



## Employing the Life of Christ in Shaping the Sanctity of al-Husayn ibn 'Alī: A Comparative Study within Shi'a Heritage

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### Abstract

This research compares the figures of Jesus Christ and al-Husayn ibn 'Alī in light of Shi'a sources, premised on the notion that Shi'a tradition engages with the Islamic biography of Christ to elevate the status of al-Husayn and the Ahl al-Bayt (the Prophet's family). The study analyzes this intersection through several key themes. It begins by tracing the noble lineage of each figure, showing how the divine selection of the family of Imran parallels the elevated status of the Ahl al-Bayt. It then examines their mothers—Mary, daughter of Imran, and Fatima al-Zahra—demonstrating how the virtues of Mary are invoked to reinforce the sanctity of Fatima. Next, the study considers the prophecies surrounding their births and the miraculous nature of these births, highlighting their signs of exceptional status. The research also discusses the extraordinary abilities and miracles attributed to both figures, including healing and esoteric knowledge, and compares their foreknowledge of their destinies and the circumstances of their deaths, particularly the details of their thirst and ultimate sacrifice. The study concludes that Shi'a tradition has deliberately shaped the character of al-Husayn with traits analogous to those of Christ, thereby reinforcing his role as a redeemer and savior.

**Keywords:** Christ; al-Husayn ibn 'Alī; Shi'a sources; martyrdom; thirst; sacrifice; miracles; Ahl al-Bayt (People of the House)

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### Introduction

Pivotal religious figures throughout history serve as profound sources of inspiration and symbolism for their followers. At the heart of Shi'a thought, al-Husayn ibn 'Alī occupies an exceptional position—not only as the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, but also as a symbol of resistance, sacrifice, and redemption. Throughout history, Shi'a tradition has drawn striking parallels between the life of al-Husayn and that of Jesus Christ ('Isā ibn Maryam), raising a fundamental question about the nature and significance of these comparisons.

This study seeks to analyze the relationship between the figures of Christ and al-Husayn as presented in Shi'a sources, revealing how these texts employ the life of Christ to shape the image of al-Husayn and confer upon him a unique sanctity and spiritual status. Through a comparative analytical approach, the research addresses key themes such as noble lineage and divine selection, the status of their holy mothers, the prophecies and miracles surrounding their births, and the spiritual dimensions of sacrifice and death in both lives.

Understanding these parallels is not merely a historical exercise, but a profound entry point into the mechanisms that shaped Shi'a religious consciousness and the construction of symbolic sanctity. Furthermore, this study aims to open new avenues for interfaith dialogue by highlighting the spiritual convergences between two central figures in the histories of Islam and Christianity.

### Research Methodology:

The present study employs the following approaches:

**1-Comparative Methodology:** This approach compares the lives of Jesus and al-Husayn in the following aspects: lineage, mother, the Annunciation, birth, miracles, death, manner of death, thirst, and the salvation of their people.

## **2. Historical-Critical Methodology:**

This approach explored the historical and religious context in which these narratives emerged. Why did these comparisons appear at a specific time? What objectives did they serve?

## **3. Analytical Methodology:**

This approach analyzes the texts that bring these narratives together, extracting shared concepts—such as infallibility, divine election, and divine light—and examining how these concepts are employed in both narratives

### **Research Question**

The present study seeks to answer the following question:

How has the Shi'a tradition employed the biography of Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, in shaping the character of al-Husayn ibn 'Alī?

Additionally, the study aims to identify the most prominent points of intersection and similarity between Jesus and al-Husayn as presented in Shi'a sources.

### **The Importance of the Study:**

**1.Filling a research gap:** By analyzing the comparative relationship between Jesus and al-Husayn in Shi'i sources—a topic that has received little scholarly attention.

**2.Understanding Shi'a consciousness:** By revealing how the figure of Jesus is employed to elevate the status of al-Husayn and to illuminate the construction of sanctity.

**3.Promoting dialogue:** By opening new avenues for Christian–Muslim dialogue through the exploration of symbolic points of convergence.

**4.Unveiling symbolism:** By demonstrating that these narratives embody universal concepts such as redemption and sacrifice, thereby granting them anthropological significance.

### **Similarities between Jesus Christ and al-Husayn ibn 'Alī**

#### **A. The Noble Lineage of Jesus and al-Husayn ibn 'Alī**

Shi'a sources' interest in the lineage of Jesus is closely linked to their emphasis on the sacred genealogy of the Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt (the Prophet's family). This connection becomes particularly evident in their interpretation of the Qur'ānic verse referring to the family of Jesus — the family of 'Imrān:

"Indeed, Allah chose Adam and Noah and the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imrān over all the worlds — descendants, one of another; and Allah is Hearing and Knowing<sup>(1)</sup>."

The verse leaves no room for doubt that God chose two families in addition to His selection of Adam and Noah, making them superior to other families by appointing prophets and messengers from among them. These two families are led by the family of Abraham, followed by the family of 'Imran. To understand the Shi'a perspective on the virtue of the family of Jesus and its relation to the aforementioned verse, we can quote an early Shi'a exegesis by al-Tusi (d. 460 AH / 1067 CE):

*"If one asks: Who are the family of Abraham? It is said: Ibn 'Abbas and al-Hasan replied: They are the believers who follow his religion, meaning that God granted them a distinction among the people of their time. It is also said that the family of 'Imran are the family of Abraham, as it is stated: 'offspring, some of them from others,' meaning Moses and Aaron, sons of 'Imran. Al-Hasan said: The family of 'Imran refers to Jesus, because his*

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1- Qur'an 3:33–34.

*mother Mary was the daughter of 'Imran. And in the reading of the Ahl al-Bayt, it is 'and the family of Muhammad over the worlds.'*"

He also said: "The family of Abraham refers to the family of Muhammad, who are his close kin. As we have previously explained, 'al-āl' (the family) means 'the kin.' The verse indicates that those whom God has chosen are infallible and pure, for He selects and chooses only those who are so. Their outward and inward states are united, and thus the privilege of being chosen should be granted to the families of Abraham and 'Imran to those who are pleasing and infallible, whether they are prophets or imams<sup>(2)</sup>."

The last exegesis clarifies that the meaning of the family of 'Imran has two possible interpretations: either it refers to the family of Moses and Aaron, the prophets of the Israelites descended from a father named 'Imran, or it refers to the family of Jesus, since 'Imran is the grandfather of Jesus through his mother Mary, known as the daughter of 'Imran.

Al-Tabrīsi's exegesis provides further details on the lineage of Jesus and confirms what al-Tusi had mentioned earlier: that Jesus is infallible because he belongs to the family of 'Imran, whom God chose over others. This clearly indicates that membership in the family of 'Imran prepared Jesus for infallibility and prophethood, and it is a clear sign of the sanctity and the special sacred characteristics of this noble family.

It is important to note that what Shi'a exegetes say about the family of 'Imrān is somewhat connected to their belief in the Imams. At times, they hint and at other times explicitly assert that the infallibility attributed to the family of 'Imrān parallels the infallibility of the family of the Prophet Muhammad, known as the Ahl al-Bayt, whose Imams are considered sacred and belong to that noble lineage. There exists an unusual Shi'a reading of the verse: "Indeed, Allah chose Adam and Noah and the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imrān over the worlds" (Qur'an 3:33), in which an additional phrase is inserted: "and the family of Muhammad over the worlds."<sup>(3)</sup>

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2- Al-Tusi, *Al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, Vol. 2, p. 441.

3-See: al-Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, vol. 1, p. 108; al-Tabarāsī, *Jawāmi' al-Jāmi'*, vol. 1, p. 181; al-'Ayāshī, *Tafsīr al-'Ayāshī*, vol. 1, p. 191; Furrāt, *Tafsīr Furrāt*, vol. 1, p. 78.

According to al-'Ayāshī and Furrāt al-Kūfī, the text of the verse appears to have undergone some alteration, and the name of the Ahl al-Bayt was omitted from it. For the issue of Qur'anic textual alteration in Shi'i thought, see: Etan Kohlberg, "Some Notes on the Imāmite Attitude to the Qur'ān," pp. 209–224.

4-To examine the lineage of the Ahl al-Bayt from 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib, see: *al-Samarqandī, Ansāb al-Tālibiyyīn*.

5- Regarding the virtue of the Ahl al-Bayt among Muslims from the Sunni tradition, there are many hadiths, too numerous and extensive to fully cite here. We will limit ourselves to what Muhibb al-Dīn al-Tabarī (d. 694 AH / 1295 CE) recorded concerning their virtue and the exhortation to adhere to them and their descendants, which includes the following:

The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said:

*"I am leaving among you two weighty things; if you hold fast to them, you will never go astray after me. One of them is greater than the other: the Book of God, exalted is He, a rope extended from heaven to earth, and my family, the Ahl al-Bayt. They will not separate until they return to the Basin, so consider how you follow me in both."*

This hadith was reported by al-Tirmidhī, who classified it as ḥasan ghareeb.

In another narration, the Prophet, peace be upon him, stood among us as a preacher, praised God, and said:

*"O people, I am but a human being, and soon the Messenger of my Lord will come to me and I shall respond. I am leaving among you the two weighty things: the first of them is the Book of God, in which is guidance and light, so hold fast to it and follow it."*

This addition includes the Ahl al-Bayt within the aforementioned Qur'anic concept, providing evidence of the Shi'a's keen concern to incorporate the Ahl al-Bayt into the notion of divine selection and the privileging of families of noble lineage<sup>(4)</sup>.

Love for the Ahl al-Bayt and their great blessings was not exclusive to the Shi'a. Most Muslims, regardless of their sectarian affiliation, revere the Ahl al-Bayt and the Imams, considering them among the best of creation, endowed with great blessing, piety, devotion, and closeness to God<sup>(5)</sup>.

However, all of this cannot compare with the sanctity of the Ahl al-Bayt, beginning with the Prophet Muhammad and extending to 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib, Fātīma al-Zahrā', al-Hasan, and al-Husayn, and continuing to their descendants and noble lineage as revered by the Twelver Shi'a<sup>(6)</sup>.

Among the Shi'a texts that illustrate the extent to which the Shi'a take pride in the lineage of the Imams and their belonging to the sacred noble family is what al-Irbilī (d. 693 AH / 1294 CE) wrote in a commentary on the lineage of al-Husayn ibn 'Alī. He says:

*"His lineage, peace be upon him, is a lineage before which all other lineages pale; his nobility is a nobility confirmed by evidence and written record. He and his brother are the trunk of prophecy, flourishing both in branch and root, and the two divisions of valor that are elevated in dignity and nobility. They are men embodying leadership and honor, descendants of the noble lineages that demonstrated pride in Muḍar and Nāzar. Glory and honor have encompassed them, and eminence has accompanied them; nothing has turned*

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He encouraged adherence to the Qur'an, then said:

*"And my Ahl al-Bayt — may God remind you of them — three times."*

It was asked of Zayd (Zayd ibn Arqam, the narrator): *"Are his wives not among his family?"*

He replied: *"Yes, his wives are among his family, but the Ahl al-Bayt are those upon whom charity is prohibited after him. And who are they?"* He said: *"They are the family of 'Alī, the family of Ja'far, the family of 'Aqīl, and the family of 'Abbās."*

The question was: *"Is charity prohibited to all of them?"* He replied: *"Yes."*

This was recorded by Muslim.

In Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the meaning appears in a narration from Abū Sa'īd with the wording:

*"I am about to be called, and I shall respond. I am leaving among you the two weighty things: the Book of God and my family, the Ahl al-Bayt. The Book of God is a rope extended from heaven to earth, and my Ahl al-Bayt — the Subtle, All-Aware informs me — will not separate until they return to the Basin, so consider what you leave behind in both."*

In another chain through 'Abd al-'Azīz, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said:

*"I and my Ahl al-Bayt are a tree in Paradise, and its branches are in the world; whoever holds fast to us has taken a path to his Lord."*

**Reference:** al-Tabarī, *Dhakhā'ir al-'Uqba fī Manāqib Dhawī al-Qurbā*, p. 16.

Compare with: Sharon, "Ahl Al-Bayt – People of the House", 169–172.

6-To review the abundance of Islamic hadiths and texts regarding the virtue, nobility, and elevated status of the Ahl al-Bayt in Sunni sources—which are also accepted by the Shi'a because of the respect and veneration they convey for their Imams—see: al-Fīrūzbādī, *Faḍā'il al-Khamṣa* from the Ṣahāḥ al-Sitta, and other works recognized among the Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jamā'a. Compare with:

I. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, II, 103ff.

7-For the full text, see: al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-Ghumma fī Ma 'rifat al-A'imma*, p. 140.

8-To understand the contemporary Shi'i view of the status of the Ahl al-Bayt in their tradition and in the wider Muslim world, see: Mughniyya, *Ahl al-Bayt wa Mabādi'uhum 'inda al-Muslimīn*.

*away from them. Majesty surrounds them, so that it seems almost to drip from their eyes, and their dignity is manifest in their presence; it appears upon their features as the sun appears upon the horizon..."*<sup>(7)</sup>.

Although this last text is rich in elegant literary expressions and indicates the preeminence of the Prophet's family in the hearts and heritage of the Shi'a, it may still not suffice to fully describe the elevated status that the Ahl al-Bayt have acquired in the hearts of Shi'a believers throughout the ages<sup>(8)</sup>.

Returning to the lineage of Jesus in Shi'a texts, the Shi'a, as we have seen from the earlier texts of al-Ṭūsī and al-Ṭabarī, acknowledge that the family of Jesus is a family chosen by God for prophethood and mission. To align this Shi'a interpretation with the biography of Jesus, some of their narrations state that the maternal grandfather of Jesus, namely Imran, was a prophet<sup>(9)</sup>.

This naturally recalls al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī, whose maternal grandfather was the Prophet Muhammad. This reflects, to a considerable extent, the influence of al-Ḥusayn and the Imams on the biography and character of Jesus as perceived and shaped by the Shi'a in their narratives. One can say that the status of the family of Jesus and his noble lineage acquired special value in Shi'a heritage, serving as a ready-made model that contributes, in part, to elevating the status of the Imams in particular and the Ahl al-Bayt in general. In this way, it becomes clear that the Shi'a deliberately utilize the family and lineage of Jesus in shaping their conception of the Shi'a Jesus.

From the above, it is evident that Shi'a heritage employs the concept of divine selection of the "Ahl al-Imrān" mentioned in the Qur'an as a direct parallel to consolidate the infallibility and honor of the "Ahl al-Bayt" (the family of al-Ḥusayn). This use relies on the interpretation of the verse regarding the election of the Ahl al-Imrān as indicating their infallibility and links it to the family of Muhammad through the addition of the phrase "and the family of Muhammad above the worlds" in the Shi'a reading of the verse. The aim is to create a ready-made Qur'anic model (Ahl al-Imrān) that can be projected onto the family of al-Ḥusayn, thereby emphasizing that the lineage of the Imams is divinely chosen, before which all other lineages pale, and thus reinforcing the principle of Imamic infallibility.

