Qayāmat awr Nazūl-e-Masīḥ*, (Karachi: 1393 AH), p: 41