## **B. The Similarity Between the mothers: Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Fāṭima al-Zahrā', the mother of al-Ḥusayn**

### **1. The Holy Virgin Mother**

Lady Fāṭima, the mother of al-Ḥusayn, occupies a preeminent place in Shi'a thought, comparable to that of Lady Mary, the mother of Jesus, within Christian tradition. Shi'a Muslims affirm Fāṭima's infallibility and

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<sup>9</sup> - In a Shi'i narration from Abū Baṣīr, he asked Imam al-Bāqir about 'Imrān, the father of Mary and the grandfather of Jesus, whether he was a prophet. The Imam replied: "Yes, he was a prophet, sent to his people. Hannah, the wife of 'Imrān, and Hanānah, the wife of Zakariyyā, were sisters. 'Imrān had a child, Mary, from Hannah, and Zakariyyā had a child, Yahyā (John) from Hanānah. Mary gave birth to 'Isā (Jesus), who was the son of his cousin, while Yahyā was the son of Mary's cousin; and a maternal aunt has the status of an aunt."

Reference: al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, 14: 202. Compare with: Qā'im, 'Isā 'alayhi al-Salām fī Riwāyāt al-Muslimīn al-Shī'a, pp. 33–34.

regard her as the most exalted of all women on earth. Likewise, several Christian denominations uphold the belief in Mary's perpetual virginity—before, during, and after the birth of Jesus—just as Shi'a theology maintains Fāṭima's state of *batūliyya* (virginal purity), understood as her freedom from menstrual and postpartum bleeding.

According to Shi'a narrations, the Prophet Muḥammad was once asked: "What is *al-Batūl* (the Virgin)? We heard you, O Messenger of God, describe Mary as a virgin and Fāṭima as a virgin." He replied: "The virgin is she who has never seen redness," referring to the absence of menstrual and postpartum blood<sup>(10)</sup>.

In Islamic sources more broadly, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is portrayed as endowed with unparalleled virtues and spiritual excellence. The Qur'ān mentions her by name<sup>(11)</sup> on multiple occasions and extols her

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10- al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, 43:15; al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, *'Illal al-Sharā'i'*, 1:181; al-Tabarī, *Dalā'il al-Imāma*, 194; al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, *Ma 'ānī al-Akhbār*, 64.

11- See: Hayek, *Le Christ de l'Islam*, p. 66.

12-The verse states:

"The Messiah, son of Mary, was no other than a messenger; messengers (the like of whom) had passed away before him. And his mother was a saintly woman. And they both used to eat (earthly) food. See how We make the revelations clear for them, and see how they are turned away!"

(*Qur'ān*, 5:75)

Shi'i exegetes note that Mary was called *ṣiddīqa* (truthful/saintly) because she faithfully obeyed God's commands. See: al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, p. 591.

13-Surah *Maryam* is the 19th chapter of the Qur'ān, and *Surah Āl 'Imrān* is the 3rd chapter.

14-The Qur'ān supports this notion in the verse: "*And I commend her and her offspring to Your protection from Satan, the accursed*" (Qur'ān 3:36). Shi'a exegetes interpret this to mean that Satan could not reach or negatively influence Mary and her son, the Messiah, and that he was prevented from pricking Jesus at birth, as he does with all newborns. One of the Shi'a interpretations confirming this appears in *al-Ṭabrisī's Majma' al-Bayān* (2:435), where it states: "Her seeking refuge was from the touch of Satan in her side, through which every newborn cries at birth. God protected her and her son Jesus from it by a veil. Abū Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'There is no newborn whom Satan does not touch at birth, causing him to cry from that touch, except Mary and her son.' It was also said that her seeking refuge was from the temptation of Satan to lead her astray." (Compare with Hayek, *Le Christ de l'Islam*, 66–67).

15-A similar report is narrated from Ibn 'Abbās, who said: "When she reached the age of nine, she fasted by day and prayed by night, and was devoted in worship until she surpassed the rabbis." (al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, 2:436).

16- Shi'a sources recount reports of angels descending and bringing gifts from Paradise to Fāṭima on the occasion of her marriage. For details on the wedding of Fāṭima, see: Sindawi, "Legends Concerning the Wedding of Fatima al-Zahra' as Reflected in Early Shi'ite Literature," 181–192. This closely parallels the reports concerning the heavenly food that descended upon Mary. See: al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā'il al-Imāmah*, 22–23; al-Ṭabrisī, *I'lām al-Warā*, 151.

17-See: al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 2:447; al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, 2:436; *Jawāmi' al-Jāmi'*, 1:183; al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, 14:203–205.

Compare with: Hayek, *Le Christ de l'Islam*, 69.

18-This is the view of some Shi'a exegetes. See: al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 2:447; al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, 2:437.

as among the most truthful <sup>(12)</sup>. One of its chapters bears her name, *Sūrat Maryam*, while another, *Āl ‘Imrān*,<sup>(13)</sup> is named after her family.

Mary is mentioned in numerous Muslim writings in general, and Shi‘a sources have treated her story with particular care. According to these accounts, she was born infallible (*ma‘ṣūmah*), protected—along with her offspring—from Satan’s harm <sup>(14)</sup>. It is also narrated that she surpassed all worshippers of her time in devotion and prayer <sup>(15)</sup>. She was known to receive her sustenance directly from the Garden of Heaven <sup>(16)</sup>: fruits of summer would come to her during winter, and fruits of winter during summer—all of this occurring before the birth of Christ <sup>(17)</sup>.

These divine provisions were seen as a prelude to the miraculous appearance of her son, the Messiah <sup>(18)</sup>. God’s power, manifested in providing Mary—secluded in her sanctuary—with food out of season, served as a precursor to the acceptance of the idea of her giving birth to Jesus without a father or prior marriage, for God is capable of all things <sup>(19)</sup>.

These reports concerning Mary find strong support in the Qur’anic text, which documents many of her virtues and distinctions. The Qur’an says:

*“And her Lord accepted her with full acceptance and vouchsafed to her a goodly growth; and made Zachariah her guardian. Whenever Zachariah went into the sanctuary where she was, he found that she had food. He said: ‘O Mary! Whence cometh unto thee this (food)?’ She answered: ‘It is from Allah. Allah giveth without stint to whom He will.”* <sup>(20)</sup>

(Qur'an 3:37)

The Qur'an also includes verses that speak of Mary's divine assignment to worship and pray, which implicitly indicate the abundance of her devotion, fasting, and piety <sup>(21)</sup>. Based on the many Qur'anic

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19-See also: *al-Ṭūsī, al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, 2:448.

20-(Qur’ān 3:37). Shi‘a sources include a report that indicates the miraculous descent of food upon Fāṭima al-Zahrā’ directly from God. Al-Ṭabrisī narrates in *Jawāmi‘ al-Jāmi‘* (1:183): “The Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) once suffered hunger during a time of drought. Fāṭima (peace be upon her) presented him with two loaves of bread and a small piece of meat, preferring him over herself. The Prophet brought the food back to her and said: ‘Come, my daughter.’ She lifted the dish and found it filled with bread and meat. Astonished, she realized that it had come from God. He then said: ‘O my daughter, whence is this?’ She replied: ‘It is from Allah. Truly, Allah gives sustenance to whom He wills without measure.’ The Prophet then praised God, saying: ‘Praise be to Allah who has made you like the Lady of the Women of Israel.’ The Prophet then gathered ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, and all the members of his household, and they all ate until full, yet the food remained as it was.”

See also the same account in the Shi‘a sources: *Furāt, Tafsīr Furāt*, 1:83–85; *al-‘Ayyāshī, Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī*, 1:194–195.

<sup>21</sup>-This is expressed in the Qur’ān in the verse that says:

*“O Mary! Be obedient to your Lord, prostrate yourself, and bow with those who bow (in worship).”*  
(Qur’ān 3:43).

passages that mention her and her exalted rank, Mary was seen to possess a unique relationship with God—her unparalleled distinction being the result of His direct selection of her above all the women of the world (22)

Mary's bond with heaven was further reinforced through the descent of angels to her, their direct address to her, and their glad tidings of her purity and superiority over all other women (23). Yet, in Shi'a tradition, the virtue of Mary is strongly connected to that of Fātīma al-Zahrā', the Prophet's daughter (24). Numerous Shi'a texts draw comparisons between the two, usually concluding with the preference of Fātīma—the mother of the Imams—over Mary, the mother of Christ (25).

The Shi'a seized upon the Qur'anic verses that exalt Mary and infused their exegeses with traditions and interpretive reports that elevate the status of Fātīma, placing her on par with—or even above—Mary in rank and favor. For instance, in their interpretation of the verse:

*“Indeed, Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds”* (Qur'an 3:42), (26)

Shi'a exegetes wrote:

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Shi'a sources note that the name *Maryam* in the language of the Jews signifies “the devout worshipper” or “the servant.” See: al-Tabrisī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, 2:435; *Jawāmi' al-Jāmi'*, 1:182.

<sup>22</sup> The Qur'ān also contains verses that indicate Mary's divine election and her superiority over all people. One such verse states:

*“And when the angels said: O Mary! Indeed, God has chosen you and purified you, and chosen you above the women of all creation.”*

(Sūrat Al 'Imrān, 3:42).

<sup>23</sup> Shi'a sources discussed the phenomenon of the descent of angels to Mary and their encounters with her. They recorded two main views originally adopted by the Mu'tazilites outside the Shi'a tradition. According to these, the event was either (1) a miracle performed for the Prophet Zachariah—who had taken charge of Mary's upbringing and care within the sanctuary—or (2) a sign intended to confirm the prophethood of her son, Jesus.

Shi'a exegetical sources, however, commented on this view by affirming that the occurrence of miracles for Mary is indeed possible and acceptable within their theological framework, since miracles are not confined solely to prophets. They may also occur to saints and the righteous, and Mary, according to them, belonged to this special category of human beings. See: al-Tūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 2:457; al-Tabrisī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, 2:436–437.

24-For details on her character and life as presented in Islamic sources, see:

Veccia Vaglieri, “Fātīma,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, III, 841–850.

25-For Shi'a traditions and exegetical reports demonstrating the superiority of Fātīma over Mary, see: al-Tabrisī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, 2:440, where he explains the verse “*And [God] has chosen you above the women of the worlds*” (Qur'ān 3:42) as follows:

“That is, above the women of your own time, for Fātīma, daughter of the Messenger of God—peace be upon her and upon her father, her husband, and her sons—is the Lady of all women in the worlds.”

26-See: A. J. Wensinck, “Maryam,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, VI, 631;

27-al-Tūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 2:456.

*“He has chosen you above the women of the worlds.”* This carries two possible meanings: al-Ḥasan and Ibn Jurayj said that God chose her above the women of her time. This is also the view of Abū Ja‘far (peace be upon him) [Imam Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq], for Fāṭima is the Mistress of the women of all worlds. It is narrated from the Prophet (peace be upon him) that he said: “Khadija was preferred above the women of my community as Mary was preferred above the women of the worlds.” And he also said: “Sufficient among the women of the worlds are four: Mary daughter of ‘Imrān, Āsiyah the wife of Pharaoh, Khadīja daughter of Khuwaylid, and Fāṭima daughter of Muhammad<sup>(27)</sup>.”

In this last narration, Fāṭima is placed among four women known for their virtue, goodness, and faith in Islamic sources<sup>(28)</sup>. This *quaternity* became, in Shi‘i tradition, an entry point to elevate Fāṭima to a superior position among them. For while the Shi‘a books include a hadith that names these four as the greatest women of the world—Mary daughter of ‘Imrān, Āsiyah daughter of Muzāḥīm (the wife of Pharaoh), Khadīja daughter of Khuwaylid, and Fāṭima al-Zahrā’ daughter of the Prophet Muhammad<sup>(29)</sup>—their sources also add sufficient narrations to demonstrate that Fāṭima is the best among these four, the most virtuous, and the most sacred<sup>(30)</sup>.

The Shi‘a tradition drew upon the exalted status and high rank that the Qur’ān attributes to Mary in order to magnify the personality of Fāṭima al-Zahrā’ and elevate her above all women of all times<sup>(31)</sup>. Among the numerous traditions that reflect the Shi‘a’s use of Mary’s figure to sanctify Fāṭima and raise her stature, we may cite a partial version of a long narration in which the Prophet describes the state of his beloved daughter Fāṭima after his death:

“Then she shall see herself humiliated after having been honored during her father’s lifetime. At that moment, God will comfort her through the angels, who will call her with the same words by which they called Mary, the daughter of ‘Imrān, saying: *‘O Fāṭima, indeed God has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of all the worlds. O Fāṭima, be devout to your Lord, prostrate yourself, and bow with those who bow.’* Then pain will overtake her and she will fall ill; so, God will send Mary, the daughter of ‘Imrān, to nurse her and console her in her ailment...”<sup>(32)</sup>

This narration depicts Mary’s intervention in Fāṭima’s life, where Mary plays the role of a celestial helper who provides spiritual support to Fāṭima after the Prophet’s death, strengthening her resolve and patience amid the hardships she faces. The narrative carries a political undertone, alluding to a sacred figure like Mary siding with the party of the Ahl al-Bayt, led by ‘Alī and Fāṭima, against those whom the Shi‘a regard as their adversaries among the Companions—especially Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq and ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.

Moreover, this narration reveals one of the distinctive features of the Shi‘a conception of Fāṭima: her connection with heaven and the angels. For this reason, Fāṭima is called *al-Muḥaddatha*<sup>(33)</sup> among the

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<sup>28</sup> These narrations concerning the four most virtuous women are also found in Sunni sources. See, for instance: al-Suyūtī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 2: 23–24.

<sup>29</sup>—See also the ḥadīth that mentions these four women and presents them as superior to all other women of the world in: al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma‘ al-Bayān*, 2: 435.

<sup>30</sup> See: Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib*, 3: 322–323; al-‘Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī*, 1: 197.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example:

Muṭahharī, *al-Malhama al-Husaynīya*, vol. 3, pp. 209–217;  
32-al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 14, p. 205.

<sup>33</sup> – It is reported from the sixth Imam, Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, that he said:

“Fāṭima (peace be upon her) was called *al-Muḥaddatha* (‘the one spoken to’) because the angels used to descend from heaven and address her as they addressed Mary the daughter of ‘Imrān, saying: *‘O Fāṭima, God has chosen you, and purified you, and chosen you above the*

Shi'a—"the one spoken to [by angels]." The contents of these angelic communications were said to be recorded in a book known as *Muṣḥaf Fāṭīma* ("The Book of Fāṭīma"), a text about which Shi'a and non-Shi'a Muslims have long differed concerning its nature and contents<sup>(34)</sup>.

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*women of all worlds. O Fāṭīma, be devoutly obedient to your Lord, prostrate, and bow with those who bow.*' She would converse with them, and they with her. One night she asked them: 'Is not Mary, the daughter of 'Imrān, the one preferred over the women of all worlds?' They replied: 'Mary was the mistress of the women of her own world, but God, the Mighty and Glorious, has made you the mistress of the women of your world and hers, and the mistress of the women of all times.'"

— al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, *'Ilal al-Sharā'i'*, 1:182; al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, 14:206; al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā'il al-Imāma*, 14.

It is also reported from al-Ṣādiq that:

"Fāṭīma wept for her father for seventy-five days. Gabriel used to visit her, inform her of her father's state, console her, and tell her of future events, and 'Alī (peace be upon him) used to record them. This is similar to the verse: '*Then he called to her from beneath her: Do not grieve.*'"

— Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Tālib*, 3:337.

The latter narration implies an indirect parallel between Fāṭīma and Mary, as the quoted verse relates to Mary's experience at the miraculous birth of Jesus and the angel's appearance to her.

Modern studies have discussed the concept of *muḥaddath* ("the one spoken to by angels") and its importance in Shi'i thought, emphasizing its role in elevating the spiritual rank of the Imams in Twelver doctrine. See:

Sindawi, "Fāṭīma's Book — A Shi'ite Qur'an," pp. 39–47.

<sup>34</sup> - Most Shi'i sources—both classical and later—affirm the widespread belief that a *muṣḥaf* (codex) was revealed to Lady Fāṭīma al-Zahrā' after the death of her father, the Prophet Muḥammad. Shi'i reports differ in their descriptions of how this *Muṣḥaf Fāṭīma* came to be revealed, dictated, and compiled, yet they converge on two primary purposes for its revelation: to console Fāṭīma and alleviate her grief after the Prophet's death, and to serve as proof of the true Imam's identity.

According to Shi'i tradition, Fāṭīma was overwhelmed with sorrow after the loss of her father. God therefore sent an angel to comfort and speak with her, easing her grief. 'Alī, her husband, would record what the angel conveyed to Fāṭīma, resulting in the compilation of numerous pages that came to form a single codex known as *Muṣḥaf Fāṭīma*.

The Shi'a alone among Muslim sects affirm the existence of this *Muṣḥaf*, though their sources offer varied and sometimes conflicting accounts concerning its content and nature. Shi'i narrations unanimously insist, however, that *Muṣḥaf Fāṭīma* bears no resemblance or relation to the Qur'an, containing none of its verses. They further stress that it includes no legal rulings—no injunctions of lawful or unlawful matters—underscoring that it is wholly distinct from the Qur'an.

This insistence on the *Muṣḥaf*'s separation from divine law appears to serve an apologetic function, reinforcing the Shi'i rejection of accusations of Qur'anic alteration. By emphasizing the absence of scriptural or legal overlap between the Qur'an and *Muṣḥaf Fāṭīma*, Shi'i scholars sought to defend themselves against charges that belief in such a text implied tampering with revelation.

See: al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā'il al-Imāma*, 29.

Compare with:

Burton, "Mushaf," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, VII, 668–669;

If there is anything that unites Mary and Fāṭima, as both are regarded among the most exalted women of all creation in Shi‘a thought, it would be certain shared virtues and spiritual qualities<sup>(35)</sup>. Yet, the traditions transmitted by the Shi‘a concerning Fāṭima’s exceptional merits and unique attributes render her even more sacred and significant than all other women—including Mary herself<sup>(36)</sup>.

There is no doubt that all the reports and narrations extolling Fāṭima’s superiority ultimately fall under the broader Shi‘i principle of venerating the *Ahl al-Bayt* and exalting the Imams who descend from her noble lineage<sup>(37)</sup>.

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Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi‘ism*, p. 74;

Köhler-Beinhauer, “Fāṭima bint Muḥammad.”

<sup>35</sup> Among the shared qualities attributed to both Mary and Fāṭima in Shi‘i thought, purity (*tahāra*) holds a central place. Fāṭima, like Mary before her, was given the title *al-Batul* (“the Virgin” or “the Chaste”), a name that reflects her detachment from worldly concerns and her spiritual devotion to God. This parallelism illustrates how attributes originally associated with Mary in the broader Islamic heritage were consciously transferred to Fāṭima to elevate her status. Such traditions were widely accepted across many Muslim sects, since they serve to honor the Prophet’s daughter—an inclination embraced by Muslims of all schools.

In Shi‘i reports, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib is said to have narrated that the Prophet was once asked about the meaning of *al-Batul*, for he used to say that both Mary and Fāṭima were *batul*. (See: al-Ṣadūq, *Ilal al-Sharā‘i*, 1:181; McAuliff, “Chosen of All Women: Mary and Fāṭimah in Qur‘anic Exegesis,” 19–28.)

<sup>36</sup> Shi‘i sources abound with traditions extolling Fāṭima’s virtues, such as those in: al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā‘il al-Imāma*, 14–30; al-Ṣadūq, *Ilal al-Sharā‘i*, 1:178–189; al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-Ghumma*, 2:75–129; al-Ṭabarsī, *I‘lām al-Warā*, 148–152; and Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib*, 3:318–335.

One of the traditions illustrating Fāṭima’s superiority over Mary reports that when the Prophet declared Fāṭima to be *the mistress of the women of all worlds*, he was asked whether this meant of *her own generation*. Imām Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq replied: “That was Mary—she was the mistress of the women of her own time. But Fāṭima is the mistress of the women of all worlds, from the first to the last.” (See: al-Ṣadūq, *Ma‘ānī al-Akhbār*, 107.)

Al-Sharīf al-Murtadā (d. 1044) likewise affirmed Fāṭima’s absolute preeminence, writing: “The Imāmī Shi‘a are unanimously agreed—without any dissent—that she is the most excellent of all women.” (See: al-Murtadā, *Rasā‘il al-Sharīf al-Murtadā*, 3:148.) Ibn Ṭāwūs also endorsed this view in *al-Tarā‘if fī Ma‘rifat Madhāhib al-Tawā’if*, 1:387.

Similarly, Ibn Shahrāshūb (d. 1192) compiled numerous Shi‘i reports affirming Fāṭima’s superiority over Mary and all other women (see *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib*, 3:134–135, 105), a stance later echoed by al-Majlisī (*Bihār al-Anwār*, 43:38).

<sup>37</sup> Among the traditions that highlight this comparison is the report from Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, who said:

“She was called *al-Muhaddatha* (the one spoken to by angels), for the angels would descend from heaven and address her just as they addressed Mary, daughter of ‘Imrān, saying: ‘O Fāṭima, verily God has chosen thee, purified thee, and chosen thee above the women of all worlds. O Fāṭima, be obedient to thy Lord, prostrate thyself and bow with those who bow.’ She would speak to them, and they to her. One night she asked, ‘Is not Mary, daughter of ‘Imrān, the most favored of women?’ They replied, ‘Mary was the mistress of the women of her time, but God has made you the mistress of the women of all worlds—of the first and the last.’”

(al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā‘il al-Imāma*, 14.)

It becomes evident from the foregoing that Shi'a tradition employs the Qur'anic sanctity of Mary, the Virgin, as a “**comparative ground**” to exalt and elevate the status of Fāṭima al-Zahrā’ — ultimately portraying her as *surpassing* Mary to become the “**Mistress of the Women of the Worlds**” in an absolute sense.

This preference is constructed by establishing **miraculous parallels** between the two figures: for example, describing Fāṭima with the epithet *al-Batul* (“the Chaste”) to denote her absolute purity and infallibility, and narrating accounts of **divine sustenance** being sent down to her. Yet, these parallels serve merely as a **launching platform** for Fāṭima’s categorical superiority; the Qur'anic election (*istisfā'*) of Mary is interpreted as limited to the women of her own era, while Fāṭima is declared the best among the four most virtuous women and the **Mistress of all women — past and future**.

This construction reaches completion through the attribution of the title *al-Muḥaddatha* (“the one spoken to by angels”) to Fāṭima, signifying her **ongoing communion with angels** and her reception of **esoteric knowledge** — later recorded in the *Muṣṭafā Fāṭima*. In this way, the **systematic use of Mary's sanctified image** becomes a deliberate theological strategy to legitimize and reinforce the **transcendent sanctity of Fāṭima al-Zahrā'**, thereby consolidating the spiritual and doctrinal primacy of the Prophet's Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) and their Imams within Shi'a belief.

### C. The Annunciations of the Birth of Jesus and al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī

Christ is regarded as the bearer of the **glad tidings of his miraculous birth**, and al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī shares with him this **sacred aspect** within Shi'a tradition. The annunciations of Christ's birth appear in clear Qur'anic passages that recount the **angels' announcement to Mary** of her imminent conception and the birth of Christ<sup>(38)</sup>. The verse declares:

*“[Remember] when the angels said, ‘O Mary, indeed God gives you glad tidings of a Word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary — distinguished in this world and the Hereafter, and among those brought near [to God].’*  
(Qur'ān 3:45)<sup>(39)</sup>

The glad tidings of the Messiah's birth reached his mother prior to his conception, although the Qur'anic narrative does not specify the precise timing of this annunciation. Shi'a traditions, however, present a more detailed chronology, situating the divine message at a clearly defined moment well before the birth itself. Among the reports that elucidate this timing is a narration attributed to Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, who stated:

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Modern scholars have noted these Shi'i parallels between Fāṭima and Mary, interpreting them either as signs of Christian influence on early Shi'ism or as theological efforts to establish Shi'i legitimacy and continuity within the broader Islamic religious mosaic. For detailed discussions, see:

McAuliff, “Chosen of All Women: Mary and Fāṭimah in Qur'anic Exegesis,” 19–28;

Massignon;

Sered, “Rachel, Mary, and Fatima,” 131–146;

Beinhauer-Köhler, *Fāṭima bint Muhammad*, 129–131.

<sup>38</sup> The annunciations of Christ's birth are also found in the **Gospel**, where it is written: *“But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ’”* (Luke 2:10–12)

However, the **Gospel's annunciation** occurs **after the birth of Christ**, as the passage clearly indicates the time of his nativity. By contrast, the **Qur'anic annunciation** of Christ's birth **precedes** the event itself, as is evident from the verse's context and its interpretations in Muslim exegesis.

<sup>39</sup> Qur'ān 3:45

"God Almighty revealed to 'Imrān: *'I will grant you a blessed son who will heal the blind and the lepers and will raise the dead by God's permission. I will make him a messenger to the Children of Israel.'* 'Imrān then informed his wife Ḥannah, the mother of Mary, of this revelation. When she conceived, she believed she was carrying a boy and said, *'My Lord, I have vowed to You that what is in my womb shall be dedicated to Your service'*<sup>(40)</sup>. Yet when she gave birth to a girl, she said, *'And the male is not like the female'*<sup>(41)</sup>."

A daughter cannot be a messenger. When God granted Mary the birth of Jesus, it was he whom God had foretold to 'Imrān<sup>(42)</sup>. Thus, the Annunciation of Christ preceded his birth by many years—indeed, it even preceded the birth of his mother, Mary. This reflects a distinct Shi'a emphasis on the concept of divine annunciation, which occupies a crucial place in their religious narratives. These narratives emerge from the belief that the Prophet, like the Imams after him, foretells their births and their future mission of disseminating his message, each according to his divinely ordained story.

In this regard, the role played by the Annunciation of al-Ḥusayn is far more significant than that of Christ within Shi'a tradition. If the Annunciation of Christ's birth is considered authentic in their accounts, it serves to pave the way for the Annunciation of al-Ḥusayn. A close reading of the Shi'a biographical literature on al-Ḥusayn reveals that his Annunciation did not end with the news of his birth alone. Rather, Shi'a narrations maintain that some were informed even of his martyrdom at Karbalā' through prophetic foreknowledge. It is related, for instance, that one of the narrators heard Ka'b al-Āḥbār—who had Jewish origins<sup>(43)</sup>—speak of al-Ḥusayn's killing based on an ancient prophecy recorded in Jewish scriptures<sup>(44)</sup>.

The miracles surrounding the birth of al-Ḥusayn closely parallel those associated with the birth of Christ. Shi'a sources recount narratives such as the angels' glad tidings to Fāṭima, her seeking refuge beneath a palm tree, her withdrawal into seclusion within her home, the miraculous provision of sustenance, the angelic breath upon her face, and the descent of a dove. All these elements strikingly mirror the miraculous motifs that accompany the birth of Christ as described in both the Gospels and the Qur'ān<sup>(45)</sup>.

Here, we observe that Shi'a tradition forges a profound spiritual and historical link between the narratives of the birth and sacrifice of Christ and those of al-Ḥusayn, grounding this connection in the shared and sacred motif of *glad tidings* (*bishāra*). While the Qur'ānic text highlights the annunciation of Christ's birth, Shi'a narratives advance the theme further in the case of al-Ḥusayn—

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<sup>40</sup> - Qur'ān 3:35

<sup>41</sup> - Qur'ān 3:36

<sup>42</sup> - Al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 14, p. 203.

<sup>43</sup> - Ka'b al-Āḥbār al-Ḥimyārī al-Yamānī was a Jewish scholar from Yemen who converted to Islam during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb (17 AH / 638 CE). He is regarded as one of the earliest transmitters of the *Isrā'īliyyāt* — Jewish-derived materials that entered Islamic tradition. For more on his character, his role in Islamic heritage, and his contribution to the introduction of Jewish elements into Islam, see:

Schmitz, "Ka'b Al-Āḥbār," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. IV, pp. 316–317.

<sup>44</sup>-The narration attributed to Ka'b al-Āḥbār states:

"In our Book it is written that a man from the descendants of Muhammad, the Messenger of God, will be killed, and the sweat of his companions' mounts will not have dried before they enter Paradise and embrace the houris."

Then al-Ḥasan passed by us, and we said, "Is it he?" He replied, "No." Then al-Ḥusayn passed by, and we said, "Is it he?" He said, "Yes."

Al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 44, p. 224; see also:

Sandawī, *Ha-Maqātil be-Adab ha-Shī'ah* (The Maqātil in Shi'i Literature), pp. 192–193 [Hebrew].

<sup>45</sup> - al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharā'ij wa-l-Jarā'ih*, vol. 1, pp. 209, 240.

transforming the *bishāra* from a simple proclamation of his coming into a far-reaching prophecy foretelling his destiny and martyrdom. This prophecy, confirmed even by figures connected to Jewish tradition such as Ka'b al-Āhbār, invests al-Ḥusayn with an aura of eternal and divine sanctity, affirming that his redemptive role was preordained in the sacred scriptures. The parallels extend beyond oral prophecy to the very circumstances of his birth: Shi'a accounts of the miracles accompanying al-Ḥusayn's nativity closely mirror those surrounding the birth of Christ. Collectively, these traditions serve to reinforce al-Ḥusayn's miraculous and *imāmate* status by intertwining his life story with the most revered narratives of redemption in the Abrahamic faiths.

**D. The Naming of the Messiah and al-Ḥusayn:** The annunciation of the Messiah's birth in the Qur'ān is inseparably linked to his divine naming and title: "*His name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary*"<sup>(46)</sup>. This naming act is of divine origin, a motif that finds a striking parallel in Shi'a tradition concerning al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī. Just as Jesus' name was decreed from heaven, Shi'a narratives assert that al-Ḥusayn's name was likewise chosen by divine command rather than by his parents. According to these accounts, the name al-Ḥusayn is the Arabicized form of *Shabīr*, the name of Aaron's son<sup>(47)</sup>—the brother of Moses—in Hebrew, which is said to carry the same meaning. Shi'a scholars further maintain that al-Ḥusayn's name appears in earlier revelations: *Shabīr* in the Torah and *Ṭab* in the Gospel<sup>(48)</sup>. In addition to this linguistic and theological correspondence, Shi'a reports emphasize another miraculous parallel between the two figures: both Jesus and al-Ḥusayn were conceived after six months of gestation<sup>(49)</sup>. This deliberate alignment of their conception and naming underscores the intimate spiritual and symbolic connection between them in Shi'a thought. The resemblance between the annunciation and conception of the Messiah and those of al-Ḥusayn

<sup>46</sup> -Qur'ān 3:45.

<sup>47</sup> A lengthy Shi'a narration describes the birth of al-Ḥusayn following that of his elder brother al-Hasan and explains how his name was chosen — a name derived from the Aramaic-Hebrew root **š.b.r.** (שָׁבֵר) and related to the term **Shabīr**, which was adapted into Arabic as *al-Ḥusayn*. The report states:

"A year after al-Hasan's birth, al-Ḥusayn was born. The Prophet came to me and said, 'O Asmā', bring me my son.' So I handed him to the Prophet wrapped in a white cloth. He called the adhān in his right ear and the iqāmah in his left, then placed him in his lap and wept.

Asmā' said, 'May my father and mother be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of God! Why do you weep?' He replied, 'Because of my son — this child. A transgressing group will kill him after me...' Then he said to 'Alī: 'What have you named my son?' 'Alī replied, 'I would not precede you in naming him, O Messenger of God. I wished to name him Ḥarb (War).' The Prophet said, 'Nor would I precede my Lord in naming him.' Then Gabriel descended and said, 'The Almighty greets you and says: Name him after the son of Aaron.'

The Prophet asked, 'What was the name of Aaron's son?' Gabriel said, 'Shubayr.' The Prophet replied, 'My tongue is Arabic.' Gabriel said, 'Then name him al-Ḥusayn.' Thus he named him al-Ḥusayn."

— al-Fattāl al-Naysābūrī, *Rawdat al-wā'iẓīn*, 154–155; al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, 43:238; 101:110; al-Muḥaddith al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il*, 15:144–145.

<sup>48</sup> -See also: al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, 43:237, 252; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Tālib*, 4:78.

<sup>49</sup> Shi'a sources further mention that both Mary and Fāṭima carried Jesus and al-Ḥusayn, respectively, for only six months. See: al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, 14:225; 25:254; 44:162, 198; al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā'il al-imāma*, 71.

Hence, it is reported in Shi'a tradition that a woman may give birth in no less than six months: al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāft*, 5:563; al-Hurr al-Āmili, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, 21:382. Compare with Vagliari, "Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Tālib," 612.

thus reflects a broader doctrinal effort to construct a sacred typology—one that elevates al-Ḥusayn’s rank and sanctity to a level approaching that of the prophets, and situates his life within the continuum of divine revelation. The text reveals the centrality of “**divine naming**” as one of the most deliberate parallels between Jesus and al-Ḥusayn in Shi‘a narrative theology. Just as the name of Jesus (“the Messiah, Jesus’ son of Mary”) was declared from heaven in the Qur’ān, Shi‘a reports affirm that al-Ḥusayn’s name was not chosen by his parents but was a direct revelation from God through Gabriel. This act serves to strip the process of naming from ordinary human agency and to ascribe to al-Ḥusayn a divinely decreed identity and mission, thereby elevating his spiritual and Imamic status. This linguistic and theological connection is further reinforced by the claim that *al-Ḥusayn* is the Arabic adaptation of *Shabīr*, the name said to belong to one of Aaron’s sons in the Torah—thus linking al-Ḥusayn to an ancient prophetic lineage recognized in both Jewish and Christian traditions.

Beyond the matter of naming, Shi‘a tradition extends this Christological parallel by highlighting another shared miracle: the **six-month gestation period** of both Jesus and al-Ḥusayn. According to these reports, both Mary and Fāṭima carried their sons for exactly six months—a miraculous and symbolically charged duration that also became the textual basis for a legal precedent in Shi‘a jurisprudence (that a viable birth may occur in no less than six months).

The consistent recurrence of such parallels—in divine naming, miraculous annunciation, and extraordinary gestation—reveals a deliberate **Shi‘a theological strategy** to construct what might be termed a “*Shi‘a Christ*” figure. Through this construction, Ḥusayn is imbued with prophetic and miraculous attributes analogous to those of Jesus, thus elevating him to a sanctified rank approaching that of the prophets themselves. This ultimately serves the doctrinal purpose of affirming al-Ḥusayn’s infallibility (*‘isma*) and divine legitimacy within Shi‘a theology.

#### **E. The Birth of Jesus and al-Ḥusayn: Shared Miraculous Aspects**

In Islamic tradition, the birth of Jesus stands as one of the greatest miracles in human history—unique and unparalleled. He alone was born of a mother without a father<sup>(50)</sup>, an extraordinary event that initially provoked slanderous accusations against Mary, who was unjustly accused of immorality. Over time, this miraculous birth became the theological cornerstone upon which Christian belief in Jesus’ divinity was built, attributing to him superhuman qualities<sup>(51)</sup>.

Muslim exegetical sources—both Sunnī and Shi‘a —defended the sanctity of Jesus and his mother, grounding their position in Qur’ānic texts that explicitly vindicate Mary from any accusation and affirm Jesus’ birth as a divine miracle. In both traditions, this extraordinary birth was not interpreted as proof of divinity, but rather as a *sign* (*āyah*) of God’s omnipotence, marking the beginning of Jesus’ prophethood and mission.

This conception was shared by both Sunnī and Shi‘a traditions, yet its impact was far more pronounced within Shi‘ism. One clear aspect of this Shi‘a appropriation appears in how miraculous and extraordinary

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<sup>50</sup> The Qur’ān likens the miraculous birth of Jesus and its extraordinary nature to the **primordial act of creation**—the creation of the first human being, Adam, who represents the beginning of humankind in all the Abrahamic faiths. This idea is reinforced by the verse: **“Indeed, the likeness of Jesus with Allah is as the likeness of Adam. He created him from dust, then said to him, ‘Be,’ and he was.”** (*Qur’ān 3:59*)

<sup>51</sup> The Qur’ān also addresses the accusations leveled against Mary and her son at the time of Jesus’s birth, defending their purity and divine selection. These accusations are alluded to in several verses, including **Qur’ān 19:27–28, 21:91, and 66:12**,

features originally associated with the birth of the “Muslim Christ” were transferred to the narrative of al-Ḥusayn’s birth.

According to Shi‘a reports, the birth of al-Ḥusayn was accompanied by a series of supernatural phenomena and wondrous signs that surpassed ordinary human experience. These miraculous elements, interwoven throughout the Shi‘a accounts of his birth, served as a **preparatory framework** for legitimizing his exceptional nature and for affirming the truth of his *imamate* and sanctity.

In this respect, the miraculous circumstances surrounding al-Ḥusayn’s birth mirror those of Jesus, underscoring a deliberate Shi‘a tendency to parallel the sacred biography of Christ with that of al-Ḥusayn—thereby reinforcing the latter’s divine election and spiritual authority within the Shi‘a worldview.

When the Virgin Mary was six months pregnant the angel Gabriel was sent to her to announce that she would give birth to Jesus: “And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph ... and the virgin’s name was Mary ... and the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest ... then Mary said unto the angel, how shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.<sup>52</sup>

Likewise, al-Ḥusayn’s mother, Fæāima, daughter of the prophet, was a virgin when she gave birth to him!<sup>53</sup>

Additional similarities: During Fāṭima’s pregnancy with al-Ḥusayn the angel Gabriel revealed himself together with a thousand celestial angels to the prophet Muhammad in order to congratulate him on the expected birth of his grandson al-Ḥusayn. On the day of al-Ḥusayn’s birth, angels descended in ranks to extol and glorify his birth.

On Jesus’ birthday, angels praising God descended from heaven to greet him.<sup>54</sup>

The birth of al-Ḥusayn heralded the spread of joy and happiness within the Prophet’s family. The joy the Prophet experienced at his birth was evident upon him, for goodness and light spread throughout the world. All creatures benefited from his birth. Among the stories recounted by them is one that confirms the benefit an angel received from al-Ḥusayn’s birth. This angel, known as Futrūs, had incurred God’s wrath for failing in a task God had commanded him to perform. As punishment, he was banished to an island with broken wings. He saw a group of angels on their way to the Prophet to congratulate him on al-Ḥusayn’s birth. He asked them to take him along, and they did. His sin was forgiven through the intercession of the Prophet Muhammad and the blessing of the newborn, whose touch was enough to quickly restore the angel’s wings. Some Shi‘a narrations call him the Master of al-Ḥusayn’s, because from that time onward, he assumed the task of recording the names of those who visit al-Ḥusayn’s shrine in Karbala<sup>(55)</sup>.

The narration on the authority of the fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir, clarifies that Shi‘ite legend employed to elevate the value of al-Ḥusayn by including angels in the scene of his birth and making it a miraculous birth. It was narrated on his authority that he said: “When al-Ḥusayn was born, Gabriel descended with a thousand angels to congratulate the Prophet on his birth. There was an angel called Futrūs on an island in

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52-Luke 1:26–38.

53-Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf ‘alā qatlā al-Tufīf*, p. 10; al-Tustarī, *al-Khaṣā’iṣ al-Ḥusaynīyya*, p. 369; Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islām*, p. 35.

54-al-Tustarī, *al-Khaṣā’iṣ al-Ḥusaynīyya*, p. 125.

55- See also::Vagliari, “Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib,” p. 612.

the sea. God sent him on a mission, but he was delayed, so his wing was broken, and he was removed from his position and brought down to that island. He stayed there for five hundred years, and he was a friend of Gabriel. When he saw them, he said to Gabriel, 'Where are you going?' He said, 'We are congratulating the Prophet Muhammad on a child who was born to him this night.' He said, 'Take me to him, perhaps he will pray for me.' So, he carried him, and when Gabriel delivered the congratulations, the Prophet looked at Futrus, so Gabriel asked him about him, and he told him about him. Then the Messenger of God turned to him." He said to him, "Wipe your wing over this newborn," meaning al-Husayn. So, he wiped his wing, and the child returned to his former state. God was pleased with him, and he was named Atiq al-Husayn. He was commanded to remain in the land of Karbala and to inform every believer who visited him until the Day of Resurrection<sup>(56)</sup>.

The role of angels in the life of al-Husayn occupies a prominent and well-established place within Shi'a narrations. These angels are depicted as constant supporters and companions of al-Husayn, reflecting their recognition of his divine authority (*imāma*) and their acknowledgment of his superiority over all creation—humankind and jinn alike.

Shi'a sources have thus accumulated numerous legendary accounts to affirm and magnify this idea, portraying angelic beings as participants in his life, from his birth to his martyrdom. This theme closely parallels the Qur'anic story of the angels' descent upon Jesus and his mother, intervening to defend the newborn Messiah and to comfort the anxious Virgin Mary<sup>(57)</sup>.

An additional element is that God names the baby. When Gabriel announced Mary's pregnancy to her, he said, "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus."<sup>58</sup> Jesus' name was thus chosen by God. In many places in Shi'a literature it is mentioned that God gave al-Husayn his name, and instructed his grandfather the prophet Muammad to call him by this name.<sup>59</sup>

Husayn's birth, like Jesus', was thus a miraculous birth, a birth of true holiness, to a virgin mother, announced by special signs. This birth, befitting a model of a holy character, appears in stories about the two personalities.

To the miraculous pregnancy and birth can be added the motif of speech in the cradle.

It is said of Jesus that he spoke while still a babe in the cradle; Husayn did not speak while an infant, but caused another infant to speak: in one of the traditions according to Safwan Ibn Mahrān, it says: two people began arguing about the baby's paternity; each claimed that the baby was his son. Al-Husayn, who was passing by, heard the argument, addressed the baby and said to him, "Speak with permission of God, may he be praised." Then the baby opened its mouth and said, "I am not the son of either

of these two; I am the son of a shepherd from such and such a tribe."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> -For details on the role of angels in the story of al-Husayn's martyrdom, see our article: Sindawi, "The Place of Angels in the *Maqātil* Literature," p. 54.

See also: al-Tabarī, *Dalā'il al-Imāmah*, pp. 78–79; al-Muḥaddith al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, 10:411, ḥadīth no. 12271-14; al-Fattāl, *Rawdat al-Wā'iẓīn*, 1:155; al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, 44:182; Ibn Shahrashūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Tālib*, 4:74; al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, p. 582; Ibn Qulawayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, p. 66, ḥadīth no. 1; al-Nabbātī, *al-Širāt al-Mustaqqīm*, 2:179, ḥadīth no. 5; al-Tabarī, *Bishārat al-Muṣṭafā*, p. 219; al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharā'iż wa-l-Jarā'iḥ*, 1:252–253.

<sup>57</sup> - See on the role played by angels in Shi'a literature in supporting the figure of al-Husayn and enhancing his status:

Sindawi, *al-Maqātil fi Adab al-Shī'a*, pp. 176–185.

<sup>58</sup> Luke 1:31; Matthew 1:21.

<sup>59</sup> See for example: Al-Tustarī, *al-Khaṭā'ib al-Husayniyya*, p. 126.

<sup>60</sup> Ibn Sharashūb, *Manāqib Āl 'Abī Tālib*, 4:59.

Al-Husayn performs a miracle by causing the babe in its cradle to speak. We will therefore continue to the next point of comparison, dealing with miracles performed by Al-Husayn and Jesus.

#### ***F. Supernatural Powers and Performance of Miracles***

Jesus and Husayn are both known for the miracles that they performed. Husayn worked miracles both during his life and after his death, through the agency of his decapitated head. Husayn's head is able to speak, and influences events around him after his murder. Jesus impresses both his believers and opponents by the miracles he performs. Let us take for example the miracle of healing by touching. The text of Matthew ch. 9 relates: "And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment. For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made the whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour."<sup>61</sup>

Deliverance through touch appears also in the traditions about Husayn. In this case the healer is the angel Futrus, who failed to perform the task commanded him by God, and as punishment his wings were broken and he was cast onto a deserted island.

When Husayn was born, Futrus begged the angel Gabriel to bring him with him to congratulate the prophet Muâmmad on the birth of his grandson. Gabriel bore Fiâris there, and when they arrived, they told the prophet Futrus's story. The prophet said to him, "Touch the newborn babe." Futrus did so and immediately flew up to heaven; his wings were healed.<sup>62</sup>

Another supernatural characteristic is the light shining from them: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."<sup>63</sup>

The term "light" in the New Testament incorporates a messianic message and tidings of redemption. This message is evident in Jesus' words to his disciples: "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you ... While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."<sup>64</sup>

It is said of Al-Husayn, "When God desired to create Husayn, first He formed light, and then He formed soul, and from the mixture of light and soul Husayn was created. Moreover, the light of Al-Husayn was created from the light of God."<sup>65</sup>

Light shone from Husayn while he was still in his mother's womb. When Fatima became pregnant, her father the prophet said to her, "I see a light before your face; you will give birth to an 'imâm of this nation." His daughter answered, "Since I conceived, I have had no need for a lamp to illuminate the darkness ..."<sup>66</sup>

In both cases, the light bursting forth from them is a symbolic, metaphoric light meant to transmit a messianic message.

It should be noted that the motif of prophetic light is very common in religious literature in general and in Shi'a literature in particular. Many stories can be found in Shi'a sources about the light of 'Adam that glowed on the Seth's forehead, and about the garments of light given to him; likewise, the pillar of light that appeared at the birth of 'Ibrahîm, which aroused the amazement of the angels, is mentioned.

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<sup>61</sup> Matthew 9:20-22.

<sup>62</sup> Al-Majlisî, *Bihâr al- 'Anwâr*, 40:249. It should be noted that the Shâfi'îte 'imâms were gifted with the power of healing by touching the sick. For examples see: Al-Tabarî, *Dalâ'il al- 'Imâma*, pp. 187, 190, 200, 213, 283, 341, 403, and 420.

<sup>63</sup> John 8:12; 12:46.

<sup>64</sup> John 1:9, 8:12, 12:35-36.

<sup>65</sup> Al-Tustarî, *al-Khaâ'i al-Husayniyya*, p. 50, 100.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

In Islamic tradition light constitutes one of the conspicuous signs of Muhammad's prophecy and mission.<sup>67</sup> The expressions "light" and "true light" appear in the New Testament more than twenty times, showing us the importance of this prophetic symbol in Christian tradition.

#### ***G.Premonition of the Time and Place of Death***

al-Husayn, like the other 'imÁms according to Shi'a tradition, knew the day of his death in advance, as well as the place of his murder and the manner of his death<sup>68</sup>. When Husayn reached Karbala' he said, "O God, here I gaze in sorrow and catastrophe (*karb wa-balÁ*), for here our blood will be spilt, here is the place of our battle, I know of this place from my grandfather."<sup>69</sup> Jesus also knew the time and manner of his death in advance, and even told his disciples so: "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."<sup>70</sup>

Before his death Jesus asked the women of Jerusalem not to weep for him and not to lament over him when he died.<sup>71</sup> Likewise, before Husayn departed for the final battle at Karbala' he asked his wives and sisters not to weep for him, nor to tear their clothes, nor to cut their cheeks in mourning after his death.<sup>72</sup>

After the hour of his death was made known to him, Jesus went out alone and prayed. He asked God to diminish the burden of his punishment: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."<sup>73</sup> The night before his murder, when he knew that the time of his death was approaching, Husayn also prayed the well-known prayer *Salat al-Khawf* (prayer in time of trouble).

Husayn also knew exactly who would kill him: at the end of the Battle of Karbala' between Husayn and Umayyad army, when Shimir ibn dhD al-Jawshan approached him in order to decapitate him, Husayn requested that he "remove the disguise from his face so that I and see it and look at you." Shimir consented to Husayn's request and removed the disguise, and his face appeared leprous and his eyes blind, with the chin of a dog and the hair of a pig. Then Husayn said, "My grandfather was right and spoke the truth when he told my father, 'O 'AlD, this son will be killed by a leprous and blind man with the chin of a dog and the hair of a pig.'"<sup>74</sup>

Like him, Jesus knew with certainty who would betray him and the man's description:

"Verily I say unto you that one of you shall betray me ... Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said."<sup>75</sup> Later, when the Greeks approached to arrest Jesus, he said to his disciples, "Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.<sup>76</sup>

It should be noted that premonition does not lead either Jesus or al-Husayn to try to avoid their respective fates. On the contrary: when al-Husayn concludes that his life is about to end he behaves accordingly and ignores the advice of his comrades and supporters suggesting that he not go to Iraq. He takes his death upon himself.

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<sup>67</sup> For details see: Kohlberg, "The ShD'a (ShD'a) are the party of Ali.", p. 15 (In Hebrew); Rubin, "Pre-Existence and Light- Aspects of the Concept of Nür Muhammad", pp. 62-119.

<sup>68</sup> For details see: Sindawi, *The MaqÁtil in ShD'ite Literature*, pp.323-24; For more detail, see, for example: Al-TabarD, *DalÁ'il al- 'ImÁma*, pp. 231, 306.

<sup>69</sup> AbÙ Mikhnaf, *Maqtal al-Husayn*, p.77.

<sup>70</sup> Matthew 26:2.

<sup>71</sup> Luke 23:28.

<sup>72</sup> AbÙ Mikhnaf, *Maqtal al-Husayn*, p.13-15.

<sup>73</sup> Matthew, 26:39, 42.

<sup>74</sup> AbÙ Mikhnaf, *Maqtal al-Husayn*, p. 95.

<sup>75</sup> Matthew 26:21-25.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 45. This verse is repeated in Mark 14:42.

Similarly, during the last supper Jesus declares to his disciples that he is about to sacrifice himself for the sake of the victory of faith, and that he will die in order to save mankind. They both willingly took upon themselves the role of sacrificial victim and their death as salvation for mankind.

#### **H. The Testament of Thursday**

On the night known in Christian tradition as *Maundy Thursday*, Christ sat among his disciples to partake in the Passover meal. During this gathering, he delivered a solemn sermon in which he foretold his death, announced the betrayal of Judas, and declared his willing acceptance of death as a means to redeem humanity<sup>(77)</sup>. Likewise, Shi'a sources recount a parallel event in the life of al-Husayn on the eve of 'Āshūrā—the Thursday night preceding his martyrdom. In these accounts, al-Husayn assembled his companions and family, informed them of his approaching death, and invited them to withdraw under the cover of night, releasing them from their pledge of allegiance. Yet they refused to abandon him, choosing instead to remain and share in his martyrdom<sup>(78)</sup>.

We observe here that the Shi'a tradition seeks to establish a profound theological and narrative parallel between the story of Christ's sacrifice in Christian tradition and that of al-Husayn's martyrdom in Shi'a heritage. This parallel revolves around the concepts of "*the conscious choice of death*" and "*redemption*," both temporally centered on the symbolism of the "*Night of Thursday*" or "*the Night of the Covenant*"—a shared temporal frame preceding the great tragedy.

On this decisive night, both figures make a fateful choice: Christ foretells Judas's betrayal and declares his impending death as a redemption for humanity, while al-Husayn gathers his companions, announces to them the nearness of martyrdom, and releases them from their pledge of allegiance, granting them full freedom to depart and save themselves.

The symbolic power of this night lies in its dramatic and spiritual turning point—where retreat is possible, yet sacrifice is voluntarily chosen. The Shi'a deployment of this narrative parallel thus serves to consecrate the sanctity of Husayn's character and affirm the sublimity of his sacrifice within Shi'a consciousness, by situating his story within a framework reminiscent of one of the most significant redemptive narratives in religious history.

This connection reinforces the notion that al-Husayn's death at Karbala was not merely a military defeat but a deliberate and redemptive act of self-sacrifice—imbued with profound theological and eschatological dimensions—that elevates Husayn's status as a *redeemer* (*fādī*) within Shi'a belief.

#### **I. Friday, the Day of the Martyrdom**

Christ was crucified on a Friday, and likewise, al-Husayn was martyred on a Friday at Karbalā'. The two martyrdoms bear striking similarities in the intensity of their suffering. Christ was nailed to the cross, spat upon, and crowned with thorns<sup>(79)</sup>. As for al-Husayn, according to Ibn Ṭāwūs's *al-Luhūf*, he witnessed the killing of his family and brothers before his eyes, until he himself fell wounded, was pierced by spears, and finally beheaded<sup>(80)</sup>. Christ cried out, "I am thirsty," before

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<sup>77</sup> -Matthew 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:7–30.

<sup>78</sup> - Al-Shaykh al-MufDd, *al-IrshĀd fD ma 'rifat hujaj AllĀh 'alĀ al- 'ibĀd*, 2:91–92; Al-MajlisD, *BihĀr al-anwĀr*, 44:391–392;

Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Lahūf 'alā qatlā al-Tufūf*, pp. 142–145.

<sup>79</sup> Matthew 27:29; John 20:25.

<sup>80</sup>-Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Lahūf 'alā qatlā al-Tufūf*, p. 85 ff.

his death<sup>(81)</sup>, and al-Husayn too was slain in a state of thirst after being denied water for three days. After both deaths, the soldiers divided their garments and possessions among themselves<sup>(82)</sup>.

### ***J. The Manner of Death***

Jesus' belief in himself as a redeemer and savior did not help him on the day of his death. When Jesus was arrested by his enemies they bound him, and one of the people rose and jeered at him, saying, If you are really Jesus, then save yourself<sup>(83)</sup>. The same thing happened to al-Husayn when Shimir came to cut off his head<sup>(84)</sup>.

When Jesus was trapped and in distress among his enemies, he said "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"<sup>85</sup> It is likewise written that Hayn could have defeated his enemies had he wanted to, but he chose martyrdom.

There are more similarities: Jesus and al-Husayn were both killed on Fridays; both were stabbed when they died.<sup>86</sup> The New Testament tells that the priests promised Judas Iscariot a sum of 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus and hand him over to them.<sup>87</sup> The *Maqātil* tells that Caliph Yazīd promised *badra* [10,000 dirhams] to whoever would bring him al-Husayn's head.

The deaths of the two were unusual. Regarding al-Husayn special importance is attributed to the fact that he was killed on 'Ashura' Day, the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Muharram, and some traditions claim that he was born on the same day, contradicting the historical record. Not by chance was al-Husayn murdered on that day. On 'Ashura' Day many fateful events took place: God created the heavens, the royal throne, and the stars; He created man, father Abraham was born; Noah's ark landed on Mt. Arrarat (al-Jūdī); He split the sea before Moses and the Children of Israel passed through on dry ground, Jonah (Yūnis) emerged from the belly of the whale, and 'Ashura' Day will be the Day of Judgement and resurrection of the dead.

According to Shi'a belief Jesus was born, and ascended to heaven, on 'Ashura' Day.<sup>88</sup>

If we examine the above events as if they took place on 'Ashura' Day, even if this is not so historically, we will see that most involved prophets or disciples, and are connected with deliverance from adversity. The births and deaths of the two thus occurred on a most momentous day for the world.

A unique motif worthy of mention in the manner of their deaths is that of thirst. Both Jesus and al-Husayn were thirsty when they died. The motif of al-Husayn's and his followers' thirst is repeated a number of times in *Maqātil* literature, and describes the acute need of al-Husayn and his family to drink from the Euphrates River at the time of the Battle of Karbala'.

The reason for the intense thirst is in the historical record: the governor of Kūfa and Baīra, 'Ubaydallāh Ibn Ziyād, ordered his men to prevent al-Husayn, his family and subjects from approaching the Euphrates River. For this purpose, two army units were ordered to block the approaches to the Euphrates and the canals carrying water from it. When al-Husayn's and his people's thirst became agonizing, al-Husayn made

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<sup>81</sup> John 19:28.

82-John 19:23–24; Ibn Tāwūs, *al-Lahūf 'alā qatlā al-Tufūf*, pp. 100–103.

83-Matthew 27:40.

84-Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqātal al-Husayn*, p. 94.

<sup>85</sup> Matthew 26:53.

<sup>86</sup> Mark 15:42–43. See also: Al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-'Anwār*, 44:199, John 19:34, Ibn Nama, *Muthār al-'Aḥzān*, pp. 69–70.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, *ibid.*; Matthew 26:14–16.

<sup>88</sup> 'Akhtāb Khawārizmī, *Maqātal al-Husayn*, p. 3–4.

a pleading speech recounting his family's virtues and merits, especially those of his grandfather the prophet Muhammad, but to no avail.

When al-Husayn's son Alî, who was fighting at his side, spoke of his great thirst, his father replied, "How it grieves me that I cannot help you ... In a short while you will meet your grandfather the prophet Muhammad in heaven, and he will quench your thirst with the most faithful cup, and you will sip from it and never thirst again."<sup>89</sup>

Before his soul left his body, al-Husayn asked his murderer, "If you must kill me, permit me to drink a sip of water." His murderer refused and mocked him, saying, "In a few minutes you will taste death, sip after sip."<sup>90</sup>

Another warrior of Umar Ibn Sa'd's army, Abdallah Ibn al-Husayn al-'Azdî, scornfully mocked al-Husayn's plea to drink: "O son of 'Abû Turab,<sup>91</sup> do you not claim that your father Alî is in charge of the al-Hawd spring in Paradise? He will quench the thirst of those who love him; be patient, and in a short time, when you die, your father will give you water from the spring in Paradise."<sup>92</sup>

It is noteworthy that al-Husayn's father Alî knew that in the future his son would die at Karbala', that he would die thirsty, that after his death he would reach Paradise and drink one sip from the spring in Paradise — and never thirst again forever.<sup>93</sup>

These words recall Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman, in which Jesus said that he who drinks from its water will never thirst again: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."<sup>94</sup>

Moreover, the New Testament stresses that Jesus gave up his spirit while he was thirsty. In fact, thirst brought his death more quickly: "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost."<sup>95</sup>

Thus, we see that al-Husayn, like Jesus, will quench his thirst in heaven. Jesus will drink from the eternal cup, while al-Husayn will drink from spring in Paradise.

An additional noteworthy motif for comparison is the division of the clothing.

After Jesus' death, his killers divided his clothes among them. The soldiers who crucified Jesus took his clothes and divided them four ways, with one portion for each soldier. They also took the coat, but when they saw that it was made of one piece without a seam, "they said therefore among themselves, let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, they parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Ibn Nama, Muthâr al-'Ahzâb, pp. 63-64.

<sup>90</sup> Abû Mikhnaf, *Maqtal al-Husayn*, p. 94.

<sup>91</sup> 'Abu Turâb is another name for Alî Ibn 'Abû Talib. For details about this name see: Kohlberg, "Abû Talib", pp. 347-352. The article was reprinted in the Kohlberg, *Belief and Law in Imâd Shâ'ism*, Chap. 6.

<sup>92</sup> On the al-Hawd spring in Paradise, see: Abû Mikhnaf, *Maqtal al-Husayn*, p.95; 'Akhṭâb Khawârizim, *Maqtal al-Husayn*, p. 36; Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad al-Imâm 'Aḥmad*,3 :102, 230.

<sup>93</sup> Abû Mikhnaf, *Maqtal al-Husayn*, p. 99.

<sup>94</sup> John 4:13-14.

<sup>95</sup> John 19:28-30; Matthew 27:48.

<sup>96</sup> John 19:23-24 according to Psalms 22:18.

Likewise, when al-Ḥusayn was killed his killers divided his clothes and cast lots for his belongings.<sup>97</sup> This is an outstanding example of the Shi'a authors attributing to Husayn elements from Jesus' biography in order to make him resemble a holy personality as much as possible.

#### **K After Death**

After saints' death, heaven and earth themselves mourn together with the forces of nature. This is a characteristic motif appearing frequently in folk legends. Here, when Jesus dies nature is shocked and darkness spread over the face of the entire earth: "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose."<sup>98</sup>

*Maqatil* literature mentions many similar natural phenomena taking place after al-Husayn's death. The earth quaked and trembled, and the mountains began to collapse.<sup>99</sup> Extraordinary events took place in the heavens as well, and blood rained down. Many traditions describe the sky turning dark, the sun eclipsed, stars appearing in the sky during the day, and the moon also eclipsed the same night.<sup>100</sup>

God himself mourns the enormity of the catastrophe of the death of the two. So great is God's grief over the evil of men who killed his chosen ones that he brings the forces of nature into action in his mourning and changes natural laws to evince his sorrow.

As God's chosen, Jesus and al-Husayn are very close to God and dwell at His right hand. It is said of Jesus: "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."<sup>101</sup> Likewise, the Shi'a believe that al-Husayn dwells in heaven at the right side of God's throne.<sup>102</sup>

Another important element in comparing the two is the belief that both of them will be resurrected and will return to redeem their people.

Jesus' body was not found in his tomb. When Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome came to anoint his body with spices, they saw that the grave was open and a young man dressed in white was sitting in it. "And he said to them, be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him."<sup>103</sup> Jesus died on Friday and was resurrected three days later, on Sunday. He remained on earth 40 days and afterwards ascended to heaven and sat at the right hand of God.<sup>104</sup> Sources tell that after al-Husayn's death his body was carried to the fifth firmament; afterwards he was returned to the ground of Karbala' and remained there unburied for three days.<sup>105</sup>

According to Ja'far al-Sadiq, al-Ḥusayn's soul left his body and God raised it to Him from his enemies, lest they kill him as had been done to Jesus. Even when al-Ḥusayn departed for Iraq, God hid within him; and at every spot where al-Ḥusayn camped on his way the angel Gabriel came to him and spoke to him. Husayn called to the angel Gabriel and asked him, who am I? Gabriel answered him, you are God, of Whom there is

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See also: Ibn Ṭawūs, *al-Lahūf 'alā qatlā al-Tufūf*, pp. 68-72; 'Akhtab Khawārizim, *Maqtal al-Husayn*, p. 37; Ibn Namā, *Muthdr al- 'Ahzān*, p. 40; Al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā'il al-'Imāma*, 3:334.

<sup>97</sup> Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manaqib 'Alī 'Abd Tālib*, 4: 120-121.

<sup>98</sup> Luke 23:44-45; Matthew 27:51-52.

<sup>99</sup> Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal al-Husayn*, p. 95; Ibn Ṭawūs, *al-Lahūf 'alā qatlā al-Tufūf*, p. 115; Ibn Namā, *Muthdr al- 'Ahzān*, p. 62.

<sup>100</sup> Ibn Ṭawus, *al-Lahūf 'alā qatlā al-Tufūf*, p. 66; Ibn Namā, *Muthdr al- 'Ahzān*, p. 36.

<sup>101</sup> Mark 16:19.

<sup>102</sup> Ibn Qulawayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, p. 47.

<sup>103</sup> Mark 16:6.

<sup>104</sup> Mark 16:19.

<sup>105</sup> Al-Tustarī, *al-Khaṣṣa'i al-Ḥusayniyya*, 1995, p. 37.

none other living and enduring, who takes life and resurrects; You are He Who commands heaven and earth and they obey You.<sup>106</sup>

Moreover, claims Ja'far, the murderers' hands did not touch even one of the saints. Even the emir of the faithful 'Alī the father Husayn was not murdered by 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Muljam in 661; rather, God carried him to heaven. Thus, no S Shi'a 'imam really dies; God takes them to heaven, just as they did not lay a hand on Jesus (the prophet 'Īsa).

The similarities are greater than the differences between these points; in the personalities of the two, their biographies and their deaths. Both al-Ḥusayn and Jesus sacrificed their lives for the sake of their principles. God put trials before both Husayn and Jesus, and the two are similar in their endurance of the misfortunes placed before them, their unwavering faith, and their tragic ends.

Jesus declared to his disciples that he is about the sacrifice himself for the sake of the victory of the faith. He saw himself as the redeemer of mankind. Likewise, Husayn made a similar declaration to his supporters; he also saw himself as a redeemer and sacrificed himself for the Shi'a faith. He knew that his death, and the tragic manner in which he would be killed, would bring about the consolidation of the sect and awakening of the Shi'a believers.

Both became great leaders of their people while they lived, but even more for future generations: al-Ḥusayn became the founder of the Shi'a faction in Islam and is considered a saint; and Jesus founded the Christian faith and became a savior and redeemer for the new Christians.

#### **L. Iraq and the Character of al-Ḥusayn and Christ in Shi'i Heritage**

Iraq occupies a central position in Shi'a belief and devotional geography, regarded as a sacred land sanctified by the presence

of the graves of the Imams and their companions. The distinguished role of Iraq in Shi'a heritage stems above all from its encompassing the most revered Shi'a sanctuaries—particularly the burial sites of six Imams<sup>(107)</sup> and several of their foremost followers. Among these, the cities of Najaf, where 'Alī ibn Abī

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<sup>106</sup> Al-Ju'fā, *Al-Haft al-SharDf*, p.96.

<sup>107</sup> -The six Imams buried in Iraq are: 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib in Kūfa, al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī in Karbalā', Mūsā al-Kāzim in al-Kāzimiyya, Muḥammad al-Jawād in al-Kāzimiyya, 'Alī al-Ḥādī in Sāmarrā', and al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī in Sāmarrā'.

<sup>108</sup>-There are different opinions regarding the burial place of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib; however, the predominant Shi'a view is that 'Alī is buried in the city of Najaf. For more on this topic, see our article:

Sindawi, "The Grave of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib: Different Views About Its Specific Location and the Locations of the Graves of Some Other Prophets Buried in It", 2, 21–49.

<sup>109</sup>-For the sanctity and significance of Najaf and Karbalā' in Shi'a thought, see:

Qanāzī, "Karbala in Shiite Literature", pp. 179–181; and also our article:

Sindawi, "The Sanctity of Karbala in Shiite Thought", pp. 21–40.

<sup>110</sup>-For the importance of *ziyāra* (pilgrimage visits) in Shi'i thought—especially to the shrines of the Shi'a Imams in Iraq—see:

Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, pp. 166–168; Sachedina, "Ziyāra," *EI*, II (1965), pp. 533–534.

The Imāmī Shi'a differ from the Sunnis regarding the practice of visiting graves. They strongly encourage believers to visit the tombs of the Imams and other holy figures, emphasizing the spiritual merits and divine rewards of such visits—particularly when they involve the shrines of the Imams. To this day, millions of Shi'a pilgrims visit these sacred sites throughout the year, especially in Iran, Iraq, Medina, and other revered locations.

For later Shi'a texts summarizing these doctrinal orientations toward *ziyāra* in general, see: Kāshif al-Ghiṭā', *al-'Abqāt al-'Anbāriyya fī al-Tabaqāt al-Ja'fariyya*, pp. 571–580.

Ṭālib<sup>(108)</sup> is buried, and Karbalā', where al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī rests<sup>(109)</sup>, hold the highest sanctity. Through a vast corpus of narrations and texts, Shi'a tradition has exalted the status of these two cities, often in language of profound reverence and hyperbolic devotion. Over time, Najaf and Karbalā' have transcended their historical boundaries to become principal Shi'a pilgrimage centers—drawing millions of devotees annually from across the world to visit the shrines of the Imams and their holy precincts<sup>(110)</sup>.

The shrine of Imam Hussein, which contains the remains of al-Ḥusayn, is called al-Ha'ir<sup>(111)</sup>, while the shrine of his father, Ali, is located in an area called al-Gharri in Najaf<sup>(112)</sup>. Therefore, the Shia call it al-Gharawi, after the location<sup>(113)</sup>. There are also shrines and holy sites in Kufa, Hilla, Samarra, Kadhimiyah, and other cities and towns throughout Iraq<sup>(114)</sup>. Unlike the Hajj pilgrimage, which Muslims perform as a religious obligation once in their lifetime to Mecca and which is bound by a specific date each year, Shiite visits to

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111- The tomb of al-Ḥusayn is known as *al-Hā'ir* or *al-Hā'ir al-Ḥusaynī*. The term *al-Hā'ir* became synonymous with the shrine of al-Ḥusayn, deriving from a story widely transmitted in historical sources. These sources recount that the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Mutawakkil (d. 860 CE) ordered the destruction of al-Ḥusayn's grave, the obliteration of its traces, and the dispersal of the Shi'i pilgrims gathered around it. He also commanded that the waters of the Euphrates be diverted over the grave to flood it completely, so that its site would vanish and become inaccessible to the Shi'a and their visitors.

However, according to these reports, when the water reached the tomb, it miraculously halted and pooled around it, forming a circular barrier (*hā'ir*) while the inner courtyard of the shrine remained dry and untouched. The water either withdrew or diverted its course, leaving the area of the tomb protected. Hence the place was named *al-Hā'ir* ("the perplexed" or "the enclosed area").

Other narrations state that when al-Mutawakkil's men attempted to plow the area with oxen, the animals would till the surrounding land but stop and refuse to move forward upon reaching the spot of the grave, as if divinely restrained.

For details on this account, see:

al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, 98:117;

Ibn Qulawayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, pp. 271–272, ḥadīths 1–5;

al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma 'ādin al-Jawhar*, 4:137–138.

Compare with:

Donaldson, *The Shi'ite Religion*, p. 96.

112- Sandāwī, "Between the Two Hills of Kūfa and the Tomb of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib in Shi'i Literature," pp. 111–152.

113- See on Najaf and its position in Shi'i heritage and literature:

al-Maḥbūba, *The Past and Present of Najaf*; Fakhr al-Dīn, *The History of Najaf up to the End of the 'Abbāsid Era*.

114- See on those shrines and sacred places among the Shi'a:

al-Khalīlī, *Encyclopedia of the Sacred Shrines*.

In fact, the visitation of shrines and sacred thresholds was a central factor in coloring the region of southern Iraq with a purely Shi'i character, and in increasing the role of this region and its political, economic, and religious prosperity in Shi'i-oriented directions that sought to serve the doctrinal Imāmī interests upheld by the Shi'a of Iraq in particular and the Shi'a of the world in general. See on this:

Nakash, "The Visitation of Shrines of the Imams and the Shi'i Mujtahids in the Early Twentieth Century," pp. 5–16.

holy shrines in Iraq are permissible at any time of the year, although there are a number of special times when visiting the shrines of the Imams in Iraq is considered particularly blessed<sup>(115)</sup>. However, Karbala, as the resting place of al-Hussein, receives unparalleled attention in Shiite writings from ancient times to the present day. Shiites have sought to transform Karbala and the shrine of al-Ḥusayn into a center of Shiite worship and a means of showcasing Twelver Shiite identity to the entire Islamic world.

This development, at certain points in history, appeared to diminish the spiritual centrality of the Ka'ba and Mecca<sup>(116)</sup> in the hearts of Shi'a believers, redirecting their devotional focus toward Shi'a sacred sites. Such a tendency aligns with historical evidence suggesting that during specific periods of Islamic history—most notably amid the conflicts between the Safavids and the Ottomans, and later between the Shi'as and

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<sup>115</sup> - See on the types of visitations to the sacred shrines in Iraq and other countries: Sindāwī, “*Visit to the Tomb of al-Husayn b. ‘Alī in Shi‘ite Poetry: First to Fifth Centuries AH (8th–11th Centuries CE)*,” pp. 235–236.

<sup>116</sup> - Shi'i sources repeatedly draw comparisons between the scene of al-Ḥusayn in Karbalā' and the sanctity of the Ka'ba in Mecca. Numerous early and authoritative Shi'i traditions emphasize the superiority of Karbalā' over Mecca and the elevated status of the former above the latter. For instance, a narration attributed to the fourth Shi'i Imam, ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 94 AH/712 CE), states:

“God made Karbalā' a blessed and secure sanctuary twenty-four thousand years before He created the land of the Ka'ba and made it a sanctuary. And when God shakes the earth and sets it in motion, it will be raised, pure with its soil, and placed in the best dwelling in Paradise— inhabited only by the prophets and messengers (or, as he said, the possessors of steadfast resolve among the messengers). Indeed, it will shine among the meadows of Paradise as a radiant star shines among the stars to the people of the earth. Its light will envelop the dwellers of Paradise, and it will proclaim: ‘I am the sacred, pure, and blessed land of God that contains the master of martyrs and the lord of the youths of Paradise.’”

For details, see:

Ibn Qulawayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, p. 268;

al-Karakī, *Tasliyat al-Majālis wa-Zinat al-Majālis*, 2: 531–532.

This narration demonstrates the extent of Shi'i veneration and glorification of Karbalā'—so profound that it led to assertions of its superiority over the Ka'ba itself. For further discussion, see:

al-Shajri, *Faḍl Ziyārat al-Husayn*, pp. 77–79, 86.

Numerous Twelver Shi'i traditions elaborate on this preferential comparison, asserting the superiority of *Hā’ir al-Husayn* over the Ka'ba. For instance, several hadiths equate visiting al-Ḥusayn's shrine with performing an accepted hajj or ‘umra—or even both combined (see: al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, 98: 31; Ibn Qulawayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, p. 155).

These Shi'i narratives emerged largely as a byproduct of the long-standing sectarian struggle between the Shi'a and the Sunnis—particularly during the conflicts between the Ṣafavids and the Ottomans, and later between the Shi'a and the Wahhābīs. Each faction employed theological and symbolic means to assert its religious legitimacy and refute the other's claims.

In light of these historically tense Sunni–Shi'i relations, such narrations can be understood as part of the Shi'i effort to affirm the spiritual preeminence of Karbalā' and al-Ḥusayn's shrine over Mecca and the Ka'ba.

17- See also Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islām*, pp. 181–182; Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, pp. 163–164.

the Wahhābīs—the Shi‘a began to substitute, at least symbolically, the pilgrimage to Mecca and the Ḥijāz with the visitation (ziyāra) of Karbalā<sup>(117)</sup>.

In their veneration of Karbalā<sup>1</sup> and, consequently, their devotion to the sanctity of al-Ḥusayn, the Shi‘a employed several strategies, foremost among them the production of narratives and exegetical traditions that reinforce their theological claims about the holiness of the land. Within these narratives, the figure of the “Shi‘i Messiah” reappears as one of the signs affirming Karbalā<sup>2</sup>’s sacredness. Shi‘a tradition relates, for instance, that Jesus himself was born in the very land later sanctified by Ḥusayn’s martyrdom. It is narrated from the fourth Imam, ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 94/712), known as Zayn al-‘Ābidīn<sup>(118)</sup>, that in his interpretation of the Qur’ānic verse “*So she conceived him and withdrew with him to a remote place*<sup>(119)</sup>” (Q 19:22), he said that when Mary conceived Jesus, she “departed from Damascus until she reached Karbalā<sup>3</sup>, where she gave birth to him at the site of al-Ḥusayn’s grave—peace be upon him—then returned that same night<sup>(120)</sup>.” Other reports locate this miraculous birth in Najaf, near the waters of the Euphrates<sup>(121)</sup>.

Through this symbolic linkage between Christ and Iraq’s sacred geography—particularly its Shi‘a sanctuaries—Shi‘a tradition extends the sanctity of these sites beyond Islamic history, rooting them in an ancient, pre-Islamic sacred narrative. In this way, the connection between Jesus and Karbalā<sup>3</sup> serves to endow southern Iraq with a primordial holiness that precedes Islam yet ultimately finds its full theological expression in the person and martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn. Thus, the sanctity of the land, though ancient, derives its enduring power from the sanctity of al-Ḥusayn himself.

In this context, it becomes evident how Shi‘a tradition employs the figure of Christ to reinforce the sanctity of al-Ḥusayn within its theological framework. One striking example appears in a popular Shi‘a narrative that depicts Jesus as bearing witness to al-Ḥusayn’s tragedy long before it occurred. According to this account, “Jesus (peace be upon him) was once traveling through the wilderness with his disciples when they passed through Karbalā<sup>3</sup>. There they encountered a lion, fierce in appearance yet silent, blocking the road. Jesus approached the lion and asked, ‘Why do you obstruct our path?’ The lion replied eloquently, ‘I will not let you pass until you curse Yazīd, the killer of al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon him).’ Jesus asked, ‘And who is al-Ḥusayn?’ The lion answered, ‘He is the grandson of Muḥammad, the unlettered Prophet, and the son of ‘Alī, the guardian.’ Jesus then asked, ‘And who killed him?’ The lion responded, ‘His killer is cursed by all beasts, wolves, and wild animals—especially on the days of ‘Āshūrā’.’ Jesus thereupon raised his hands, cursed Yazīd, and prayed against him, and his disciples said “Āmīn.” The lion then withdrew from their path, and they continued on their journey<sup>(122)</sup>.”

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<sup>118</sup> -For further details, see:

Kohlberg, “Zayn al-‘Ābidīn,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, XI, 481–483.

<sup>119</sup>-Qur’ān 19:22.

<sup>120</sup>-Al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, 14:212.

<sup>121</sup>-For narrations indicating that Jesus was born in the region of Najaf, see:

al-Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī, *Wasā’il al-Shī‘a*, 14:361;

al-Muḥaddith al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā’il*, 17:22;

al-Fattāl, *Rawdat al-Wā’izīn*, 2:408.

For the Euphrates River and its significance in Shi‘i tradition, see:

Sindawi, “The Cult of the Euphrates and Its Significance among the Imāmī Shī‘a,” pp. 249–267.

<sup>122</sup> -al-Darbandī, *Iksīr al-‘Ibādāt fī Asrār al-Shahādāt*, 1:215–216;  
al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, 44:244–245.

Such a legendary narration, in which the Shi'a exaggerate the sanctity of al-Ḥusayn by portraying wild beasts mourning him and Christ himself grieving deeply for him centuries before the event, serves a clear doctrinal purpose: to reinforce the sacred status of al-Ḥusayn and the Imams within Shi'a thought. By invoking a revered figure from another faith as a witness to al-Ḥusayn's holiness, these narratives function as interreligious validation, elevating the standing of the Shi'a Imams through symbolic continuity with earlier prophetic traditions.

**Similarity in the Events of Their Deaths**

**A. The Piercing of the Side**

The incidents of the piercing of al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī and Jesus Christ in the side are among the pivotal events in the religious narratives surrounding their lives and deaths. Both carry profound symbolic meanings that transcend the mere physical act itself. Although the sources and religious traditions recounting each event differ, certain symbolic parallels can be discerned that may suggest a convergence in theological or narrative understanding among some groups. This study examines the accounts related to these two incidents, analyzes their implications, and compares them within the framework of religious tradition.

**The Piercing of Christ's Side:**

In Christian tradition, the piercing of Christ's side is considered a crucial event, mentioned exclusively in the Gospel of John<sup>(123)</sup>. The Gospel recounts that after the Roman soldiers had crucified Jesus, they sought to confirm his death before breaking his legs. Upon finding that he had already died, they refrained from breaking his bones; instead, one of the soldiers—later identified in Christian tradition as Longinus—pierced his side with a spear.

**The Piercing of al-Ḥusayn's Side:**

In Shi'a tradition, the piercing of Ḥusayn's side constitutes one of the central details of the Battle of Karbalā' and is recorded in numerous *maqātil* and biographical works. These sources narrate that after al-Ḥusayn had sustained many wounds and was exhausted, a member of Yazīd's army struck him in the side with a spear or lance<sup>(124)</sup>. This wound is seen as part of a sequence of blows inflicted upon him before he was ultimately killed.

Despite the narrative resemblance between the piercing of Christ and that of al-Ḥusayn, the symbolic implications of the two events differ markedly. In Christian tradition, the piercing of Christ's side fulfills prophecies of salvation and is integrated into the theology of atonement. In Shi'a tradition, by contrast, the piercing of al-Ḥusayn's side forms a component of the tragic sequence that highlights his oppression, suffering, and sacrificial stand against injustice.

**B-The Trembling of the Earth at Their Deaths**

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<sup>123</sup> -John 19:33–37.

<sup>124</sup> 124-Al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 45, p. 55.

Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Al-Luhūf 'alā Qatlā al-Tufūf*, p. 182.

125-Matthew 27:51.

126-Matthew 27; Luke 23:45.

127-Al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, 45:223; Abū Mukhnaf, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn* (pages related to the incident).

The phenomenon of the earth shaking—or an earthquake occurring upon a momentous religious event or the death of a sacred figure—is among the deeply rooted ideas in world religious traditions.

### **The Earth Trembling at the Death of Christ:**

The account of an earthquake at the crucifixion of Christ stands among the most striking events recorded in the canonical Gospels, particularly in the Gospels of *Matthew* and *Luke*. In the Gospel of Matthew, the occurrence is explicitly mentioned:

“And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split<sup>(125)</sup>.”

While Luke’s Gospel describes the event as a “darkness” that enveloped the earth, some interpretations also associate it with an earthquake; however, the Gospel of Matthew provides the most explicit account<sup>(126)</sup>.

In Christian theology, this earthquake is understood as a divine manifestation underscoring the gravity of Christ’s death—a cosmic sign marking the end of one dispensation and the dawn of another. It functions as a heavenly declaration of the death of the Son of God, instilling fear and awe among the witnesses and leading the Roman centurion to proclaim, “Truly, this man was the Son of God.”

### **The Earth Shaking at the Martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn**

In Shī‘a tradition, the trembling of the earth at the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn is regarded as one of the miraculous phenomena that accompanied his death at Karbalā’. These accounts are widely reported in biographical and battle narratives and are interpreted as expressions of the heavens and earth’s wrath against al-Ḥusayn’s killers<sup>(127)</sup>.

Al-Majlisī, in his *Bihār al-Anwār*, cites several traditions describing cosmic reactions to the tragedy. He transmits a narration from Imām Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq: “*When al-Ḥusayn, peace be upon him, was killed, the earth shook and trembled with a mighty quake, and the people thought that the Hour had come*<sup>(128)</sup>.”

Similarly, in *Maqṭal Abī Mikhnaf*—though the extant versions of the work may not represent its original form—numerous reports describe the earth shaking, the stars scattering, and the sky raining blood, all interpreted as signs of divine anger and cosmic mourning over the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn. (These details are mentioned in various editions of the book.)

In Shī‘a tradition, the earthquake is understood as a manifestation of divine wrath against the killers of al-Ḥusayn. It is not regarded as a mere natural occurrence, but as a divine sign that proclaims the enormity of the crime committed and affirms al-Ḥusayn’s sanctity and exalted rank in the sight of God. This cosmic reaction reinforces the Shī‘a narrative of divine justice and oppression (*zulm*), which lies at the very core of Shī‘a theology and devotional consciousness.

The account of the earthquake at Jesus’ death in the Gospel of Matthew constitutes part of the canonical and authoritative Christian scripture, whereas the account of the earth shaking at al-Ḥusayn’s martyrdom belongs to the corpus of Shī‘a biographical and traditional literature and is not attested in the Qur’ān. In Christian theology, the earthquake at Christ’s crucifixion is interpreted as a proclamation of salvation and a symbol of the triumph of life over death, prefiguring his resurrection. In contrast, the earthquake at Karbalā’ is perceived as an expression of divine wrath and a testimony to the enormity of the injustice inflicted upon the Prophet’s family. Yet, in both traditions, the phenomenon underscores the sanctity and

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<sup>128</sup>-Al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, 45:223.

centrality of these figures in salvation history, signifying that their deaths were not ordinary occurrences but events of cosmic and theological magnitude.

### **The Title of "Sayyid"**

The title *Sayyid* carries profound religious and social significance. It does not merely denote elevated social standing but also conveys notions of spiritual authority, noble lineage, and moral leadership. Within various religious traditions, the title has been associated with figures who embody both divine favor and human virtue — among them, Jesus Christ and al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī.

### **The Title "Sayyid" for Christ:**

The title "Sayyid" is widely used for Christ in Christian sources. It is a translation of the Greek word "Kyrios," which is used to refer to Lord or God. This title carries several meanings:

The title is used to signify Christ's divinity and absolute authority. In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he states, "Every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord (Kyrios) to the glory of God the Father."<sup>(129)</sup> This verse directly connects the title "Lord" with Christ's divinity, and the title also refers to Christ as the promised Savior<sup>(130)</sup>. These texts demonstrate that the title "Lord" in the Christian tradition is not merely a term of respect but a doctrinal essence that expresses Christ's absolute authority and divine role.

**The Title "Sayyid" for al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī:**

In Shī‘a Islamic tradition, the title *Sayyid* is bestowed upon al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī as an honorific designation signifying both noble descent and spiritual authority. The title—literally meaning "master" or "lord"—is reserved for those who trace their lineage to the Prophet Muhammad through Imām ‘Alī and Lady Fātimah al-Zahrā', thereby affirming their belonging to the Prophet's exalted family, the *Ahl al-Bayt*.

Within Shī‘a ḥadīth literature, the Prophet is reported to have said: " *al-Hasan and al-Ḥusayn are the masters of the youth of Paradise*"<sup>(131)</sup>.

This narration explicitly links the title *Sayyid* (*master/leader*) to their eschatological preeminence, reinforcing the sanctity of their lineage and their divinely ordained status. Moreover, the title embodies more than social reverence—it conveys the doctrinal belief in al-Ḥusayn's role as an infallible Imām (*ma‘ṣūm*) endowed with spiritual leadership and divine guidance. In Shī‘a theology, the Imāms are regarded as the rightful *sayyids* of the community in every generation, whose authority stems from their direct descent from the Prophet and whose obedience is considered a religious duty.

It is worth noting that following the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn in Karbalā', the title *Sayyid* became closely linked with another honorific—*Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* ("Master of Martyrs"). This epithet encapsulates al-Ḥusayn's supreme status as the greatest martyr in human history according to Shī‘a tradition. His sacrifice is regarded not merely as a historical event, but as a cosmic paradigm of truth, justice, and redemptive suffering. In *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* by Ibn Qulawayh (d. 367 AH / 977 CE), it is narrated that Imām al-Ṣādiq declared: "*Husayn is the Master of Martyrs on the Day of Resurrection*"<sup>(132)</sup>.

It becomes clear that the title "Lord" carries essential connotations for both Christ and Husayn, even though the nature of these connotations differs. In the Christian tradition, the title is primarily associated with divinity and divine authority, whereas in the Shī‘a tradition, it is mainly linked to noble lineage, Imamate, and sanctity. In both cases, the title points to a unique and central status for the two figures within their respective beliefs and highlights their role as spiritual leaders and enduring symbols.

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<sup>129</sup> - The Holy Bible, New Testament: Philippians 2:11

<sup>130</sup> -Luke 2:11

<sup>131</sup> - Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, 43:247

<sup>132</sup> -Ibn Qulawayh, *Kamil al-Ziyarat*, p. 183

## The Twelve Apostles

The Twelve Apostles of Christ:

The term “*apostles*” refers to the twelve disciples whom Christ chose to accompany him, learn from his teachings, and assist in spreading his divine message. They are prominently mentioned across the four Gospels, and their list is well established within Christian tradition. The Gospel of Mark outlines the mission entrusted to them<sup>(133)</sup>, while the Gospels as a whole agree on their names, differing only slightly in order and detail. The Gospels agree on the names of the apostles, with slight variations in their order. The Gospel of Matthew provides a list of their names<sup>(134)</sup>.

The Companions of al-Husayn<sup>(135)</sup> and the Concept of “Apostles” in Shī‘a Tradition: Although the term “*twelve apostles*” is not explicitly applied to al-Husayn’s followers, Shī‘a sources describe his companions at Karbala as embodying a level of loyalty and devotion that even surpasses that of Christ’s apostles. Their steadfastness and unwavering faith in the face of certain death are celebrated as the highest example of fidelity to divine truth. Shī‘a narrations emphasize that al-Husayn’s companions were among the most righteous of believers. Shaykh al-Mufid, in his *Al-Irshād fī Ma‘rifat Ḥujaj Allāh ‘alā al-‘Ibād*, relates a report on the authority of al-Husayn, who addressed his companions on the night of ‘Āshūrā’, saying:

“I do not know of any companions more loyal or better than my companions, nor any family more righteous or more dutiful than my family<sup>(136)</sup>.”

Some Shī‘a texts explicitly draw a comparison between al-Husayn’s companions and the disciples of Christ, with the purpose of demonstrating the superiority of al-Husayn’s followers. In his work *Kamal al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq transmits a narration from Imam Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (‘Alī ibn al-Husayn), who describes his father’s companions, saying:

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<sup>133</sup> -Mark 3:13–15

<sup>134</sup>-Matthew 10:2–4

135-The companions of Husayn were the small, select group from among his household and loyal supporters who remained with him and stood firm during the Battle of Karbala in the year 61 AH / 680 CE. They fought and were martyred under his banner on the Day of ‘Āshūrā’. Historians differ in determining their exact number, but most accounts agree that they were very few in the face of a vast army—the generally accepted number is about seventy-two men (including thirty-two horsemen and forty infantrymen), in addition to Husayn himself.

They are divided into two groups:

1. Ahl al-Bayt (the Banū Hāshim) — the close relatives belonging to the family of Abū Ṭālib, including the sons of ‘Alī, al-Ḥasan, al-Husayn, and the sons of Ja‘far and ‘Aqīl.
2. The Anṣār (non-Hashemite supporters) — the faithful followers who came from Kūfa, Baṣra, and Mecca, or joined him along the way.

They represented different social classes and were distinguished by their refusal to depart when Husayn released them from their oath of allegiance on the eve of ‘Āshūrā’. All insisted on staying and dying for him. Among them were elders, commanders, Qur’ān reciters, and men of diverse tribal and sectarian backgrounds. They were all slain in the battle after fighting with exceptional courage.

For further details about them, see: al-Karbasi, *Mu‘jam Ansar al-Husayn*.

<sup>136</sup>-Al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *Al-Irshād fī Ma‘rifat Ḥujaj Allāh ‘alā al-‘Ibād*, 2:91

"I know that they did not abandon him nor betray him... rather, they are like the disciples of Jesus<sup>(137)</sup>."

This statement reveals the Shi'a view of al-Husayn's companions as exemplars of perfect loyalty and faith, comparable to, yet even surpassing, the disciples of Christ.

In short, although the term "Twelve Apostles" does not appear in Shi'a tradition with reference to al-Husayn as it does for Christ, the concept of a devoted group of followers who remain steadfast beside their leader in times of trial is common to both traditions. While Christ's disciples constitute the foundational nucleus for the dissemination of his message, al-Husayn's companions at Karbala embody the highest ideal of loyalty and self-sacrifice. In some Shi'a narrations, they are even regarded as superior to Christ's disciples, for they did not abandon or betray their leader as Judas Iscariot betrayed Christ and delivered him to the Jews for thirty pieces of silver<sup>(138)</sup>.

### **The Betrayal of the Supporters**

Jesus was betrayed by his own people, the Jews of Jerusalem, who handed him over to the Romans and approved his crucifixion<sup>(139)</sup>. Similarly, al-Husayn was betrayed by his own followers in Iraq after they had pledged allegiance to him, abandoning him at his most critical moment and leaving him to face his enemies with only a small group of loyal family members and companions. Shi'a sources harshly condemn the stance of the people of Kūfa toward al-Husayn. Among these is what al-Mufid records in *al-Irshād*, quoting al-Husayn's supplication: "Then al-Husayn raised his hands and said: 'O God, if You grant them respite for a time, then scatter them in disarray, divide them into factions, and never let their rulers be pleased with them. For they called upon us to support them, then turned against us and killed us<sup>(140)</sup>.'"

**Between the Via Dolorosa and the Arba'een Pilgrimage** Christians believe that after his death, Christ rose from the dead, remained on earth for forty days, and then ascended to heaven to sit at the right hand of God. The Gospels mention several appearances of him during which he delivered sermons. Christians celebrate the Feast of the Ascension forty days after Easter<sup>(141)</sup>.

According to Shi'a Imamite traditions, after Hussein was killed, his head was severed from his body and sent to Caliph Yazid ibn Mu'awiya in Damascus. During this time, the head spoke on more than one occasion, as mentioned by Ibn Tawus in "Al-Luhuf 'ala Qatla al-Tufuf" (The Sighs for the Martyrs of Karbala). Then, after forty days, the head was reattached to the body when Hussein's family returned to Karbala carrying it. The Shi'a Imamites commemorate Arba'een. The Way of the Cross is seen as a journey of redemption, where Christ demonstrates his willingness to endure pain and suffering in order to save humanity from sin. Believers see walking the Way of the Cross as a symbolic participation in Christ's suffering, and this path teaches that salvation comes through pain and sacrifice. Similarly, the *Arba'īn* of Husayn—or the *Ziyārat al-Arba'īn*—is a major Shi'a religious observance held annually on the twentieth of the month of Ṣafar, marking forty days after al-Husayn's martyrdom at Karbalā' and the return and burial of his severed head with his body.

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137-Al-Saduq, *Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni'ma*, 1:30

138-Gospel of Matthew 27:3

<sup>139</sup> -Matthew 26:56 (the disciples' flight); Mark 14:50; John 1:11; Matthew 27:1–2; Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1; John 18:28–32; Matthew 27:20–25; Mark 15:11–15; Luke 23:21–24; John 19:15

<sup>140</sup> -Al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *Al-Irshad fi Ma'rifat Hujaj Allah 'ala al-'Ibad*, 2:98; Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, 45:51, 87; Ibn Tawus, *Al-Luhuf 'ala Qatla al-Tufuf*, pp. 75–76

<sup>141</sup> -Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20–21

Millions of Shi'a participate in this commemoration, walking on foot from various cities in Iraq toward Karbalā' to visit Husayn's shrine <sup>(142)</sup>.

The *Arba'īn* is regarded as one of the signs of true faith and as an embodiment of the followers' loyalty to their leader. The journey to Karbalā' symbolizes steadfast adherence to Husayn's principles in the face of injustice and a declaration of solidarity with the oppressed. Pilgrims experience a journey of hardship akin to that endured by Husayn and his family, which brings them spiritually closer to him. The *Arba'īn* pilgrimage is considered the largest religious gathering in the world—a living testament to the enduring and absolute devotion to al-Husayn.

### Points of Similarity and Difference

Both events embody a physical journey that symbolizes a spiritual pilgrimage. Each commemorates a profound act of bodily sacrifice undertaken for the sake of higher ideals. Both gather followers from diverse backgrounds, uniting them around a sacred symbol. In both, believers perceive the endurance of suffering as a means of drawing closer to God and attaining spiritual salvation.

In conclusion, the *Via Dolorosa* in Christianity and the *Arba'īn* of al-Husayn ibn 'Alī in Shi'a Islam represent two central events in the religious consciousness of millions of believers. Each constitutes a journey of suffering and sacrifice that, over time, has evolved into an annual religious ritual through which followers commemorate the pain of their leaders.

Despite the essential difference between Christ and al-Husayn—where the former signifies a living ascension and the latter the return of a martyr's severed head—their commemorations follow a similar pattern: both unfold across a forty-day period marked by suffering or transformation, culminating in enduring annual observances—the Feast of the Ascension and the *Arba'īn* commemoration.

Nevertheless, each event carries its own distinct meaning: while the *Via Dolorosa* centers on the salvific and redemptive dimension of Christ's passion, the *Arba'īn* emphasizes the revolutionary spirit and the experience of oppression embodied by Husayn. Ultimately, both stand as timeless symbols of faith, inspiring believers to sacrifice for their convictions.

### Return and Retribution

Christians believe that Christ will descend at the end of time in a cloud to judge the dead, establish the Kingdom of God, and bring peace to the world <sup>(143)</sup>. Similarly, Twelver Shi'a Muslims believe in the return of Hussein at the end of time when the Mahdi returns. al-Husayn will be resurrected from his grave, accompanied by his family, supporters, and enemies, to exact retribution from them and rule the earth after the Mahdi's death.

As we can see, there is a profound parallel between the Christian (the return of Christ) and Twelver Shi'a (the return of Hussein) religious traditions: the belief in a leading figure who will return at the end of time, not only to implement divine justice and hold humanity accountable, but also to establish an earthly system of governance that embodies salvation and perfection. This similarity lies in the idea of "return" or "mini-resurrection" where the wronged leader, or savior, returns to reward each soul for what it has done, which

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<sup>142</sup> - **Shi'i biographical sources:** The narratives recorded in works of *siyar* (biographies) and *maqātil* (accounts of martyrdom) recount the return of the captives from the Prophet's Household from Syria forty days after the martyrdom of Husayn. Al-Shaykh al-Tūsī reports in his *Tahdhīb al-Āhkām*, quoting Imam al-'Askarī: "The signs of a believer are five: performing fifty units of prayer, and visiting (the shrine of Husayn) on the fortieth day (al-*Arba'īn*)..." (*Tahdhīb al-Āhkām*, 6:52).

**Al-Shaykh al-Tūsī, *Tahdhīb al-Āhkām*, 6:52; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 3:206.**

<sup>143</sup>-**Matthew 16:27** — "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done."

confirms that belief in achieving absolute divine justice at the end of history is a shared doctrinal value between the two schools of thought, even if the details of the returning personality and the scope of his return differ (generalism in Christianity versus particularity in Shi'ism).

### **Similarities in Miracles and Supernatural Abilities**

Similarly, in Shi'a narrations, al-Rāwandī in *al-Kharā'ij wa-al-jarā'iḥ* reports accounts that al-Ḥusayn restored Ḥabbāb al-Wālibiyya's sight and cured her of leprosy, and that he brought back to life a young man's mother so that she could utter her final testament. This study highlights that both figures share the ability to manifest miracles. Just as Christ performed acts of healing through touch, al-Ḥusayn is attributed with similar miraculous powers, such as in the story of the angel *Futrus*, whose wing was healed through the blessing of al-Ḥusayn, as discussed earlier. Such parallels reinforce the notion that al-Ḥusayn was not merely a human leader but a figure endowed with divine-like attributes. These supernatural acts are interpreted as evidence of his *'isma* (infallibility) and *imāma* (divinely ordained leadership). The Gospels and Imāmī Shi'i narrations display a striking resemblance in ascribing miraculous, supernatural qualities to both Jesus and al-Ḥusayn. This resemblance is not a mere narrative coincidence but a shared theological strategy used to affirm the divine or infallible status of both figures. The Gospels and the Qur'ān confirm Christ's power to heal the blind, cure lepers, and raise the dead (by God's permission), affirming his mission as a divine messenger. Likewise, Shi'a traditions attribute to al-Ḥusayn comparable miraculous abilities—healing blindness and leprosy, reviving the dead—and symbolic miracles such as the story of the angel *Futrus*. This parallel leads to the conclusion that the purpose of these Shi'i narratives is to establish that al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī was not simply a mortal leader but an infallible Imam whose extraordinary powers signify his divine authority (*wilāya*) and align him with Christ in prophetic sanctity, thus elevating his theological standing within the Shi'a faith.

### **Healing the Sick and Raising the Dead:**

The Gospels mention some of Christ's miracles, including healing two young men of blindness<sup>(144)</sup>, curing ten lepers in a border village between Samaria and Galilee<sup>(145)</sup>, and raising the daughter of Jairus, the head of the Jewish synagogue, and two young men from the dead<sup>(146)</sup>. The Quran affirms these three miracles of Christ.

Similarly, in Shi'a traditions, al-Rawandi, in his book "al-Khara'ij wa al-Jara'ih," recounts that al-Ḥusayn restored sight to Hababa al-Walibiyya, cured her of leprosy, and raised a young man's mother from the dead so she could give her will<sup>(147)</sup>.

This study highlights that both figures share the ability to manifest miracles. Just as Christ performed acts of healing through touch, al-Ḥusayn is attributed with similar miraculous powers, such as in the story of the angel *Futrus*, whose wing was healed through the blessing of al-Ḥusayn, as discussed earlier.

This similarity reinforces the notion that al-Ḥusayn was not merely a human leader, but a figure endowed with divine attributes, with his miracles serving as evidence of his infallibility and Imamate. Both the Gospels and Shi'a Imamic narratives attribute extraordinary and supernatural qualities to Jesus Christ and al-Ḥusayn, respectively.

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<sup>144</sup>- Matthew 9:27–31.

<sup>145</sup>-Luke 17:11–19.

<sup>146</sup>-Matthew 9:18–26; Mark 5:21–43; Luke 8:40–56.

<sup>147</sup>-al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharā'ij wa-l-Jarā'iḥ*, 2:573–574.

This is not merely a narrative coincidence, but a deliberate theological tool to affirm the divine or infallible status of these figures. The Gospels and the Quran confirm Christ's ability to heal, restore sight, and raise the dead (by God's permission), underscoring his role as a divinely guided messenger. In parallel, Shi'a narratives attribute similar miraculous powers to al-Ḥusayn, including healing blindness and leprosy, raising the dead, and performing symbolic miracles such as the story of the angel *Futrus*.

This parallel leads to the conclusion that the aim of the Shi'a narratives is to establish that al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī was not merely a human leader, but a figure endowed with divine-like attributes—an infallible Imam. The miraculous powers ascribed to him serve as evidence of his *'iṣma* (infallibility) and *wilāya* (divinely ordained authority), qualities he shares with Christ as a prophet. This, in turn, elevates his theological status within the Shi'a tradition.

### **Summary of the Study**

The study reveals that the Shi'a tradition has approached the life of Christ in a deliberate and systematic manner—not merely as that of an independent prophet, but as a symbolic and strategic paradigm employed to exalt the figure of al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī and to endow him with exceptional sanctity and status. These comparisons aim to reinforce the veneration of the Ahl al-Bayt and their sacred standing within Shi'a consciousness, indicating that the parallels are not incidental coincidences but part of a coherent theological framework with clear doctrinal purposes. This symbolic appropriation manifests in three principal dimensions linking the two figures:

**First, divine lineage and election.**

The comparison shows that both belong to holy families divinely chosen. Just as God chose the family of 'Imrān (the family of Christ), the Shi'a view the Ahl al-Bayt as a continuation of that divine selection. This gives al-Ḥusayn's lineage additional significance—not merely as the Prophet's grandson but as an heir to a chain of sanctified families. This divine election is further emphasized through the comparison between Mary and Fāṭima, in which Mary's virtues are used to elevate Fāṭima's rank. Shi'a narrations portray Fāṭima as possessing a station even higher than Mary's, thereby enhancing al-Ḥusayn's sanctity through his maternal descent.

**Second, miracles and supernatural powers.**

Both figures share the feature of being heralded by celestial annunciations preceding their births, which were accompanied by miraculous phenomena, confirming that their existence transcended ordinary human nature. The comparison extends beyond their births to encompass parallel miraculous abilities—such as healing by touch, restoring sight, and raising the dead—reported in Shi'a traditions that echo the accounts of the Gospels and the Qur'ān. The story of the angel *Futrus* similarly serves as a symbolic miracle. This resemblance is not a mere narrative coincidence but a theological device employed to affirm that al-Ḥusayn was not a mere mortal leader but an infallible Imam endowed with divine-like attributes, whose supernatural powers confirm his *'iṣma* (infallibility) and *imāma* (divinely ordained leadership).

**Third, the redemptive and sacrificial dimension.**

The themes of thirst and sacrifice form one of the deepest points of convergence between the two. Just as Christ willingly accepted his fate as atonement for humanity, al-Ḥusayn accepted his destined martyrdom at Karbalā' despite foreknowing it, thereby rendering his death an act of salvation for believers. This parallel elevates al-Ḥusayn to the rank of redeemer and savior, reflecting a pronounced soteriological tendency in Shi'a thought and investing his martyrdom with profound theological significance.

Accordingly, the study indicates that the motives underlying these comparisons serve to reinforce the doctrine of Imamate by presenting the Shi'a Imam as a figure whose sanctity rivals that of the prophets. They also consolidate the Shi'a identity founded upon sacrifice and articulate an understanding of suffering as a path to spiritual elevation and redemption.

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